

~ Morning Frost ~

(Damsel In Distress - Part Three)

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For disclaimers see [part one](#).

A special thank you goes out to my beta reader Joanne.

As always this is for Heather.

Ryan was slowly waking up as she snuggled closer to the warm inviting body next to her. The blonde's emerald eyes flew open in a sudden panic and she spun around quickly. She almost laughed at her antics when she saw Casey sleeping contentedly. The memories of the night before came flooding back to the tiny blonde. She lifted her body up and placed her hand over her still rapidly beating heart. Ryan couldn't keep the smile from emerging.

Casey was still sleeping soundly with a blissful smile on her face. Ryan peered over at her bedroom window to see that the sun was just beginning to kiss the morning sky. There was a sheet of frost on the windowpane. Ryan's heart ached slightly to see the snow-covered ground and the clear sky. Now that the storm had passed there would be no reason for Casey to stay.

Ryan's emerald eyes drifted back to her slumbering lover whose nipples had become slightly erect from the cool morning air. It was an inviting sight that was making the blonde's mouth water. It was Christmas morning and she'd found the best gift she had ever received lying naked in her bed. "Hmm," she sighed contentedly.

The slumbering brunette's hands began to wander in search of something warm to cover her naked flesh. Ryan inhaled deeply when Casey's hands found her. Casey wrapped her arms around Ryan's waist and drew her closer. Ryan bit back a delighted moan as their bodies melted together. Casey did release a soft moan as Ryan's body blanketed hers.

The blonde snuggled closer to the taller woman as she pulled the bedding up around them. Ryan if she should awaken her contentedly sleeping companion. Her brow crinkled in worry. She was well aware of the fact that Casey had plans to spend the holiday with her family. Ryan tried in vain to push aside her own selfish desire to keep the sexy woman in her bed for as long as possible. Finally greed or pure lust won out and Ryan snuggled closer to Casey's warm inviting body. Soon she joined her lover in a blissful slumber.

Sometime later Casey awoke to feel of Ryan's warm breath caressing her shoulder. She released a happy sigh as she relaxed into the feel of the blonde's body wrapped around her own. Slowly she opened her eyes, blinking slightly as the morning sun assaulted her. She craned her neck to look through the window to see the ground covered in a wonderful blanket of white. "Christmas snow," she whispered happily. Her smile vanished when she noticed that the storm had passed.

The roads would be clear enough to allow her large truck safe passage back home.

Ryan suddenly jerked from her grasp and sat up. Casey almost broke out in a fit of laughter as Ryan looked down at her in confusion. It was evident that the smaller woman was not accustomed to finding someone else in her bed. "Merry Christmas," Casey offered tenderly as Ryan's lips blossomed into a smile.

"Merry Christmas," Ryan responded gleefully.

Casey watched as the blonde's face suddenly turned sullen. "You seem surprised to find me here," Casey said with a hint of worry.

"I should have woken you earlier," Ryan shyly explained as Casey's hands came to rest on her hips. "I just wasn't ready for goodbye just yet."

"You don't have to," Casey suggested as she ran her fingers up along the gentle curve of Ryan's body.

"Really?" Ryan responded with a soft purr as her skin danced from her lover's tantalizing touch. The blonde finally shook her head in an effort to clear her thoughts. "Wait! What about your family?"

"You could come with me," Casey suggested hopefully.

"I . . . Uhm . . . ," Ryan began to stammer as a wave of panic rushed over her.

"Problem?" Casey pushed as she reached up and guided Ryan closer to her.

The tall brunette lifted her long frame up and met her lover who was now straddling her body. Casey quickly captured the flustered blonde in a passionate kiss. Ryan's hands began a soft exploration of her lover's body as their tongues engaged in a promising battle for control.

Casey took advantage of their position, allowing her hands to wander between them and cup the blonde's firm full breasts. The brunette allowed her lover's breasts to fill her hands as she brushed Ryan's nipples with her thumbs.

Ryan could feel the fear slipping away as Casey began to tease her erect nipples between her long agile fingers. As her fears slipped away, her resolve quickly followed. She had the sudden nagging feeling that she was about to agree with whatever Casey suggested. Ryan felt lightheaded as the kiss gently ceased. The blonde's head slumped onto her lover's shoulder. She shivered as she felt her lover's hot breath on her neck.

Ryan kissed the soft flesh of her lover's shoulders as the brunette's fingers continued teasing her nipples with a sense of urgency. "Casey," Ryan gasped as her lover nibbled gently on her earlobe. *'I'll just make love to her one more time,'* Ryan mentally reasoned as she convinced herself that she would be able to simply send Casey on her way afterward. As she felt her body

being lowered down onto the bed, Ryan briefly wondered if one more time would be enough to quell the desire she had for this woman.

Casey knew she was playing with fire. The brunette just couldn't resist the urge to touch Ryan for what could possibly be the last time. As Casey began to kiss her way down Ryan's firm body, she wondered just what it was about the commitment-phobic blonde that drove her past all sense of reason. Casey tried to brush aside her concerns as she felt Ryan's body quivering from her touch. As the musky aroma of Ryan's arousal filled her senses, Casey looked up and saw her lover looking back at her with a smoky haze of pure desire.

The intensity of Ryan's stare caused Casey to freeze for a moment as she stared back. Casey's eyes drifted along her lover's body. She memorized each curve as her gaze drifted back up along the small blonde's incredible body until she was once again locked in a fiery emerald gaze. If this was to be their last time, this was how Casey wanted to remember Ryan.

Ryan felt as if her heart had stopped beating; time stood still while she looked deeply in the tow truck driver's crystal blue eyes. She became aware of her labored breathing but she refused to relinquish the intense stare. Somewhere in the back of her mind a voice was screaming for her to stop, reminding her that the last thing she wanted was to get involved with someone. And if she did decide to get involved with someone, Sharla Casey Stewart was most definitely out of the question. Instead of stopping, she continued to look deeply into Casey's eyes. One of her hands drifted down along her own body and she kept her body supported by placing her other arm behind her.

Ryan smiled at the way Casey's eyes lit up as she followed Ryan's movements. Neither of them spoke as Ryan began to fondle her own breasts. The only sounds in the room consisted of the heavy gasps they were both involuntarily releasing. Ryan felt as if Casey's eyes were burning into her as the blonde's hand drifted down to the soft patch of golden curls. Ryan knew that simply sleeping next to the gorgeous tow truck driver had inflamed her passion; still, she was unprepared for the flood that greeted her touch.

"You have no idea what you do to me," Ryan confessed huskily as Casey continued to watch her fingers gliding along her sex from her perch between the detective's legs.

Casey was unable to speak as she watched Ryan's fingers glide along her slick folds. She inhaled sharply as the blonde began to tease her own clit. Casey could feel her own clit throbbing as she watched Ryan pleasure herself. The brunette was ready to explode when the blonde suddenly stopped and offered her glistening fingers up to Casey's lips. Eagerly Casey grasped Ryan's wrist and drew the blonde's hand closer. She plunged the glistening fingers into her mouth and suckled them greedily.

Ryan moaned in pleasure as Casey licked away every last drop of passion from her fingers. The blonde fought to control her breathing as Casey teased her sensitive fingers with her teeth and her tongue. She whimpered as her lover finally released her fingers from the warmth of her mouth. She caressed the brunette's face as her lover lowered her mouth to her wetness. Ryan whimpered and her eyes fluttered shut while her lover began to drink in her passion.

Ryan forced her eyes open as she felt her lover lifting her body slightly. Casey's strong hands cupped the blonde's backside while Ryan continued to hold her body upright with one arm. The blonde ran her fingers through her lover's long black hair, guiding her to where she needed her the most. Ryan's body lifted higher as she felt her lover's tongue enter her. "So good," Ryan managed to say as she looked into her lover's twinkling eyes.

Casey fought to hold her lover's body steady as she plunged in and out of the blonde's warm wet center. She massaged Ryan's firm flesh as her tongue slipped from the warmth and glided up to her throbbing clit. Casey murmured in delight as she drowned in her lover's overflowing passion. She suckled the blonde's clit while her lover's hips thrust forward. Her eyes never left her lover's heaving body and she suckled her harder as she waited to hear her lover begging her to take her over the edge.

Ryan felt as if her body was about to take flight as Casey's mouth devoured her. "Please," she gasped finally. "Baby, please! I need you inside of me. Take me," she pleaded, knowing that her lover was waiting to hear those very words. Her plea was granted as Casey's fingers entered her while her mouth hungrily feasted upon her. Ryan rode against her lover's touch as she fought to keep herself from losing control. Casey's tongue and fingers pleased her in a wild rhythm and Ryan was no longer able to resist the tidal wave of passion that was screaming to be released.

Casey fought to hold Ryan close to her as the smaller woman's body exploded. Her lover released a passionate cry as her entire body lifted up and escaped Casey's grasp. The brunette climbed up her lover's trembling form and brushed her short blonde locks from her sweaty brow before wrapping her up in a tender embrace.

"What were we talking about?" Ryan finally choked out once she was able to breathe again.

"I was wishing you a Merry Christmas," Casey quipped before placing a soft kiss on the blonde's shoulder.

"Oh right," Ryan sighed. "If that's how you wish someone a Merry Christmas, I'm curious as to how you wish them a Happy New Year."

"Wouldn't you like to know?" Casey purred in the blonde's ear. She laughed as Ryan trembled. "Now I need to get going. Are you going with me or not?"

Casey felt the smaller woman stiffen in her embrace. She knew she had to be direct or else Ryan would squirm out of the invitation. "Chill out," Casey instructed her. Ryan rolled over and looked up at Casey who was now leaning over the smaller woman's body. "I'm not asking for your hand in marriage. I'm simply inviting you to a holiday dinner. I'm not happy with the thought of you spending your Christmas alone."

"It's Christmas. I do have plans," Ryan protested as she rolled over and sat up.

"Yeah, pouring over your case files and throwing a couple of Pop Tarts in the toaster oven," Casey said bluntly. "Look, I'm not asking for a date. But you'll know most everyone there and

Mom is a great cook."

"That's the problem," Ryan confessed with a heavy sigh.

"Mom's cooking?" Casey teased.

"No," Ryan grumbled as she turned back to Casey. "I'll know almost everyone there. Besides I really do have plans," Ryan lied.

"Great." Casey smiled in response. "I'll give you a ride," she offered, knowing that she had caught the little blonde in a lie.

"Creep," Ryan grunted. "You really are old man Stewart's kid, aren't you?"

"He he," Casey chuckled. "So I was right about the case files and the Pop Tarts?"

"Yes," Ryan hissed.

"Look, you'll be going as my friend," Casey asserted, hoping that Ryan would agree. For some unexplainable reason, it broke her heart to think of the small blonde sitting home alone on Christmas. "No one, and I mean no one, has to know we slept together."

"Right." Ryan laughed. "A room full of cops, plus a priest, an FBI agent, and your mother, who after raising ten of you little darlings will probably be the first to figure it out."

"So? I'm an adult," Casey protested.

"I work with these people," Ryan argued. "Your brothers are going to beat me up."

"No, they won't," Casey continued to protest.

"Yes, they will," Ryan blurted out in a panic. "And Byron will be leading the pack. He knows that I'm not the marrying kind. I'm not, by the way."

"Fine," Casey responded in exasperation. She almost laughed at the sheer look of panic clearly written across the blonde's face. "Hey, what part of 'I'm not hitching up the U-haul' did you miss? I'm just offering dinner. No big deal. I thought it would be nice to spend some time together when the weather doesn't completely suck and we've got our clothes on."

Ryan chewed on her lip nervously. Casey was wearing her down. She wanted to spend more time with the tall brunette. But the thought of spending time with her and her entire family scared the hell out of the blonde. She opened her mouth to respond several times but just couldn't find the words. She wiped away the beads of sweat that seem to be oozing from every pore on her brow. Her heart was pounding in her chest as she wallowed in her inability to make a decision.

She watched in horror as Casey got up off her bed. "Where are you going?" Ryan blurted out in a

panic.

"I have to go," Casey flatly informed her.

Ryan felt numb as she watched Casey's naked body walk out of her bedroom. She could hear the brunette wandering around as she struggled to gather the courage to accept Casey's offer. All too soon Casey returned to her bedroom fully dressed. "Merry Christmas, Ryan," the brunette offered sincerely. "Enjoy the Pop Tarts." Ryan sat there and watched her lover walk away while her mind screamed for her to do something. As she heard the front door close, she knew it was too late.

Almost a week later Ryan was sitting at her desk staring blankly at her case files. She hadn't been able to eat or sleep since Christmas. She wanted to call Casey. She needed to hear the brunette's voice. But Ryan had no idea what she would say to the sexy tow truck driver. How does one apologize for being an emotional coward? She should be focused on the case at hand, but she was constantly lost in thoughts about Casey.

"You want to talk about it?" Byron asked her.

"Talk about what?" she grumbled, unable to meet his gaze.

"Why you've been walking around like you just lost your best friend?" he offered gently.

"My car died," she offered, hoping that it would be the end of the conversation. Still, a little voice inside of her had been nagging her all week to pump her partner for details about Casey.

"Again?" He laughed. "Why don't you just buy a new car?"

"I am," she said with a heavy sigh. "Dirk said it was time to pull the plug."

"I could have told you that." Byron snorted in disgust. "So what else is bothering you?"

"Nothing," she lied.

"Masters?" he pushed.

'Geez, what is it with this family? Are they psychic or something?' she mentally groaned. "So how was your holiday?" she asked in an effort to change the subject.

"Great." Byron beamed. "The whole family got together Christmas Day. Nothing like having everyone together and a bunch of kids running around on a sugar high." He laughed.

Ryan finally looked up and met his gaze. She smiled as she realized that he had the same laugh as his younger sister. "The things you miss when you're an only child," she said with slight smile. She and Byron hadn't been working together for very long; he hadn't spoken much about his family. For the first time Ryan realized it was probably because she was so standoffish when it

came to talking about her own.

"I can't even imagine what that would be like," Byron responded with a slight shiver.

"Well, I guess when you have nine siblings the thought of being an only child must seem foreign," Ryan added before she realized what she had done.

"How did you know that?" he asked in sudden interest.

"You must have told me." She shrugged as she prayed that her partner would suddenly develop a lapse in memory.

"No, I didn't," he corrected her.

"I . . . uhm . . .," she stammered. "It must have been Casey."

"When did you meet Sharla?" he inquired with a hint of coldness in his voice.

"Relax. She towed my car," Ryan quickly informed him as her palms began to sweat.

"Oh," he said with a sigh of relief.

"Thanks a lot, pal," she fumed as she shoved her files shut and stood, slamming her chair against the desk.

Ryan retreated to the break room in search of some space and a cup of coffee. Ryan was furious that Byron had assumed the worst. And she was angry with herself since her partner's assumption had been correct. She gritted her teeth while she stalled and regained her composure. Finally she poured herself a cup of three-hour-old coffee and returned to the squad room.

"I'm sorry," Byron quickly apologized. "I didn't mean to offend you."

Ryan couldn't respond to his apology. What could she say? You're right; I took one look at your baby sister and seduced her not once but twice? She wondered at what point did she start living up to the womanizing reputation she'd had back in Baltimore? The 'love them and leave them' rap she had earned was one of the reasons she moved up north so she could spare her father, the senator, any further embarrassment. What was really hurting her at the moment was that she really liked Casey and had blown her chance with the tall brunette. "Forget it," she finally muttered as she reopened her files. "So why did she leave the force? Was because of her eye?" she asked quickly before she lost her nerve. Now that she had unwittingly opened the door she might as well find out as much as she could.

"How did you know about that?" he asked.

"I noticed that when I entered a room she had to turn all the way around to see me," Ryan explained as she pretended to read the file in front of her. "When someone does that, it's usually

because they have limited or no vision in one eye."

"Yeah, it was an accident," Byron informed her sadly. "They always warn us about flying bullets, never flying glass. It was a raid and a window was shattered; she lost most of the vision in her left eye."

"So she has no depth perception," Ryan said. She was sad that Casey's career had ended over something so trivial.

"Right," Byron sighed again. "She had the option of leaving with a nice compensation package or spending the rest of her career sitting behind a desk."

"I can't see Casey stuck behind a desk," Ryan admitted, thinking that the hyper brunette would have ended up going ballistic in a very short period of time.

"Hold on," Byron suddenly said in a quiet yet commanding tone. "If all Sharla did was tow your car, when did you enter a room she was in?" Ryan turned three shades of red while her partner glared over at her. "Oh man. Masters, please tell me you didn't," the older man pleaded.

"I swear I didn't know she was your sister," Ryan weakly tried to explain. "Not to mention the baby sister of half the people I work with. And the Commissioner's daughter," she added with a groan.

"Do you have any idea how truly screwed you are if this gets out?" Byron asked her in bewilderment. "Her ex, Amanda, can barely drive across town without getting a ticket. I like you and I still want to kick your ass."

"Tell me about her," Ryan asked, throwing all sense of reality out the window.

"Who?" Byron suspiciously responded.

"Amanda," Ryan growled.

"She was a first class bitch," Byron informed her. "No one liked her. She made Sharla very unhappy. Not only did she make her unhappy, she didn't care that she made her unhappy."

"Bitch," Ryan spat out.

Ryan looked up in surprise as her partner burst into gales of laughter. "What?" she sneered at the still chuckling man.

"Oh nothing," he choked out. "It's just that you could have gone your entire career without anyone ever finding out about you and Sharla. Instead of keeping your mouth shut, you tell me."

"I didn't," Ryan argued. "It was a slip of the tongue."

"Right." He chuckled again. "You like her."

"I do not," Ryan protested as her heart began to beat in an erratic rhythm.

"Oh, so you're playing with my baby sister's affections?" he accused her.

"No," she blurted out.

Ryan's face fell as she realized what she was about to admit to him and to herself. "Oh crap," she muttered.

"You like her," he taunted her once again.

"Do not," Ryan whined, suddenly feeling very young.

"You know, Masters, I said the same thing and had the same look on my face right before I decided to ask Robin to marry me," he said with a boisterous laugh.

"Stop it," Ryan fumed. She felt a panic attack starting to choke her.

"Fine, have it your way," Byron offered in a patronizing tone. "You don't like her. And since she seemed really happy, I won't have to hurt you. And it won't bother you that she has a date on New Year's Eve."

"She what?" Ryan choked out in horror.

"Yeah, some doctor Maureen works with," Byron responded in a blasé manner.

"A doctor?" Ryan grunted, suddenly feeling very angry. "That's nice," she hissed as her partner just smiled at her.

"Yeah, Maureen talked her into it on Christmas Day," Byron continued his explanation as if he didn't have a care in the world.

"Well, that's just peachy," Ryan grumbled once again.

Ryan sat there grinding her teeth as Byron went on and on about how Sharla was going with the lady doctor to the annual New Year's Eve dance at the Briarwood Country Club. It wasn't until Ryan snapped her pen in half that Byron took a break from the conversation. He did continue it later in the day, and as much as Ryan pretended that it didn't matter, inside she was furious. The following day her partner was only slightly better behaved, only mentioning the annual dance every hour instead of every half hour as he'd done the previous day.

The icing on the cake happened when the Captain called her into his office. Ryan could feel the sweat pouring off her. Normally being called into the boss' office wasn't a big deal, unless of course you recently slept with his little sister. Ryan said a silent prayer that Byron had chosen not

to share this information with the rest of the overprotective Stewart clan.

"Yes, sir?" she stammered nervously as she stepped into his office.

"I understand you're on the desk tomorrow night for New Year's Eve," the gray-haired gentleman said as he reviewed his paperwork without looking up at her.

"Yes, sir," she said in relief. He appeared to be treating her no differently than before.

"I'm changing your assignment," he informed her with a slight yawn.

"Okay," she responded with a shrug, simply thankful that he wasn't about to shoot her for sleeping with Casey.

"A couple of politicians have been added to the guest list for the Briarwood dance. You'll be working security," he continued.

"Excuse me?" she squeaked out.

"Problem?" He seemed to be taunting her as his crystal blue eyes looked up at her.

Ryan briefly wondered if that response was some kind of annoying genetic thing. She was also searching her mind for some plausible reason to refuse the assignment. She knew the real reason she didn't want to work the detail. First, she had no desire to spend the night watching Casey enjoying her evening with her date. Secondly, if there were going to be politicians around there was always the chance she would run into dear old Dad or one of his cronies. "I'm waiting, Masters," he bellowed.

"No problem, sir," she wearily answered him.

"Good," he grunted with satisfaction. "Wear something nice that will hide your gun. Meet with Lt. Sampson here at seven."

"Yes, sir," Ryan grumbled before trudging back to her desk.

"What's wrong now?" Byron asked as Ryan rested her head on her desk. She prayed for death to come and take her there and then.

"Lt. Sampson is your brother Jarrod, isn't he?" Ryan whimpered as she slowly lifted her head.

"Yes," Byron confirmed. "Poor bugger is stuck working that big party over at Briarwood tomorrow."

"I know," Ryan said in exhaustion. "So am I."

"Really?" Bryon chuckled in amusement.

"What about you?" Ryan asked him suspiciously.

"I'm going to be happily enjoying the New Year at Robin's parents' cabin in New Hampshire," he informed her with a teasing smile.

"Any other members of your family going to be there?" Ryan hissed. "And did you tell them about Sharla and I?"

"No, I didn't tell anyone," he denied a little too vehemently for Ryan's comfort. "Let's see, Jarrod is running the security detail and Deshawna is also working the detail. Maureen, her husband, my parents, Sharla and her date will be there as guests."

"Great. Just freaking great," Ryan groaned.

The following evening Casey stared at her reflection in the mirror. She liked the red evening gown she'd selected; she just had no desire to go out. She brushed her long dark hair once more and checked her makeup before heading downstairs to find her sister Taylor sprawled out on her sofa. "Move your fat ass," she griped. She shoved her sister's feet aside so she could sit down.

"That's Special Agent Fat Ass to you." Taylor laughed.

"I want to stay home with you tonight and watch Dick Clark," Casey whined.

"You hate Dick Clark, and if you didn't want to go on a blind date then you should have said so," Taylor informed her as she began to flick through the channels. "Oh, look who's in town?"

Casey looked at the television to see what her sister was sneering at. "Senator Leigh," Taylor spat out as she tossed a handful of popcorn at the screen. "Do you think I have issues with my biological father?"

"No." Casey laughed. "Geez, when was the last time he and Mom were in the same room?" Casey mused, wondering how her mother was going to feel about running into the pious old flame who had left her the moment she got pregnant with Taylor.

"When Dad wanted to adopt me," Taylor explained. "Suddenly he gave a damn about me having his last name. I never understood him. Tonight should be fun. Oh look, and Senator Masters is attending tonight as well."

"Another pious asshole," Casey groaned. "Now I really don't want to go."

"What's the real reason?" Taylor unexpectedly asked.

"Real reason for what?" Casey asked in confusion.

"That you don't want to go out tonight?" Taylor elaborated.

"I hate blind dates, New Year's Eve parties, and Republican senators," Casey quickly explained.

"And now the *real* reason?" Taylor pressed.

"I met someone," Casey whispered.

"No kidding." Taylor chuckled. "I didn't think you spent Christmas Eve with a sick friend. So what's the problem? Why are you going out with someone Maureen found at the hospital?"

"She's not into commitment," Casey tried to explain.

"Not good, Sharla," Taylor grumbled.

"And she's a cop," Casey further explained. "She's terrified that the boys will beat her up."

"Screw the boys! Deshawna's the one with the temper." Taylor laughed. "So what's Miss Wonderful's name?"

"You can't tell anyone," Casey cautioned her older sister.

"Scout's honor," Taylor pledged.

"You were never a scout," Casey jested.

"Fine. FBI honor," Taylor muttered. "Now don't make me tell Mom that you were the one who dented her car. Out with it. Just who would be the lucky, albeit clueless, lass?"

"No running a check on her," Casey warned her sister.

"Killjoy," Taylor snorted. "Okay, I promise."

"Ryan Masters." Casey couldn't help but smile when she said the blonde's name.

"Ryan? What kind of name is that for a girl?" Taylor teased. Suddenly her smile vanished. "Wait! Is she a blonde about yay high?"

"Yes; why?" Casey asked with a grimace.

"It's okay," Taylor reassured her. "If it's the same Ryan Masters that I'm thinking of, she was in my class at Quantico. In fact, she was at the top of the class."

"Then why isn't she an uptight fed like you?" Casey asked curiously.

"You're going to love this," Taylor slowly began. "Remember back then you couldn't be gay and in the FBI?"

"Vividly," Casey snorted. "In fact, I believe that was the reason I told their recruiter to shove his offer."

"Her mother outed her," Taylor explained flatly.

"Excuse me?" Casey choked out.

"Her mother outed her," Taylor repeated. "She showed up, met with the brass, and outed her own daughter."

"Why would anyone do that?" Casey gasped. "And why did the brass meet with this woman?"

"Because she's Shirley Masters, wife of . . . ," Taylor began.

"Senator Sherman Ryan Masters," Casey finished for her. "The same jerk who suggested that homosexuals should be quarantined so we couldn't get near innocent children. Dear God, no wonder she has issues."

"Not as many as she thinks she does," Taylor supplied. "I knew her when she was on the force in Baltimore. She's a nice person. And she's a good cop. She would have been a good field agent if her parents weren't assholes. They wanted her to be a sweet little girl and marry some other bonehead politician's son. Law enforcement wasn't an option. They thought if they got her tossed out that would be the end of it."

"Does she know they were behind it?" Casey asked as she felt her heart breaking for Ryan.

"Yes," Taylor confirmed. "The mom was smart. If she'd simply told the director, he would have let it slide. Hell, most of the men she told would have let it go. But since she told them all at once, they had no choice but to boot Ryan out."

The knock on the door stirred Casey from her thoughts. "That would be my date," she said sadly.

"Sharla, relax and have a good time," Taylor tried to reassure her. "You never know; the doctor might just sweep you off your feet."

"Whatever," Casey responded in a defeated tone as she got up to open the door for her sister Maureen and her date.

Much to Casey's relief, she only found her sister and her husband at the door. Maureen quickly explained that Vivian had an emergency and had to cancel. "See? Things are looking up already," Taylor called out as the trio made their exit. Casey was so relieved that she missed the conspiratorial wink her sisters shared when her back was turned.

Ryan was miserable as she watched the elegant guests moving about the ballroom. She was dressed in a long black evening gown with a slit up the side that showed off her legs and gave

her easy access to the gun strapped to her thigh. She was tense enough when she discovered her father was attending the function. But what really set her on edge was that Casey's family was there, and at any moment the woman she couldn't stop thinking about was due to arrive on someone else's arm. The only bright spot was that her shift was over at 1:00 a.m. whether or not the party had broken up. "Just another five hours and I can go home and forget all about this," she whispered careful to keep her musings from the microphone she was wearing.

If it weren't for the tiny device and the earpiece she was wearing, the blonde would have resembled any other guest in the room. "Still talking to yourself?" a deep voice interrupted her thoughts. She turned to see a tall burly man she'd known all her life. "Mr. Palmer, still heading the Senator's security?" Ryan greeted the older man with respect.

"Mr. Palmer?" he choked out. "There was a time when you called me Uncle Buck."

"There was also a time when I called the Senator Dad," Ryan discreetly pointed out. She didn't begrudge the man his position on her father's staff. She truly liked Uncle Buck and he'd always been kind to her. In fact, she probably spent more time with the giant man during her childhood than she did with either of her parents.

"Can I still call you Rie Rie?" h softly inquired.

"Ssh," Ryan chastised him as she blushed. She heard squawking and laughter in her earpiece. "Now you've done it. My lieutenant wants to know if he can call me that," she explained with a warm smile.

"Tell him he has to go through me first." The large man laughed.

"Thank you, Uncle Buck," she whispered shyly.

"Well, I guess we both need to get back to work." Uncle Buck sighed. "I just wanted to say hello and to tell you how proud I am of you. I've been following your career and I just about split a gut when you got your gold shield."

Ryan thanked him and bit back the urge to ask if her parents had followed her success as well; she already knew that they hadn't. She stifled the request and the bitter feelings as she said goodbye to Uncle Buck and refocused her attention on her duties. She braced herself as she saw Commissioner Stewart approaching. "Good evening, Detective," the graceful man greeted her with a warm smile. "Paula, this is Byron's new partner, Ryan Masters. This is my wife, Paula."

"A pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Stewart. Are you and the Commissioner having a good time this evening?" Ryan politely greeted the couple.

"Nice to meet you, Detective," Mrs. Stewart greeted her in kind. "Honestly, I hate these kind of affairs, don't you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do," Ryan confessed.

"Wouldn't be so bad if some bonehead hadn't decided to invite the moral majority," the Commissioner grouched.

"Now, Frank, you promised to behave," Mrs. Stewart cautioned her husband with a playful swat.

"Right you are, my dear. It wouldn't do to have one of the kids lock up the old man." The Commissioner snorted in amusement as Ryan smiled.

The Stewarts wished her a Happy New Year before drifting off to mingle. *'It isn't hard to figure out where Casey gets her good looks and personality from. So that's what real parents are like.'* Ryan smiled at the older couple; they obviously still adored one another. Her back stiffened as her own parents passed by without acknowledging her. *'And there's the other side of the coin.'* She grimaced as she watched her parents stiffly move across the room, barely touching one another.

"This sucks," a voice said from behind her. She turned around to find Deshawna Wright beside her. The tall caramel-colored woman with brilliant blue eyes was hard to miss in a crowd.

"Detective," Ryan greeted her.

"Detective," Deshawna said in return. "I could wring my brother's neck for roping me into this detail."

Ryan was about to make a pithy comment in response when something occurred to her. Prior to her partner finding out about her and Casey, the Stewart clan had kept quiet as to how many of the Commissioner's children were on the force. Tonight they all seemed very open with her about it. It was almost as if they knew that Ryan knew. Suddenly the small blonde didn't feel very well. *'Why do I get the feeling that I'm being set up?'* Ryan thought with a sense of dread. Her negative feelings vanished as the most beautiful woman she'd ever laid eyes on entered the ballroom. "My God, Casey, you are stunning," Ryan whispered.

On the other side of the ballroom Casey was scanning the crowd, searching for her parents as her sister Maureen and her husband were greeted by some of their co-workers. Her jaw dropped when she spotted the most beautiful woman she'd ever seen on the opposite side of the room. "Ryan, you're gorgeous," she gasped, as her eyes remained focused on the small blonde.

"And what you gawking at?" her father barked.

Reluctantly she tore her eyes away from Ryan's beauty. "Happy New Year, Dad," she said, greeting him with a big hug.

"Happy New Year, Sharla," he responded, giving her a big hug.

"How is Mom doing with Senator Leigh being here?" she asked in concern.

"She's fine," he explained. "He's staying on one side of the room and she's on the other. Trust me, the last time they spoke your mother got the last word in. How did you know he was here?"

"Taylor and I saw it on the news," Casey explained.

"Should I call her? Is she alright?" he blurted out quickly.

"She's fine," Casey reassured him. "She threw food at the television and called him a nasty name. Nothing new there. I almost asked her to take my date's place but then I remembered that he was here."

"Where's your date?" the Commissioner inquired casually.

"Medical emergency," Casey explained, curious as to why her father didn't seem surprised. "Doctors! Go figure. I still don't understand how Mom can be so calm about being in the same room with him," Casey said, returning her attention to Senator Leigh.

"That's what adults do," her father calmly explained. "Speaking of arrogant blowhards," he grumbled. Casey stiffened as she saw Senator Masters approaching them. "Here comes another one."

"Commissioner, we finally meet," the senator offered brightly. "I was beginning to think you were avoiding me. This is my wife, Shirley," Casey could feel her skin crawling as the Senator discreetly checked her out. She was amazed at how polite her father could be with a man she'd heard him refer to as a horse's arse on more than one occasion.

"This is my daughter, Sharla," he introduced the tall brunette as he motioned for Maureen and her husband Steve to join them.

Casey ignored the senator's offer to shake her hand. She stared at him coldly; he smiled at her while her father introduced Maureen and Steve to him. "And this is one of my other girls, Deshawna," the Commissioner proudly introduced her older sister.

"Senator," Deshawna greeted him as the senator just stared at her.

The Stewart clan stood there and stared at the befuddled man who seemed to have lost the ability to speak for a moment. "A pleasure," he choked out as he finally shook Deshawna's hand.

"Problem?" the Commissioner innocently inquired as Casey noticed Deshawna fiddle with her earpiece.

"No," Senator Masters said with a slight stammer as Deshawna grimaced and played with her earpiece. "You have a lovely family," the senator continued in an effort to save his dignity.

"Oh, this is just the tip of the iceberg," the Commissioner boasted. "Do you have any children?"

"One," he explained quickly in a well-rehearsed way. "She's traveling."

"Excuse me," Casey blurted out. She walked away before she struck the arrogant Senator.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Deshawna asked as she followed her.

"Nothing," Casey fumed. "What is it with you and that earpiece?"

"Oh, just a little blonde cop laughing herself silly when Dad was giving it to the Senator," Deshawna explained with a scowl. "No, I won't go back so you can hear more," Deshawna shouted into her microphone. "Geez, how does Byron put up with her?"

"Ryan has her moments," Casey said with a smile.

"Oh, you know her?" Deshawna innocently asked.

Not for the first time that evening Casey had a sneaking suspicion that something was going on. She clamped her hand over the tiny microphone her sister was wearing and glared at Deshawna. "What's going on?" she demanded.

"Sharla, I don't know what you're talking about," Deshawna lied.

Casey was grilling Deshawna as Jarrod approached Ryan. He began discussing the staff, how they had more than enough police and private security, and there was a chance that she could get off-duty early. Ryan would have been jumping for joy if she weren't straining her neck to see if she could sneak a peek at Casey's date.

"Are you listening to me, Masters?" the Lieutenant asked.

"Sorry, sir," Ryan quickly apologized.

"I said if you want to turn in your radio, that's fine," he explained once again. "Just stick around and enjoy the party, but don't drink in case we need your help."

"Seriously?" Ryan asked. She tore off her microphone and earpiece and handed them over. The entire situation failed to make any sense, but she wasn't about to argue. She could go hide in a broom closet for the rest of the night and avoid everyone.

"Go, enjoy," he instructed her.

"Yes, sir," she responded with a broad smile.

Ryan scurried off, deciding that the first thing she needed to do was get a peek at Casey's date. She snuck up behind Casey who was in a very animated discussion with Deshawna.

"May I interrupt for a moment?" Ryan requested as the two women turned to her.

"Please feel free," Deshawna eagerly offered. "I need to get back to work since you're off-duty."

"I knew it," Ryan groaned as Deshawna rushed away from them.

"You knew what?" Casey asked in confusion.

"Where's your date?" Ryan quickly blurted out.

"Stood me up," Casey explained as her eyes widened. "How did you know I had a date?"

"I think we've been set up," Ryan softly explained.

"By whom?" Casey asked.

"Apparently your entire family." Ryan chuckled as she stepped closer to the woman who had been haunting her for months.

"How could they know?" Casey babbled.

"Byron," Ryan stated as her hands came to rest on the taller woman's hips.

"Go on," Casey encouraged her as she leaned into the smaller woman's touch. Ryan's hands slipped up along the curve of the brunette's waist. "I meant with your explanation," Casey clarified as her own hands found their way to Ryan's shoulders.

"Right," Ryan said with a smile. "I told Byron about us."

"How much did you tell him?" Casey squeaked out fearfully.

"Not that much," Ryan quickly clarified. "Just enough that he wouldn't shoot me. I'm assuming that he blabbed the whole thing to the rest of your family. Suddenly I'm working this detail and then I'm not but I have to stay and your date is a no-show."

"I'm going to kill them," Casey grumbled.

"No, don't," Ryan protested as she leaned closer to the dark-haired beauty. "I think it's sweet and it gives me a chance to make up for being such an ass on Christmas morning. I should have gone with you. I just panicked."

"I understand," Casey tried to reassure her. "How are you doing?"

"Better now that I'm holding you," Ryan stated boldly.

"I was referring to your parents," Casey explained.

"How did you know?" came Ryan's stunned response. "After all, I'm traveling. In fact, I think that I've been traveling for at least fifteen years now. Hard to say."

"My sister Taylor," Casey offered.

"The FBI agent?" Ryan added.

"Yes, Special Agent Taylor Leigh," Casey softly said.

"Taylor Leigh?" Ryan said brightly as she nodded in understanding. "So now you know everything."

"Not everything," Casey emphasized. "I don't have a clue as to what it would be like to go out on a real date with you."

"Well, it's New Year's Eve and I thought I was supposed to work. But since I have the night off and I'm stuck at this swanky shindig, would you consider being my escort for the evening?" Ryan eloquently requested.

"I don't know," Casey hedged.

"Please?" Ryan pleaded.

"Oh, I do so love it when you beg," Casey purred.

"Yes, I know," Ryan responded in a husky tone. "Sharla, would you do me the honor of allowing me to escort you for the rest of the evening?"

"If you're okay with being around your parents, then I would love it," Casey answered before placing a soft kiss on the blonde's lips.

"They don't bother me," Ryan said with a shrug. "They've walked past me at least a dozen times tonight. I honestly don't know if they've even recognized me."

"What is wrong with them? How can they not see you for the truly amazing person that you are?" Casey fumed.

Ryan was taken aback by the Casey's boldness. She also felt a sense of warmth from the heartfelt sincerity that seeped through the tall brunette's words. "Well, I have a theory about that," Ryan began playfully.

"Do you now?" Casey encouraged her silliness with a smile as she tucked an errant strand of blonde hair behind Ryan's ear.

"Yes, I do," Ryan merrily continued. "I'm convinced that my real parents were abducted by aliens and those two are really pod people."

"This works for you?" Casey asked, worried that Ryan might not be as all right with the situation as she pretended to be.

"Absolutely," Ryan confirmed. "Casey, trust me. I'm all right with them being here. Yes, it hurts, but I have to let it go. They let me go a long time ago. I can either allow it to swallow me up or I can live my life. It's not easy at times but it is what it is. I accept it as much as I can."

"Ladies, are you enjoying the evening?" a friendly voice greeted them. Both of them turned to find a tall-distinguished gentleman smiling at them.

"Yes, thank you, Councilman Grayson," Casey responded brightly.

"Happy New Year, sir," Ryan chimed in.

"Then why aren't the two of you dancing?" the councilman inquired.

"Perhaps it's because of those two fatheads the board invited?" the Commissioner griped from behind them.

Ryan jumped at the sound of the man's voice, instantly removing her hands from the man's daughter. Casey sighed heavily as she wrapped her arm around Ryan's waist. Despite her best efforts, Ryan couldn't relax as the Commissioner stood next to her.

"Honestly, Jack, why did you invite those idiots? You're a Democrat, for Pete's sake," the Commissioner continued to complain, seemingly oblivious to Casey's closeness to the small blonde. "Aren't they blocking that measure you've been busting your arse on?"

"Yes, I'm at cross purposes with both of the Senators," Jack Grayson confessed with a smile. "Perhaps the joyous celebration of the season will help both of them see the light. It is, after all, the season for giving. And both of the Senators are very firm in their convictions for family values."

Casey's eyes lit up when she grasped the comment. "Oh boy," the tall brunette whispered.

"What?" Ryan asked in confusion.

"Apparently we weren't the only ones to be set up this evening," Casey said with a smirk.

"What are you up to, Jack?" Frank Stewart pressed.

"Just politics as usual," Jack confessed. "I promise to be very discreet."

"Jack, if you're planning on using my daughter to upset Senator Leigh, I strongly suggest you rethink things," Frank Stewart cautioned the other man. "Taylor is my daughter and I won't let you or anyone else hurt my kid."

"Taylor?" Ryan asked Casey in confusion.

"Senator Leigh is her father," Ryan whispered in the blonde's ear.

"I'm her father," Frank Stewart asserted. Ryan could see the look of pride on the man's face as he made the declaration. It was more than apparent that mending scraped knees, teaching her how to drive, and all of the things a father endures meant more to him than biology.

Casey jumped at the loud tone her father used. "How did you hear me?" she whined. "Look, Councilman Grayson, I know these guys make your skin crawl. I feel like I need a bath just from being in the same room with them. But whatever you're planning, don't do it. Other people could be hurt by this." Casey tightened her grip on Ryan's waist.

"Okay, I get the gist of what's going on," Ryan suddenly blurted out, tired of the Councilman's games. She had met the man a few months ago when she solved an important case and apparently he'd figured out who she was. "First, I want you to know that no matter how discreet you are or how good your intentions are, what you're doing sucks. I moved up here to get away from all this."

"Detective Masters, I don't mean any harm, but both of these men preach their version of family values and both of them refuse to acknowledge their own children," the councilman tried to defend his actions.

"Yes, I agree that it's despicable," Ryan asserted. "But using it against them is just as bad."

"Sharla, care to fill the old man in?" the Commissioner requested.

Ryan could hear them whispering behind her as she continued talking with the councilman who finally agreed to back off.

"I meant no offense," the councilman confessed.

"I know. You just thought you could back them into a corner," Ryan conceded. "Trust me; I've seen this my entire life and no one wins. Now, if you'll excuse me, I want to enjoy the evening with my date." Having had her say, she took Casey by the hand and led the slender brunette away from the crowd. Ryan didn't stop until they were outside on one of the terraces safely away from prying eyes.

"I hate politics," Ryan grumbled.

"I can see that," Casey said with a smile as she wrapped her arms around the smaller woman's body.

Ryan nestled her head against Casey's body. They held one another tightly in an effort to ward off the cold winter air. "Why can't it just be us?" Ryan whispered against the bare skin of Casey's neck.

"I know, baby; reality truly sucks at times," Casey agreed as she ran her hands up and down Ryan's back in a reassuring motion.

Ryan raised her head slightly. Her breathing caught in her throat as she found herself captured in a fiery blue gaze. They moved in unison and soon became lost in a passionate embrace as their tongues wrapped around one another. Ryan moaned deeply as her lover's hands began to roam along her shivering body. The blonde's body swayed against her lover as Casey's moans filled her. Ryan's lips were still tingling long after the kiss had ended.

Casey drank in the scent of her lover's hair as she felt the blonde's hands gently exploring her body. "This isn't the best place for this," Casey reluctantly interrupted the fondling.

"I know," Ryan murmured against her chest. Casey felt her skin erupt in a rash of goose bumps; she was all too aware that the frigid night air had not caused them. "Let's go back inside before we freeze to death," Ryan said as her breath caressed Casey's skin. The brunette inhaled sharply as she felt her entire body tense. She was unable to form a verbal response as Ryan took her by the hand and led her back into the grand ballroom. "You know, just before I approached you I was thinking about spending the night in a broom closet," Ryan lightly offered.

"Now that sounds like fun," Casey scoffed. "We could just leave."

"I can't. I've been told to stick around just in case," Ryan griped.

"I'll talk to Jarrod," Casey volunteered.

"No." Ryan halted the brunette who was about to hunt her brother down.

"Why not?" Casey protested. Her amorous feelings were growing with each passing moment. "My family spent a lot of time hooking us up; we should be able to enjoy it."

"I think they want us to have fun but not too much fun, if you get my drift," Ryan informed her as she leaned her body closer to the leggy brunette.

Ryan spotted Uncle Buck out of the corner of her eye. "Come on. There's someone I'd like you to meet," she said as she guided her lover towards the security specialist who was sporting a very troubled expression.

"Uncle Buck?" Ryan interrupted the man's thoughts.

"Ryan," he greeted her with a smile.

"I want you to meet Sharla Stewart," she nervously introduced her lover. Introducing someone who was special to her was a rare event and she had never introduced a special someone to a person she considered family.

"A pleasure," Uncle Buck greeted Casey in such a warm tender tone that it instantly pushed aside Ryan's fears.

Ryan felt proud as Casey and Uncle Buck continued to exchange pleasantries. Then suddenly the man grimaced. Ryan followed his line of vision and understood what was troubling him. "Oh dear," she sighed.

"Not to worry, Ryan. I can handle it," Uncle Buck reassured her.

"What is it?" Casey asked fearfully.

The brunette had every reason to worry after everything else that had happened that evening. "Mrs. Masters is lingering at the bar," Ryan explained.

"Mrs. Masters?" Casey stammered as she processed the information. "You mean your mother?"

"Yes," Ryan confirmed as her jaw clenched. "It's never a good sign when Mother lingers at the bar. The Councilman just might get that embarrassing scene he was hoping for."

"This night just gets better and better." Casey smirked.

"Still want me to be your escort for the evening?" Ryan inquired seriously.

"Oh yeah," Casey reassured her as she gave the blonde's hand a gentle squeeze.

"Palmer!" a voice called out.

Casey felt her lover tense as someone pushed them aside. Ryan's father had stepped between them and Uncle Buck. "Deal with her," he instructed Uncle Buck coldly. Casey felt Ryan stiffen as the Senator cast a cold stare down at her while Buck rushed off towards the bar.

"Senator," Ryan greeted her father formally.

"Must you?" the man responded as he glared down at their joined hands.

"Sir, this time you're a guest in my hometown," Ryan politely explained. "I suggest you err on the side of caution."

"Are you threatening me, young lady?" the senator hissed as Casey's jaw dropped. If she hadn't known that these two were related, she would have sworn they were complete strangers. What was truly boggling her mind was that this man felt threatened when Ryan had been nothing but polite.

"I wouldn't dream of it, sir," Ryan continued in the same overly polite manner. "I just know how you hate a spectacle."

Casey had had enough when the Senator opened his mouth to respond. "Stop," she growled. "Let me put it to you this way, Sparky. Ryan is my date for the evening and you are the only person here that seems to have a problem with it. I would also like to point out that I own the only plowing and towing company in town. I could be shackled up with a kangaroo and folks round here wouldn't care so long as their driveways are clear. Now before you go off on some long-winded tirade about how we're going to hell, I might remind you that the Police Commissioner is my Daddy and he doesn't like you."

Ryan smiled up at her as the pompous Senator started to choke. "I do believe you've been outmaneuvered, Senator," Ryan proudly exclaimed.

"Well done," the senator conceded as he stepped away.

"No one has ever done that for me before," Ryan gushed as she wrapped her arms around Casey's waist.

"Done what?" Casey asked as she leaned into Ryan's touch.

"Stood up for me," Ryan exclaimed in wonderment.

"Never?" Casey responded in surprise.

"No," Ryan confirmed as her smile slipped away.

"Ryan, you do know that you're worth fighting for, don't you?" Casey asserted as she pulled the blonde closer to her. "You are," she stressed when the blonde failed to respond. Ryan's smile reemerged as she gently laced her fingers through Casey's long black tresses. Casey quickly claimed the blonde's lips in a promising kiss.

"So do you want to start a pool on how long it takes Mom to get loaded and start ranting about my Father's infidelities?" Ryan merrily quipped.

"How did you survive that?" Casey asked in astonishment.

"I left," Ryan answered bluntly. "The story that I'm traveling isn't that hard for my father's constituents to buy since I was never around. I didn't like the way my parents led their life or most of the people they chose to surround themselves with, so I was never around."

"You do realize that one of these days the press is going to figure out that you're not simply off on a very long cruise," Casey pointed out as she took Ryan by the hand and led her to the dance floor.

"I know," Ryan agreed as she stepped into Casey's embrace and allowed the taller woman to guide her around the dance floor. "I simply refuse to be the driving force behind my Father's fall from grace. I like the way you dance," Ryan added as she delighted in the feel of her lover's body moving against her own.

"Thank you," Casey responded with a shy smile; she also enjoyed the feel of Ryan's body swaying against her own.

"May I be so bold as to request that I be the one to kiss you at midnight?" Ryan requested huskily.

"Yes, you may," Casey eagerly accepted.

"And may I be permitted to escort you to your home this evening?" Ryan further pressed as her hands drifted to Casey waist. Ryan smiled as she realized how good it felt to hold the brunette in her arms.

"Tell me, did you buy a new car?" Casey teased as she placed one hand on the back of Ryan's head.

"Rental," Ryan informed her as she leaned in and stole a kiss.

"In that case, yes, you can drive me home. And if you're really good, you can sleep over," Casey informed her in a husky tone that left no room to misinterpret her intentions.

Neither of them had noticed that the music had stopped; they were far too busy staring into one another's eyes to notice anything. It wasn't until the bandleader began the countdown that they realized what was happening. They drew closer and closer to each other, and before the crowd erupted into cheers as the clock struck midnight, they were wrapped around one another, lost in a fiery kiss.

Each of them seemed to be dazed as the kiss ended and the band played another slow waltz. "How long have we been dancing?" Ryan asked as she tried to figure out where the time had gone.

"I have no idea," Casey answered. "I was just thinking."

"About?" Ryan encouraged her.

"What time are you free to leave?" Casey asked as her hands glided down Ryan's body and brushed against her firm backside.

"One," Ryan informed her as the blonde's eyes darkened with desire.

"Well, if we start our goodbyes now, we could be out the door before anyone notices that you're cutting out a little early," Casey suggested.

"You start at one end of the room and I'll hit the other," Ryan readily agreed. "Meet you at the front door."

The couple shared a quick kiss before separating. Ryan started with Jarrod. "Boss, I'm leaving," she told him.

"Okay." He shrugged. "Just behave yourself."

While Ryan was shivering from her boss' overprotective tone, Casey was saying goodnight to her parents. Both women continued to work their way around the ballroom until they met up again at the entrance. Ryan took the brunette's coat check ticket and scurried off to claim their coats before anyone could stop them from making a quick exit.

"Masters," a voice barked in the empty hallway just as the blonde had retrieved their coats.

"Deshawna," she greeted her co-worker with a smile. The smile quickly slipped from the blonde's face as she noticed the intense look on the taller woman's face. "Oh crap," she muttered.

"A word," the tall woman commanded.

"I thought it would be your brothers," Ryan muttered as she sheepishly stepped closer to the angry-looking woman.

"You thought what would be my brothers?" Deshawna demanded.

"To threaten me," Ryan admitted. "That is what you're planning to do, isn't it?" Deshawna folded her arms across her chest and nodded in agreement. "Okay, but before you do, I think you should know that I have feelings for Casey - feelings that frankly scare the life out of me since I've never felt this way about anyone before. I plan on treating your sister like the lady she is and I would never disrespect or hurt her. I'm well aware that if I do, you'll beat the living shit out of me."

"You do know that you just sucked all the fun out of threatening you, don't you?" Deshawna grumbled.

"Yes, I do," Ryan beamed triumphantly. "Happy New Year. Oh, and if it makes you feel better, I'm pretty sure Mrs. Masters is probably about to make a drunken scene. You could arrest her."

"Cool," Deshawna said with a bright smile. "Happy New Year. I'll see you at dinner tomorrow night."

"Dinner?" Ryan muttered as she wondered what she had just gotten herself into.

"What about dinner?" Casey whispered in her ear.

"Deshawna just mentioned having dinner tomorrow," Ryan explained as she helped Casey on with her long wool coat.

"Did she threaten you?" Casey inquired in exasperation.

"I didn't give her the chance," Ryan boasted.

"Good for you," Casey congratulated her. "As for dinner, it's a family thing we do every New Year's Day. You don't have to go if you don't want to."

"I'd like to," Ryan nervously accepted. "I'm not making promises," she quickly explained. "I've never been good at dating or relationships, but I'm trainable."

"Trainable huh?" Casey said with a wicked grin. "I like the sound of that."

"Well, in that case let me get you home so you can begin *training* me," Ryan retorted in a husky tone that sent a shiver down Casey's spine.

They drove to Casey's modest home in silence as the intensity of their desire crackled in the air. The need to touch one another overwhelmed them as they stumbled inside. The brunette kicked the door shut as she pinned Ryan against the wall and began an assault on the blonde's neck. Ryan moaned as she squirmed against Casey's warm inviting body.

"Geez! Get a room," a voice groused.

"I can kick you out into the snow," Casey growled as she spun around and glared at her sister. Her eyes widened in horror when she spotted the mess of pistachio shells littering her coffee table. "Did you eat all of them?"

"Yes," Taylor chuckled as she held up her hands, showing her sister her now pink fingers. "Hey Detective," Taylor shouted out to the small blonde hiding behind Casey.

"Agent Leigh, always a pleasure," Ryan greeted the brunette whom she had never seen behave in such juvenile manner before.

"Good night, Taylor. Clean up your mess before I get up in the morning," Casey addressed her smirking sister.

"What? Aren't you going to tell me about the party?" Taylor teased.

"No, I'm taking Ryan upstairs, tying her to the bed, and having my way with her," Casey offered in a deadpan tone.

"Casey?" Ryan choked.

"Eww! Thanks for the visual, Sharla," Taylor blanched.

Ryan was blushing as Casey took her by the hand, led her up the staircase, and into her bedroom. "So you're going to have your way with me, are you?" Ryan challenged the brunette as she removed the taller woman's coat.

"That was my plan," Casey responded as she assisted Ryan with her coat. "Why?" she inquired as she tossed both of their coats onto a chair. Casey released a squeal as Ryan tossed her down onto the bed.

"Change of plans," Ryan asserted as she kicked off her shoes and climbed up onto the bed.

"Really?" Casey panted anxiously as Ryan began to kiss her way down her neck.

Casey's heart skipped a beat when her lover ceased her movements and looked up at her. Ryan had always been able to melt her into a willing puddle of desire with just one look. The level of intensity in the look she was now receiving made all the others dim in comparison. "Ryan." Her voice trembled as she spoke.

"I love the way you say my name," the blonde confessed as she cupped Casey face in her hand.

Casey was a quivering mass of desire as she leaned into Ryan's touch. As Ryan returned her attention to Casey's neck and earlobes, they no longer had a need to speak. Casey was panting heavily as she felt her lover's mouth on her skin. She reached behind the blonde who was hovering above her and slowly began to lower the zipper on Ryan's black evening gown. Ryan's breath tickled her ear as the blonde's hands cupped her breasts.

Casey kicked her shoes off as she lowered the thin straps of Ryan's gown down her shoulders while the blonde's hands continued fondling her breasts. Her body arched in response to her lover's touch as the blonde's touches grew bolder. Casey shuddered as she realized it was like the first time they'd made love; she knew that she would willingly give the blonde anything she requested.

Ryan captured Casey's mouth with her own as she melted into her lover's body and they began to roll across the large bed. She lowered the zipper on Casey's gown, as the kiss grew even deeper. She lowered the straps of the red gown as she felt her lover removing her bra and casting it off into the darkness. Ryan mirrored her lover's movements. Both of them shivered as their nipples brushed against one another. Each of them reached out and began caressing the other's breasts while they exchanged promising kisses.

Casey could feel her body burning from Ryan's touch and they grew bolder with each caress. Ryan lowered Casey's dress further down her body. The brunette rolled onto her back as her lover began to kiss her way across Casey's broad shoulders. Casey gasped as Ryan captured her nipple in her mouth. Casey held her lover tightly against her body as Ryan suckled her eagerly.

After the blonde lavished her full attention on each of Casey's nipples until the brunette pleaded with her to take her, Ryan began to kiss and taste her way down Casey's body. Casey was lost in a haze of ecstasy as Ryan feasted upon her while she all too slowly removed her clothing. Casey shivered as she lay before her lover completely naked. Ryan guided her up to the pillows and gently placed them behind Casey so that the naked woman was sitting slightly upright.

Casey bit down on her bottom lip as her lover reached between her own legs and removed her pistol along with its holster. The blonde placed the gun on the nightstand. Casey gripped the comforter as her lover lifted her half-naked body up off the bed and began to undress herself. Casey was transfixed at the sight of Ryan caressing herself as she removed each article of clothing.

Casey was wriggling against the bedding as her lover climbed up and straddled her hips. She reached out to touch the blonde whose body was still not touching hers. Ryan playfully swatted the brunette's hands away. Casey was trembling as Ryan continued to caress her own body. "Yes," she whispered as Ryan parted herself and dipped her fingers into her wetness. She watched as her lover's nimble fingers glided across her swollen clit.

Casey was ready to beg as Ryan raised her glistening fingers to the brunette's quivering lips. Her tongue snaked out in an effort to capture the sweet nectar. She groaned when Ryan snatched her fingers away and began to paint her own nipple. Casey could barely breathe when Ryan returned to stroking her clit and then painted her other nipple.

Ryan leaned forward and braced her hands on the wall above Casey's head. The brunette could smell her lover's desire on her breasts. She flicked her tongue across one nipple, savoring each drop of Ryan's wetness. Soon she cupped the blonde's breast and brought both of them to her mouth. She licked and suckled every drop of Ryan's passion from her breasts as she felt her lover's clit pressing against her body.

Casey finally released her lover's breasts as Ryan rocked urgently against her. She cupped the blonde's firm backside and guided her to thrust harder against her. Soon feeling Ryan's desire wasn't enough. Casey reached between their bodies and dipped her long fingers into Ryan's warm wet center. Ryan lowered her head and began to tease Casey's nipples with her mouth while her body rode the brunette's touch.

Casey pressed Ryan closer with one hand while the other plunged in and out of her wetness. She could feel her lover's body pulsating against her own as she teased the blonde's clit with her thumb. Ryan was gasping heavily as she released Casey's breast from the warmth of her mouth. "I need to feel you too," she panted in her lover's ear.

Casey wrapped her long legs around Ryan's body as the blonde reached between them and ran her fingers through the brunette's wetness. They were both fighting to control their breathing as they began to move frantically against the other's touch. They clung to one another, their bodies riding against each other until they both cried out in pleasure.

Ryan didn't give her lover a chance to catch her breath as she slipped down the brunette's body and nestled herself between still quivering thighs. She parted her lover and began to feast upon her wildly until Casey was screaming her name. Ryan climbed back up her lover's body and kissed her deeply. Casey's fire was burning brightly as once again they rolled across the bed.

Ryan found her body pressed against the pillows as Casey straddled her from behind. Shamelessly the blonde thrust her backside against her lover's body. Casey eagerly accepted the

invitation; she pressed her wetness into Ryan while she entered her center with several fingers. "Yes," Ryan cried out. She clutched the pillows while Casey ground against her. Ryan continued her cries of pleasure as Casey felt her own body nearing the edge. Casey melted into her lover as they swayed in a sensual rhythm. Ryan shuddered as her body exploded. She collapsed on the bed and Casey continued to thrust against her until she followed the blonde into blissful oblivion.

They curled up together under the blankets and held one another. "Happy New Year, Casey," Ryan whispered as she listened to the steady beat of her lover's heart.

"Happy New Year, Ryan," Casey murmured in response as she kissed the top of Ryan's head.

The End

Send comments to findingmavis@comcast.net

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