

~ Rain's Journey ~

by Mavis Applewater

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

As always this is for Heather.

The Western Territories 1849

Rain looked across the trail as the sun burned down, baking her skin. It was one of those hot sticky days when even the twilight wouldn't bring relief to the sweat-soaked woman or her trusty horse. She removed her hat and wiped her sweaty brow with the worn sleeve of her shirt. The scratchy material of the ragged shirt grated against her fair skin. She adjusted the long blonde braid that was hanging down her back, lifting it in an effort to cool the back of her neck. She had contemplated cutting her long locks on several occasions since she already endured odd looks and sneers from the folks she encountered on her travels. A woman dressed in masculine attire and traveling alone led to all sorts of unpleasant assumptions. Having no desire to add more grist to the mill, Rain left her long unruly hair in place.

She looked back up at the blazing sun and hoped that the night would bring some relief. "Not much longer," she commented aloud, noting how low the fiery orb stood in the late afternoon sky. No one but her horse was around to hear her words. Together they had survived another day in her dismal existence. "What do you say, boy? Another night camping out at the Widow Jenkins place?"

Her horse snorted in response and she patted the tired animal softly. The appaloosa had been her sole companion for almost two summers now. She had saved him from being destroyed by an uncaring owner who couldn't see the horse's worth until she offered to take him off of the man's hands for him. Of course she hadn't had the means to buy the animal, so under the cover of darkness, she liberated the beast.

"Maybe it's about time I named you," she pondered as she continued along her path. But if she named him then it would be as if he belonged to her. She didn't want to own anything or to have anything owning her. She couldn't do that. They were both free. He was simply horse or boy and she was Rain; Rain because of the fierce rainstorm she'd survived the night she was cast out of

her parents' home. She was no longer Abigail Smoothers. Abigail died that night and had been reborn as Rain.

The unnamed horse seemed to know his way to the Jenkins farm. "Ah, the Widow Jenkins," she said with a pleasant smile. "Now that is a tall drink of water." Her smile grew brighter as the image of the dark-haired beauty filled her senses. The familiar warm sensation that filled her was the reason the young blonde found herself drifting from one dusty township to the next.

She tried to convince herself that she was returning to Mrs. Jenkins' small farm night after night simply because the woman had made it clear that she was welcome to camp there. Rain was quite accustomed to being driven off from most folk's homesteads.

For over three years, she'd been drifting the countryside clad in men's clothing. It was what she could steal and they were more suited for her travels. She was constantly forced to leave places because the *decent* folk she encountered didn't want someone of her kind lingering around.

Stafford had been no different. That is until the night she set up her camp just outside of the widow's fence line. She could see the small house from where she'd set up for the night and became fearful that she wouldn't get to sleep when she spotted the tall dark-haired beauty standing out on her front porch. She was a vision of beauty bathed in the light of the summer moon. Rain's stomach clenched with desire and she found herself watching the woman until she retreated into her home.

Rain had kept her meager belongings close at hand, fully expecting Henry, the woman's hired hand, to appear at any moment to send her on her way. The request for her to vacate the premises never came. Instead, when the morning sun and the sounds of birds chirping woke her, she noticed that the fence gate was slightly open. Just beyond the gate lay a pot of coffee, a basket of freshly baked biscuits, and a clean blanket.

Rain looked around to see whom the items belonged to. Finding no one else she realized that they'd been left for her. The friendly gesture touched Rain's heart and melted a thin layer of ice from it. After she had eaten, she silently replaced the items on the front porch when she was certain that no one could observe her actions. On top of the neatly folded blanket, she placed a bunch of wildflowers that she'd picked in the field just outside of Mrs. Jenkins property.

The normally hardhearted blonde felt silly leaving flowers for her hostess; sillier yet that she'd taken the time to pick flowers that matched the tall woman's amazingly blue eyes. She had seen the Widow Jenkins up close earlier that day when she was riding through town and couldn't help becoming mesmerized by the woman's eyes. Perhaps that's why she had chosen her small ranch to camp outside of? She shrugged off the silly romantic notions as she climbed up on her horse and made her departure.

The following evening Rain had returned to Mrs. Jenkins farm. She'd convinced herself that she was simply returning since it was a safe place to set up camp for the night. It wasn't at all possible that she fancied the tall attractive woman who'd shown her the only act of kindness she'd received in far too many years.

She couldn't have stopped the smile that emerged on her face when she returned to the same spot to discover the gate open and a basket of food and a fresh blanket waiting for her. That night she feasted upon the Widow Jenkins' fine cooking and then wrapped up in a clean blanket. As she snuggled into the warmth of the blanket, she inhaled the scent of jasmine and vanilla and wondered if the Widow Jenkins smelled that way as well.

Now it had been over a fortnight and Rain found that she was once again returning to the same place she camped every evening, silently accepting the meals, fresh blanket, and the invitation to camp within the confines of Mrs. Jenkins' fence. From her camp she could see the light coming from the house; on occasion Henry or his employer would be outside but no one disturbed her solitude.

Rain found it odd when she kept hoping that the Widow Jenkins would approach her. Of course she understood that her desire to spend time with the attractive woman was based solely on her baser desires. They were the same feelings that had started her on her desolate journey.

Still it didn't prevent her mind from picturing the young widow in the throes of passion while she pleased herself. "When was the last time I had a little fun?" she asked her nameless steed. "Flagstaff, wasn't it?" The horse merely snickered in response. "I think it was that redheaded dancer, or at least she said she was a dancer. She sure was pretty." She smirked as the memory of her last experience of true passion replayed in her mind.

A frightened scream broke her from her thoughts. She halted her steed's steady gait and searched the empty field. Another scream pierced the silence. Rain's heart raced, knowing it was the sound of a woman and it was coming from Mrs. Jenkins' farm.

Rain spurred her horse into a full gallop, exhausting the poor tired animal that was only slightly bettered cared for than herself. Rain's heart was pounding when she came upon the now familiar fence line. The Widow Jenkins was wrapped up in a fierce struggle with a scruffy man. Rain recognized the rogue instantly as Brett Thornsby. Brett was the local bully who fancied himself as something of a ladies' man. Rain had correctly deduced that the only time he spent with a lady was paid for.

As he attempted to maul the struggling woman, Rain realized that Brett had another tactic with the ladies. A man like him made the young blonde sick to her stomach. Her horse neatly jumped the fence, and as his hooves touched the ground, Rain jumped off. The grace of their motion surprised both the woman and her steed.

As she struggled with Brett, Mrs. Jenkins was proving that she was not the shrinking violet that most women Rain encountered pretended to be. The raven-haired beauty was pummeling the unruly cad senseless as Rain made her descent. As Rain neared the battling duo, the blonde harbored sincere doubts that Mrs. Jenkins required her assistance.

Still the petite blonde possessed an urgent desire to beat the bully senseless as well. She hated bullies and everything the callous cowards stood for. Her father had been a bully. He and all the

pious folks back in Twin Corners were nothing but a group of ignorant bullies that had made her who she was today.

Just as Mrs. Jenkins landed a powerful blow directly into Brett's midsection, Rain spun the despicable creature around and delivered a powerful blow of her own. She hit him squarely in his ugly face.

"Nice shot," Mrs. Jenkins complimented her.

"Bitches," the stunned man spat out as he lunged for the both of them.

"Oh no," Rain grumbled as she ducked away from the large man.

"I'm going to kick your sorry ass," Mrs. Jenkins screamed as she yanked him away from Rain. The blonde smiled at her bravado.

Soon she was jumping in to rescue the brunette. Together they unleashed a melee of punches and kicks against their larger opponent. Finally Rain landed a powerful blow in the man's face; the sickening sound of bones crunching as blood oozed from his nose confirmed that she had hit what she'd aimed for. Thankfully Brett finally collapsed onto the ground in a heap.

Henry had just returned in a cart and was rushing towards them as Mrs. Jenkins smoothed out her dress. "Well, your dinner is ruined," Mrs. Jenkins commented dryly. Rain just stared back in surprise after noticing the ruined basket lying on the ground.

Rain was still staring as Henry's large form reached them. The widow was a tall woman, close to six feet, and Henry stood a good shoulder above her and had a chest the size of a small wagon. "Henry, you missed all the fun," Mrs. Jenkins merrily quipped. "Would you mind hogtying this pig and hauling his sorry ass down to the jail?" "Well, it is my job to dispose of the garbage," Henry drew out slowly.

Rain's emerald eyes widened even further at Mrs. Jenkins' colorful language. During the fight itself the respectable widow had strung together some words that would have made a hardened foot soldier blush. At the time Rain had been too involved with the heated battle to notice. Now she was shocked right down to her blonde roots.

Henry snatched Brett's limp body up by the back of his shirt collar and began to drag him towards the house. Mrs. Jenkins wrapped her arm in Rain's and urged her to follow him. "Do I want to know what happened?" Henry inquired.

"I'll tell you in the morning," Mrs. Jenkins sighed. "Just tell the sheriff that he tried to take advantage of me. It's late so why don't you stay in town for the night? Take some money from the jar and have yourself a good time."

Henry simply nodded in response as Rain allowed the brunette to lead her towards the small well kept home. The blonde looked over her shoulder to find the horse following close behind. "Now

I need to fix you some dinner," Mrs. Jenkins offered thoughtfully to Rain.

The blonde turned to the woman in surprise, her arm tingling from the intimate contact. "I couldn't . . .," she began to protest.

"I insist," Mrs. Jenkins asserted firmly. "I need to thank you for your extreme heroism."

"Excuse me?" Rain said in confusion. She looked over at Henry who was still dragging Brett across the ground. She was quite certain that Henry could have easily carried the man, yet he seemed happier to be dragging him. Rain was pleased with the idea as well.

"Are you doubting your bravery?" Mrs. Jenkins inquired as she began to gently caress Rain's arm. The blonde wanted to sink into the sensations Mrs. Jenkins' touch was sending through her body.

"I am," Rain finally managed to choke out. "I think you had the situation quite well in hand." Henry snorted in agreement.

"Ssh, Henry," Mrs. Jenkins scolded him. "No, you're my heroine and I must properly thank you."

A rash of goose bumps erupted on Rain's skin as the timber of Mrs. Jenkins tone dropped to sensual level. If Henry noticed he didn't show it. "No disrespect, Mrs. Jenkins, but I was about ready to sell tickets and place a wager on your impending victory." Mrs. Jenkins released a hearty laugh.

"Since you know my name perhaps you will share yours, my beautiful savior?" Mrs. Jenkins implored her as she released her arm to step up onto the porch.

"Rain," the blonde replied as she blushed from the compliment.

"Rain?" Mrs. Jenkins responded with a doubtful look.

"It's what I call myself," Rain boldly responded as her body craved to feel the woman's touch once again.

"Rain it is then," Mrs. Jenkins concluded with a flourish. "And what is his name?" She pointed towards her horse.

"Doesn't have one," Rain responded with a shrug.

"Shame on you," Mrs. Jenkins scolded her. "Well, put your fine stallion in the barn. Henry will show you the stall that would be appropriate and then please join me inside the house. I don't pay attention to such matters."

"Mrs. Jenkins . . .," Rain began to protest once again, wishing only to escape back to the safety of the open road. There she could indulge her body in what she was certain Mrs. Jenkins would never offer her.

"Shirley," the attractive woman cut her off.

"Shirley?" Rain uttered in surprise.

"Problem?" Mrs. Jenkins shot back.

"No, it's lovely," Rain lied, thinking that the name did not suit the vision of beauty standing before her.

"My very dear friends call me Sher, and since you and I are destined to become the very best of friends, that is what you shall call me," Sher firmly instructed her. "Now go stable Horace."

"Horace?" Rain blurted out in bewilderment.

"A fine and noble name for a fine and noble animal," Sher reasoned. "Now off with you; Henry really should tie up Mr. Thornsby before he wakes up. I don't have time to engage in another altercation; I have a dinner to prepare." Having had her say, Sher spun on her heel and entered the house.

Rain stood there in astonishment before she collected what was left of her thoughts. "Is she always like that?" the blonde asked the chuckling handyman.

"Oh yeah," he responded with a toothy grin. "Come on, Rain. You too, Horace."

"His name isn't Horace," Rain vehemently protested as the horse simply followed Henry into the barn. "Traitor," she grumbled as she threw her hands up in defeat. She followed the pair into the barn and settled Horace into a stall while Henry tied Brett up.

"Have a good night, Horace," she offered once she finished brushing the animal down. Surprisingly the horse seemed to respond to the name. "Great. She's named my horse," she muttered bitterly.

"Need a hand?" she offered as Henry lifted a moaning Brett into the cart.

"No thanks," Henry said with a shrug as he tossed Brett into the cart bed. Brett's head slammed into the back wall as he landed. "I'll see you in the morning, Rain."

"I don't think so," Rain shyly protested; she planned to be long gone by the time the rooster crowed. She had already stayed longer in Stafford than she was accustomed to. Her reaction to Mrs. Jenkins' touch convinced her that it was time to be moving on.

"I'll pick up some extra feed for Horace," Henry added as he climbed up into the cart, ignoring her comment.

"I won't be staying," she argued. Henry simply laughed lightly before flicking the reins and

driving off. "I'm not staying," she repeated to herself as she climbed up onto the porch. She wiped her dusty boots off before stepping into the simple yet well decorated home.

"You need a bath," came the sultry purr from behind her. Rain's heart and stomach clenched as she turned around to find Mrs. Jenkins leaning in the doorway to the kitchen, casting a smoky gaze over Rain's body.

"Mrs. Jenkins, I really do appreciate the kindness that you have shown me over the past few weeks . . . ," Rain began, firm in her convictions to leave this woman's company as soon as possible.

"Sher," the brunette corrected her. "Now I think a bath before dinner would be the wisest course of action."

"Mrs. Jenkins . . . ," Rain began to whine as the taller woman slowly approached her.

"Sher," the woman corrected her once again.

"Fine. Sher." Rain agreed in an exasperated tone. "I haven't set foot in another person's home in more years than I care to think about. I'm not fit company for a lady such as yourself."

Sher studied the agitated blonde for a brief moment before raising her brow in defiance. "Rain, I decide who is or is not welcome in my home," she offered in a calm tone as she placed a comforting hand on the smaller woman's shoulder. Rain couldn't stop the shudder her eager body released. Sher's fingers drifted up the blonde's neck and her fingers began to caress her cheek. "Rain, my late husband was a fine man," Sher explained in a soft voice as her fingertips continued to caress Rain's delicate features. "He was much older than myself and cared for me deeply despite how we met."

"Hmm," Rain sighed as she leaned into Sher's gentle caresses. "Wait," Rain said as she snapped out of her trance. "Mrs. Jenkins, I'll bed down in the barn with Horace and then be on my way. You've already shown me far more kindness than I've seen in a very long time," Rain reasoned as her body screamed at her stupidity.

"And just where is it that you're heading?" Sher asked as her hands came to rest on the small blonde's shoulders.

"Nowhere," Rain confessed as Sher's body brushed against her own.

"Then one more night won't delay your arrival," Sher reasoned as she leaned even closer to the trembling blonde. "I promised to properly thank you and I mean to do just that."

Rain moaned as she felt Sher's breasts brush against her body. Sher leaned in even closer, her breath caressing the blonde's face. Rain felt flush as her body heat began to rise. "Thank you," Sher whispered, her lips almost grazing Rain's as she spoke. Rain's body melted as Sher's full lips brushed against her own.

Rain's eyes drifted shut as she leaned into the kiss and Sher's tongue tickled her bottom lip. She parted her lips and greeted Sher's tongue with her own. They engaged in a sensual duel as they explored the warmth of one another's mouth. Rain's small hands followed the curves of Sher's body as the brunette's hands drifted down her back.

The kiss deepened as Sher's hands cupped her firm backside and Rain's hands felt their way up the taller woman's back. As Sher caressed her bottom, Rain could feel her desire dampening her trousers. Her hips swayed against the brunette's body as their tongues continued to wrestle for control. Rain's nipples tightened as Sher's hand grew more insistent, pressing the smaller woman more tightly against her body.

Rain cursed the need to breathe as the fiery kiss came to an end. "You're welcome," Rain panted as she licked her lips, savoring the remnants of Sher's kiss.

"I'm not through thanking you yet," Sher insisted as she continued to knead Rain's cheeks. "My sweet beautiful savior, I've only just begun to show you my gratitude," Sher whispered hotly in Rain's ear.

Rain moaned as Sher nibbled on her sensitive earlobe. Sher's talented mouth began to feast on her neck as her hands drifted up along the blonde's body. Rain could only whimper as Sher continued to express her gratitude. Rain's head fell back, her hat falling to the floor as Sher cupped her breasts and began to suckle her neck.

Rain's body arched as Sher caressed her aching breasts. Her fingers fumbled to undo the buttons on the back of the taller woman's fine dress. She fought to keep her hands steady as she felt her own shirt buttons being released; Sher's tongue and mouth tasted her newly exposed flesh.

Having freed the buttons down to Sher's slim waist, Rain reached up and untied the ribbon that held her hair up. The silky mass welcomed her fingers as she wrapped them in the raven locks. The soft scent of vanilla mixed with jasmine greeted her. *'Oh God, it was her blanket I was sleeping under. It was as if she was wrapped around me while I touched myself.'* Her mind raced as the erotic image filled her senses.

Rain reluctantly released the silky tresses so Sher could remove her shirt. Sher kissed her shoulders as Rain clasped the taller woman's hips. Sher ran her hands down the frayed chemise that covered the blonde's breasts before slowly untying it. Rain whimpered as Sher's hands began to caress her stomach.

Sher's hands brushed her breasts as she lowered the undergarment from Rain's body. The blonde's body was quivering with desire as Sher began to massage her breasts. Rain held Sher's hips tighter as the brunette began to roll and pinch her aching nipples.

Rain gasped in pleasure as Sher captured one of her nipples in her mouth. The brunette's other hand drifted between their bodies and began to undo Rain's belt as she eagerly suckled Rain's nipple. Rain wrapped one arm around Sher's waist as she once again ran her fingers through the

brunette's hair. She arched her body as she pressed the woman's head against her breast, offering more of herself up to the woman's touch.

As Sher's teeth grazed Rain's hardened nipple, the brunette was undoing the buttons on the blonde's trousers. Sher's mouth licked and tasted her way across Rain's chest until she captured her other nipple in her mouth and began to lavish it with the same sweet attention its twin had received. Rain's hips thrust against Sher as her body hummed with a needy desire.

Rain was certain that she was going to explode as Sher began to kiss her way down her body. As Sher made her descent, she tugged Rain's clothing down. Sher's hands clasped her naked backside as she playfully dipped her tongue into Rain's navel.

The blonde's chest was heaving as the scent of her own arousal filled her senses. She steadied herself by clutching Sher's broad shoulders as she urged the brunette to continue her journey. Sher pushed Rain's clothing further down her body; her long dark hair caressed Rain's trembling thighs, further fanning the flames of her passion.

She was covered in a sheen of sweat when she heard Sher growling; Rain's boots were preventing her from completely removing the blonde wanderer's clothes. Sher abandoned her quest and Rain felt her thighs being gently nudged apart as the brunette's tongue ran slowly up one of her legs.

Rain opened herself up further as she felt Sher licking away the passion that had painted the inside of her thighs. Rain's breathing grew ragged as she gazed down upon the raven-haired beauty nestled between her thighs. She released a strangled cry as she felt Sher's tongue dip into her wetness.

The blonde clung to Sher's shoulders as the brunette's tongue glided along her swollen nether lips, drinking in Rain's overflowing passion. Sher massaged the blonde's firm round backside as she continued to drink in her passion. Rain's hips thrust forward, silently begging her lover to take all of her.

Sher responded by plunging her tongue deep inside the blonde's center. Rain was panting as she felt Sher's talented tongue curl and plunge deeper inside of her. Sher continued to caress her backside while plunging in and out of her wetness. Rain's hips thrust urgently, matching her lover's sensual rhythm. "Sweet Jesus," Rain cried out as she cupped the back of her lover's head, guiding her to take her deeper and harder. "That's it," Rain groaned as Sher's tongue slipped from the warmth of her center and began to flicker across her throbbing clit.

She felt the hood being teased before Sher suckled her clit in the warmth of her mouth. Rain was losing control as Sher teased her clit with her teeth and her tongue and pressed two fingers against the opening of her center. Rain's hips thrust against Sher's hand as she begged her to be inside of her.

Rain's thrusts grew frantic as the long fingers entered the warm wetness, filling her as Sher suckled her harder. Sher began to move her fingers and tongue in a passionate rhythm that Rain's

body moved to match.

Rain lost herself in the sensation of Sher loving her as her knees buckled slightly. Rain fought against the explosion building inside of her, never wanting to feel her lover stop pleasuring her. Sher took her deeper and harder as Rain's body arched and the waves of passion captured her body. The climax ripped through her as she screamed out in ecstasy.

Rain fought to remain standing as Sher kissed her quivering stomach while her fingers remained in her warm wet center. Brilliant blue eyes gazed up at her as she tried to control her breathing. Rain moaned as she felt her lover's touch slip from its cocoon. She watched as Sher licked her fingers clean. As her lover's tongue glided across her fingers, slowly suckling the wetness, Rain cupped one of her breasts and slowly began to roll one of her nipples between her fingers.

Sher released a soft purr as she watched Rain touching herself. "Thank me again," Rain requested in a shaky tone as she guided her lover's head back to her passion. Rain continued to tease her nipple as Sher's tongue once again flickered across her throbbing nub. The sound of Sher's enjoyment was music to the blonde drifter's ears as she watched her lover's tongue darting in and out of her wetness.

Rain's hips swayed as Sher eagerly drank in her nectar. Rain pinched her nipple harder as she felt Sher suckling her clit. The sounds of her climax were already filling the room as Sher's mouth drove her once again over the edge. Rain's body began to collapse. Sher gathered her up in her arms and held her tightly as the aftershocks rippled through the smaller woman's body.

Rain clung to her lover and began to suckle the brunette's nipple through the soft material of her dress. She felt Sher's body arch against her own as she sucked harder on the nipple. Soon the need to feel more of her lover's body had the drifter slipping the woman's dress from her shoulders.

Rain struggled with the buttons and other restrictions the fashionable garment provided. Finally she had managed to slip the dress and Sher's undergarments down to the brunette's waist. They were still kneeling on the floor as Rain raised her lover up to the sofa. Rain ran her fingers down Sher's back as the brunette moaned in pleasure.

With one hand Rain continued to caress the soft skin of her lover's back while she slowly lifted the hem of her dress up to her waist. "Do you want this?" the blonde inquired in a soft sensual tone as both her hands drifted to Sher's slender waist.

"Oh yes," Sher moaned in desire. She gathered her dress up even further while Rain began to lower her bloomers down to her knees.

Rain nestled herself behind her lover, pressing her nipples into the brunette's naked back while her wetness brushed her backside. Sher's hips thrust backward demanding more as Rain brushed her raven hair away from her neck. Rain slowly kissed the nape of her lover's neck as her damp golden curls swayed against her naked cheeks.

"Yes," Sher encouraged her as their hips moved wildly in unison. Rain loved the feel of her lover's skin dancing against her aching clit. "Yes," Sher repeated with an urgent scream as Rain reached around her and began to stroke her clit. Sher's desire coated her fingers as she continued to rock her body wildly.

Rain could feel Sher's thighs trembling as they opened, inviting the blonde further inside of her aching need. Rain lifted her body slightly so she could tease Sher's clit with the pad of her thumb while she entered her with her fingers. Rain's fingers plunged in and out of her lover as her thrusting hips followed the same frantic pace.

"Yes, Rain!" Sher cried out as she exploded under the blonde's body. Sher clung to the plush cushions of the sofa as Rain continued pleasuring her. Soon her lover could only call out her name over and over again until she collapsed. Rain stilled her movements as Sher panted. "Keep going," the woman managed to choke out. "Want to feel you again." Rain held her lover for a moment before slipping her fingers slowly out of her warmth.

The blonde clasped her lover's hips and began to rock against the brunette. Sher moaned deeply as she allowed Rain to ride against her body. Rain was straddling her lover, their bodies gyrating, until their screams rang out as they crossed over the edge.

They held one another in a tender embrace until the beating of their hearts had slowed to a normal level. "Now about that bath," Sher teased her as she kissed her nose. Rain sighed contentedly as her lover kissed her lips. "I'll need to heat some water," Sher continued thoughtfully.

"You're like a force of nature," Rain noted.

"Oh pshaw," Sher chastised her as she stood and removed the rest of her clothes before tossing them on the floor. "Now get those boots and the rest of your things off so we can take our bath."

"I can't stay," Rain reminded her as Sher strutted towards the kitchen in all her naked glory.

Sher paused along her route to light a couple of oil lamps. "I know. You're in a hurry to go nowhere," Sher responded in disbelief as she struck another match. "Ouch." She flinched as an errant spark touched her skin.

"Are you all right?" Rain quickly inquired in concern.

"Yes." Sher shrugged. "Lesson learned. There are some things that one shouldn't do naked. Do you still have those boots on? I'm going to have to break you of that habit."

"Sher, I can't stay," Rain protested with uncertainty.

"Right - in a hurry to get to nowhere," Sher conceded with a shrug as she disappeared into the kitchen. "But I haven't finished thanking you yet," the brunette called out.

Rain was struggling to remove her boots as the impact of Sher's statement struck her. "She's going to kill me," the blonde uttered with a hard swallow as her body clenched with renewed desire.

"No, I'm trying to love you," came the sincere response.

Rain looked up to find her hostess once again leaning in the doorway. "You don't even know me," Rain choked out, trying to sound defiant as her sorrow and pain slipped through with her words.

"I understand you better than you think," Sher answered her in a soft honest voice, maintaining her perch in the doorway. "Rain, I'm offering you a bath, a hot meal, a bed to sleep in tonight, and a body to share it with. When you're ready to move on, you're free to go."

Rain just stared at her as she fought against the tears that were threatening to escape. "Now hurry up and get those damn boots off. The water is almost ready," Sher chastised her.

"Already?" Rain responded in amazement. "You certainly do move fast."

"You're just figuring that out?" Sher chuckled. "Now get a move on and while we take our bath I'll tell you all about Horace."

"My horse?" Rain said in confusion as she renewed her battle with her boots.

"No, silly, my husband." Sher sighed as she knelt down and began to assist Rain with her footwear.

"You named my horse after your late husband?" Rain gasped in surprise.

"A noble name for a noble animal," Sher explained. "When I saw him clearing that fence to save me, I knew then that he should be named Horace." Sher continued assisting Rain in removing her clothing. "You see, Rain, I do know you; in fact at one time in my life I was you. But Horace saved me."

"And now you're trying to save me?" Rain grumbled.

"No," Sher corrected her as she assisted the naked blonde to her feet. "I'm trying to love you. Not out of pity, but because I want to love *you*. The water should be ready. I should warn you about something," Sher continued as she led the blonde towards the kitchen.

"You're insane?" Rain commented wryly as they entered the kitchen.

"Tsk," Sher scolded her as she began to pour the water into the claw foot tub in the corner of the room. "No. I plan on getting fresh with you while we bath."

"Oh well, if you must," Rain stammered as she blushed. She watched as Sher tested the

temperature of the water. Sher smiled in response as she held out her hand. Rain accepted the woman's hand and her entire body felt the warmth of Sher's gentle touch.

Rain sighed in delight as she lowered herself into the warm water. Sher knelt beside the tub and dipped a cloth into the water and then lathered it with soap. Rain watched her lover's hands foaming with lather and inhaled sharply as she felt the warm soapy cloth run along her body.

Sher slowly ran the cloth down Rain's shoulders, along her arms, and up the swell of her breasts. The brunette's touch lingered upon reaching her bosom until Rain was moaning with desire. Sher continued to wash her breasts as she climbed into the tub and positioned herself behind Rain's body. "You are very beautiful," Sher whispered in her ear. The timber of her lover's voice sent shivers up and down Rain's spine.

Rain relaxed into her lover's touch as Sher continued to cleanse her body. She loved the feel of the brunette's breasts rubbing against her back. Rain hadn't noticed that Sher had set the washcloth down until she felt the brunette's hands cupping her breasts. Rain's back arched as Sher kneaded her ample bosom playfully. Her eyes fluttered shut as she felt one of Sher's hands drift along the curves of her body.

She moaned as she felt the tips of her lover's fingers teasing the blonde curls of her triangle. She leaned back against Sher's body as a single finger stroked her clit. Sher continued to roll her nipple between her thumb and her forefinger while she teased her nub.

Rain leaned her head back and captured Sher's lips; the blonde could once again taste her own passion on her lover's lips. Sher continued to tenderly caress her nipple and clit. As Rain sank into the feel of the tender kiss and her lover's touch, everything felt right for the first time since discovering her passion for women.

Once again Rain released her passion into her lover's body. The tender kiss continued as Sher wrapped her arms and endless legs around the smaller woman. Rain was smiling as she leaned her head back against her lover's shoulder. "Why?" Rain asked in a small voice. "Why what?" Sher responded as she nuzzled the blonde's neck.

"Why would you want to love me?" Rain shyly asked.

"Because there's something about you that draws me to you," Sher responded honestly. "Your smile, your laugh . . . I don't know what it is but you have captured my heart. That and you're drop dead gorgeous."

Rain once again found herself blushing. "When I leave . . ."

"If," Sher cut her off.

Rain opened her mouth to respond but words failed her. Everything she had learned in life told her to run. Yet everything she was feeling screamed for her to stay. She was also drawn to this woman and not from the kindness or the intimacy. "I not leaving, am I?" she said aloud as she

smiled.

"I don't think so," Sher softly answered.

Rain relaxed in her lover's embrace as she pondered the future while Sher began to tell her about the late Mr. Jenkins. It was a tale that wasn't completed until after the bath and a quick meal Sher threw together. After the meal they retired to Sher's bedroom. Rain had begun to wonder if it was simply the intimacy that was drawing the older woman to her. But that night Sher simply held her. For the first time in years, Rain felt wanted and loved. She was frightened when she realized that she loved the quirky widow as well. As she drifted off to sleep, she promised herself that she would return to her endless journey. She soon lost track of the number of times that she promised herself that she would leave at dawn. And each dawn she would awaken in her lover's arms, knowing that she was going to stay.

The End

Send comments to findingmavis@comcast.net

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