

# ~ Road Trip ~

by Mavis Applewater

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

As always, this is for Heather.

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Veronica sat on the curb in front of the church thinking about that old saying, *'Life is funny'*. Funny wasn't the way she would describe the events that had bombarded her life in the past two weeks. At the moment her life was far from funny - it was freaking hysterical. "It was a simple favor," she muttered bitterly. "Just keep one snotty overgrown brat away from her family for two weeks so she can marry some guy that looks like a Ken doll. That's all I had to do."

"Hey, buddy, want to tell me why you look like you just lost your best friend?" Saul, who was in fact her best friend, asked as he planted his massive body next to her. "You did it. You outsmarted one of the richest guys in America and delivered the girl to the church on time. The boss is thrilled."

"Of course he's thrilled; she's marrying his idiot son," Veronica grumbled as her head slumped forward.

That was how it had all started. Veronica Walker was a gifted news photographer who had the misfortune of working for Benjamin McBride; Benjamin's son, Maxwell, despite his good looks, was a complete moron. None of this should have made Veronica's life a living hell but it seems that Max met and became engaged to one Elise Manning. The senior McBride was thrilled that his son, who had barely graduated from junior college after seven long years, had managed to become engaged to one of the richest women in America. This was great news for her boss since his only child had never held down a job and only seemed interesting in sleeping all day after drinking and dancing all night. Apparently this was how he'd met the debutant.

As Veronica sat stewing on the curb, the young couple was inside the church exchanging their vows. The bride's parents were rushing over to stop the ceremony. It seems they didn't approve of their little girl marrying someone who had no ambition to do anything beyond dancing badly to house music. Then again, since it wasn't the first or second time their little angel had waltzed down the aisle, the negative reaction wasn't a complete surprise.

"I never should have kissed her," Veronica confessed.

"What?" Saul blurted out just as the limo carrying the bride's parents came to a screeching halt in front of the church. "Walker, what did you do?"

"I swear I was just trying to get her to shut up," the brunette absently muttered as Mr. and Mrs. Manning stormed up the stone steps and barged into the church.

"Veronica, what happened?" Saul squeaked out fearfully.

"That's a very good question," Veronica said, acknowledging the man's presence for the first time. "It all started when I was supposed to be going on vacation."

### *Two Weeks Earlier*

Veronica was just finishing up in the darkroom at the small magazine she worked for. All she could think about was that soon she'd be done for the day and finally taking off on her overdue vacation. Whenever Veronica was about to take so much as a day off, McBride, the owner and editor, threw a last minute assignment at her. She loved being a news photographer but McBride didn't pay any of them enough to justify the long hours. He was a good editor but probably the cheapest man on the face of the planet when it came to his staff. He had a way of cheating them out of everything on their expense reports as well as their vacation time.

She tossed her travel bag over her shoulder, having packed it the night before. She had reasoned that if she took it with her to the office then she could just hit the road and not stop at home first. That was how McBride had caught her the last time. She peeked out of the darkroom to look up and down the hallway. Seeing that the coast was clear, she stepped out of the room and turned to lock the door. Turning her back proved to be a mistake.

"Walker?" McBride cooed from behind her.

She flinched before spinning around to find her pudgy balding boss smiling up at her. "No," she asserted firmly.

"I was just going to say have a nice vacation," he said, blinking and looking hurt.

"Sorry." She almost laughed. "Thanks; see you in two weeks." She tried to brush past him before he could add anything further to the conversation.

"Oh, just one thing." He chuckled as he gave her a big grin.

"No," she flatly refused before he could talk her into flying off to Iran.

"Why so negative?" he gasped with a sad look. "I just wanted to tell you my son is getting married."

"Max?" she said in genuine surprise. "Really?"

"Surprised us too," McBride confessed.

"Well, congratulations. Just let me know where the happy couple is registered," she offered, hoping that this was going to be the end of the conversation. She made a move to get away from her boss.

"They're not registered," he continued thoughtfully.

"Well, kids these days. Go figure," she offered as she managed to get two more steps away from him. "Gotta go."

"Just one thing, Veronica," McBride continued. Her stomach clenched, knowing it wasn't a good thing when he used her first name. "The wedding is in two weeks."

"Fine. I'll take the pictures," she agreed before he could ask. "I know it must be hard for kids just starting out." *'Particularly when the groom doesn't have a job,'* she thought in amusement.

"Oh no, you don't have to do that," he quickly dismissed her offer. "Everything is taken care of. The wedding will be at St. Paul's on Euclid Avenue two weeks from today."

"Great, I'll see you there," she said quickly as she tried to make her escape.

"There's just one thing," he repeated sweetly.

"What?" she asked as she shifted her heavy travel bag on her shoulder.

"If it's not too much trouble, could you give the bride a lift to the church?" McBride asked shyly.

It was a strange request but if it meant she could take off for her vacation then why not agree?

"Sure," Veronica agreed.

"You're a life saver." He sighed in relief. "Here's the address," he explained as he shoved a piece of paper into her hand before she could change her mind. "She's waiting for you."

"What?" Veronica blurted out as she stared at him.

"Yeah, she's already packed. In fact, you're a little late picking her up," he continued in a flurry.

"Hold it," she shouted. "The wedding is in two weeks. Why am I picking her up today? You know what? It doesn't matter since I'm on vacation."

"She's going with you." He shrugged as if it was understood.

"Back up, little man," she growled. "Why would I take a complete stranger on vacation with me?"

"Because her parents are trying to call off the wedding," he explained dryly as if this was an everyday request, like picking up some donuts on your way to the office. "It seems they're not as thrilled about the upcoming nuptials as we are."

"No kidding," Veronica snorted, thinking she wouldn't be thrilled with the idea of her kid marrying Max either. "Maybe he'll grow on them. I'm out of here."

"I'll double your vacation pay," he blurted out, stopping her in her tracks.

"You're offering money?" she inquired as she eyed him suspiciously. "What gives?"

"Nothing," he squeaked in his defense. "You'll be helping out two kids in love. One of whom is my son. And I'll throw in an extra wee of paid vacation."

"You're up to something," she hissed.

"I want my son's happiness. Is that so hard to believe?" he protested.

Looking back on things Veronica should have trusted her instincts and just walked away. But McBride had seemed genuine about his concerns regarding his son, and he'd thrown in more money than her depleted bank account sorely needed. She still didn't know if it was the money or his whining that finally broke her down. She agreed to pose as Elise's sorority sister and take her on her vacation. When she pulled up to the iron gate shielding the Manning estate from the rest of the world, the pieces began to fall into place. It was then that she realized that Elise's father was none other than the Warren Manning who owned the building she worked in. In fact, she was pretty positive he owned the entire block.

"No wonder McBride wants to hide the girl before the wedding," she grumbled as she waited for the gates to open. "Probably doesn't want her to change her mind or have her parents convince her to get a prenuptial agreement. Greedy old bastard," she added just as the gates swung open. She drove the Mercedes Benz that McBride had loaned her up to the grand home. It didn't escape her attention that the man drove a very expensive car and wouldn't pay for her meals when she traveled for him. The red convertible had been one of the factors that convinced Veronica to take the girl with her. "Two weeks locked up with a straight girl whining about not being able to see her boyfriend. I should just shoot myself now," she grouched as she approached the front door.

She almost fell over when the butler escorted her into a house that looked more like a museum than someone's home. She quickly ran her cover story through her head as two well-dressed people approached her. "Good afternoon," the man greeted her.

"You must be Elise's parents," she gushed with a fake smile. "I'm Ronnie. Ooops! I mean Veronica," she spoke without moving her lips.

"Warren and Glenda," the man unexpectedly extended her a warm welcome.

Veronica felt slightly guilty at how nice these two people seemed. "I don't remember you from Elise's days at Dartmouth," Glenda apologized.

"So sorry, I was just a wee bit ahead her," Veronica continued her charade. "But once a Kappa sister always a Kappa sister." It was the only truth Veronica had spoken since being welcomed into the Manning's home. She had attended Dartmouth just a couple of years ahead of their daughter. But the closest she ever got to the Sigma Kappa house was to wrap toilet paper around it on Halloween or play around with a couple of bi-curious debutants.

"I'm afraid she's still upset about this whole wedding nonsense," Mr. Manning explained in concern. "Maybe you can talk some sense into her?"

"It won't matter. In two weeks I'll be old enough to take over Grampy Cabot's trust fund. You can't stop me," a voice whined from above them.

Veronica's eyes widened as she took in the small woman with long flowing blonde hair storming down the staircase. "But I promised to call off the wedding until I get back so I'll see you on my birthday," Elise Manning continued. Two maids loaded down with enough baggage to clothe the Seventh Fleet followed behind her.

"Elise, you've only known this boy for a few days," her father tried to reason with her.

"Max; his name is Max," Elise furiously corrected her father.

"That crap is never going to fit in the car," Veronica muttered in disbelief. She blanched at her slip as Mr. Manning snorted in agreement.

"Quite right," Mrs. Manning agreed as she peered out the window. "Perhaps you should take the Lexus?"

"No," Elise flatly refused. "You'll just activate that tracking device. I want to spend some time alone with . . .?"

"Veronica," the photographer interjected. *'Geez, if this brat thinks she's fooling anyone, she's crazy,'* her mind reasoned as she caught the suspicious glances from the blonde's parents. As Elise's parents eyed her carefully, Veronica took a moment to take a quick glance at her new roomie. *'You're a lucky man, Max,'* she noted as her eyes drifted up the curve of the younger woman's body to the swell of her breasts.

"We really need to get going," Elise's whining voice broke through the silence.

"Of course," Veronica agreed. The butler lugged the blonde's luggage out to the car and somehow made it fit into the trunk, while Elise exchanged goodbyes with her parents.

"Where are you two gals off to?" Mr. Manning casually inquired.

"The quaintest little cabin in Maine," Veronica lied. She hated lying to this man; there was something in his eyes that called out to her. At that moment she had no doubt that she was working for the wrong side.

As they were descended the steps, Mr. Manning touched Veronica lightly on her arm. "Is there any way I can convince you to bring her back before her birthday?" he pleaded softly.

"I gave my word," she wearily whispered in response.

"I understand," he responded in a defeat tone.

As Veronica pulled the expensive car out onto the road, she knew that their act hadn't fooled Elise's parents and they probably would do everything in their power to track them down. Veronica secretly hoped that they would catch them. She hated deceiving the nice elderly couple; they were only trying to keep their child from making a terrible mistake. The only reason that Veronica was continuing with the charade was the reason she gave to Mr. Manning - she'd given her word. Despite the disdain she felt for her employer and his greedy nature, her word meant everything to her.

"Nice car," Elise said as she played with the radio.

"It's McBride's," Veronica grumbled as she sped quickly away from the posh neighborhood.

"Figures," Elise snorted as she looked up and down at Veronica's well-worn jeans and old suede barn jacket.

Elise continued to play with the radio; Veronica mourned her decision to take the girl along with her. Her dislike for the pampered brat was growing with each passing minute. "I don't think Daddy believed you," Elise pouted. Veronica cringed at the way the girl pronounced the word *Daddy*.

"No, he didn't," Veronica agreed as she kept her eyes on the road. "He's probably running the car plates now."

"Good luck to him." Elise laughed. "Since this isn't your car, it'll just lead him back to Max's family and they won't help him. And he won't be able to figure out who you are," she added with a triumphant smile.

"Yes, he will," Veronica corrected her.

"Don't be a silly goose," Elise scoffed. "I don't even know who you are. How is Daddy going to find out?"

"He'll start with McBride's employees and then Dartmouth," Veronica explained.

"Well, good luck then," Elise snorted indignantly.

"I was telling the truth," Veronica snapped, knowing that the girl doubted that she could have attended the same prestigious College. "I would have been about two years ahead of you."

"What happened?" The blonde gasped, horrified by the revelation.

Veronica gripped the steering wheel as she pulled the car off the road. "Listen, you spoiled little snob. I'm a photojournalist who just wanted a vacation and some peace and quiet. Babysitting some brat with a bad dye job wasn't my idea and I'd just as soon drop you off right here than be forced to listen to your constant whining for the next fourteen days," Veronica berated the stunned woman.

"Bad dye job?" Elise shot back. "I'll have you know that this is my natural color."

"Right," Veronica laughed.

"It is," Elise hissed as she folded her arms across her chest defiantly. "Look, if you don't want to help then you can just let me out here."

"Fine," Veronica beamed as she threw on the parking brake.

"I'm serious," Elise asserted. "I don't need your help. I can do this all by myself."

"Fine," Veronica repeated as they glared at one another.

Elise continued to glare at her as Veronica extracted her luggage from the trunk and began to pile it on the side of the road. She knew that she wasn't going to leave the blonde stranded but she figured if she called Elise's bluff now then things would go a lot smoother. "What are you doing?" Elise flared as she climbed out of the car.

"I don't want to help you," Veronica explained as she continued to unload the blonde's designer bags. "You don't want my help, so here you go. Enjoy your stay on Rt. 95."

"You're insane," Elise stammered as she stared down at her luggage.

"What?" Veronica questioned her with sly smile. "So you do need my help."

"No," Elise snapped as she plopped her shapely backside down on one of her suitcases and folded her arms. "I'll be just fine."

Veronica couldn't believe the arrogance of this woman. She stared at her, waiting for the blonde to crumble. Even when Elise pulled out her cell phone and discovered it wasn't working, the blonde still didn't move from her spot. "Go on," Elise shooed her away.

"Fine by me, princess." Veronica laughed as she turned back towards the car. She walked slowly, fully expecting Elise to call out and toss in the towel. Veronica was slightly unnerved when she looked back as she opened the driver's side door. Elise hadn't moved an inch since she began her slow trek back to the car. Veronica wasn't about to give in so she climbed into the car and waited. She watched the unmoving blonde in the rearview mirror.

Veronica released the parking brake, assuming that once she put the car in gear Elise would come running. The tall brunette couldn't believe that the blonde just sat there as she pulled out into traffic. Veronica also couldn't believe that her own stubborn pride had blinded her so much that she left the girl stranded on a busy highway. She took the first exit that would lead her back around and backtracked. Her heart caught in her throat as she spotted the semi stopped where she had left Elise. The blonde was standing on the foot rail of the passenger side, talking through the window.

Veronica pulled the Mercedes to a screeching halt behind the big rig. She flew out of the car and raced towards Elise. "What the hell are you doing?" she berated the smaller woman as she grabbed her by the scruff of the neck and pulled her down from the truck. Elise spun around and started slapping the brunette on her arms and shoulders. "Stop that," Veronica scolded her as she brushed her aside.

The brunette climbed up to the cab window. The large bearded man was laughing heartily. "I take it she doesn't need a ride?" He laughed.

"No, thanks anyway," Veronica offered sheepishly.

"None of my business, but next time you two have a spat, don't dump her somewhere dangerous again," he scolded her. "And I suggest you buy her a whole lot of flowers," he added with another laugh.

"Thanks," Veronica groaned as she climbed down. She waved to the driver as he pulled back into the busy Friday afternoon traffic.

When the tall brunette turned around she was horrified to see Elise standing by the side of the road with her thumb out. "Stop that!" she yelled furiously. Elise ignored her as she flipped her long blonde hair in an apparent effort to attract a ride. Veronica grabbed two of the blonde's suitcases and tossed them back into the car. Then she stormed over and yanked the perky little blonde away from the side of the road. "Not that I care, but you really want your parents identifying your body parts after some psycho chops you up into little bits?" she screamed at the smaller woman.

Elise simply pursed her lips and glared at her. "That trucker seemed very nice," the blonde finally spat out.

"And Ted Bundy was a real charmer too," Veronica grumbled. "Now help me get your stuff back into the car."

"You took it out," Elise reasoned.

"Don't start with me," Veronica cautioned her before turning back towards the expensive luggage. "I'm only going to put half in. If you don't put the rest in, we'll leave it here."

Elise was stomping and pouting like a small child as she helped load her belongings back into the sports car. It took some careful maneuvering to make everything fit, but they managed and were finally back on the road again. Neither of them spoke until Veronica finally slapped Elise's hands away from the radio dial, the constant flipping from one station to the next was grating on what was left to her nerves.

"What was he laughing at?" Elise finally demanded with a huff.

"Who?" Veronica wearily responded.

"The trucker. He was laughing very hard and I just want to know what was so funny," Elise clipped.

"You hit like a girl," Veronica teased her. "Ouch!" she yelled as a solid punch connected with her arm and the car swerved slightly. "Are you trying to get us killed?"

"No," Elise said in an exaggerated tone. "I'm just proving that when I have to I can protect myself."

"Good to know," Veronica sighed as she flipped on the turn signal and began to slow the car down in order to take the next exit.

"Now what was he laughing at?" Elise demanded as they exited the highway.

"He thought we had a lover's quarrel," Veronica explained in a bored tone.

"Why would he think that?" Elise scoffed. "I mean do I look gay?" She laughed and then looked around as Veronica pulled back onto the highway heading in the opposite direction.

"Do I?" Veronica retorted with a sultry purr.

"Of course not." Elise laughed as Veronica cringed. Suddenly the blonde's laughter ceased. "Oh," Elise softly mumbled. Veronica curled her lips in disgust as she noticed her companion shift slightly away from her. "Why are we heading back?" the blonde asked in a panicked tone.

"Don't worry. I'm not taking you back to your parents. Even though I think I should," Veronica explained. "I just realized that your father probably has tracked down my reservations in Maine."

"Daddy can be very resourceful," Elise agreed.

"Well, you don't run an empire as big as your father's without knowing what you're doing," Veronica reasoned. "I'm sure running a check on my credit cards is small potatoes. From here on in we need to use cash and we need to trade in this car."

"Now how are we going to manage that?" Elise whined. "Why are you doing this when you agree with my parents?"

"Because I gave McBride my word," Veronica explained. "I don't expect you to understand."

"I do understand," Elise fumed. "Daddy always said that your word is your pledge. If you can't keep it, then you have no honor, and without honor you have no soul."

"Your father is a very wise man," Veronica concurred. "So why not listen to him about your marriage?"

"I love Max and I just know that if we wait Mommy and Daddy will try to keep us apart," Elise reasoned. "I miss Max," Elise whimpered.

"Oh brother, here we go," Veronica groaned.

For the next two and a half hours Veronica listened to the blonde's nonstop rambling. According to Elise, Max was a saint. Between the rush hour traffic and the blonde's endless chatter, Veronica's head was pounding by the time she pulled into the driveway of a two-story house in the Lynnfield suburb.

"Why are we here?" Elise asked.

"Trading cars," Veronica explained. She climbed out of the sports car while Elise looked around in confusion.

Elise continued to rattle off questions and comments as Veronica rang the doorbell. The brunette ignored the blonde as best she could while she waited for Debbie to answer the door. Twenty minutes later she was trying to hand a very confused Debbie the keys to the Mercedes. "Let me see if I can get this - pardon the expression - straight. You want me to drive this beautiful car for the next two weeks while you take my minivan," Debbie repeated.

"A minivan?" Elise choked in horror.

"Yes, since your kids are spending the next two weeks with your ex, you won't need the van. So enjoy the Mercedes," Veronica reasoned. "I'll let my boss know from the road that you're driving it."

"Are you sure he won't mind?" Debbie asked cautiously as she ran her hands along the leather interior.

"Not when I explain it to him," Veronica reassured her.

"A minivan?" Elise repeated, still stunned by the idea.

"Where will you be going?" Debbie asked as they exchanged key rings.

"I can't tell you," Veronica said flatly.

"You're not involved in anything illegal, are you, Ronnie?" Debbie asked.

"No, just slightly insane," Veronica responded with a light laugh.

"A minivan?" Elise repeated once again.

"Is she alright?" Debbie asked in concern.

"Her?" Veronica groaned. "No," she added with a snort.

An hour later Veronica was returning to her table at the Mexican restaurant they'd stopped at on Route One. She'd used the pay phone to let McBride know that she'd left his car with a friend of hers. He was furious, but when she explained that it was the only way to keep Elise away from her family, he agreed. Elise was still sporting a stunned expression as she sucked down her third strawberry margarita. "I need to call Max," the blonde murmured.

"No," Veronica informed her. "No calls, no cell phones, no nothing until I drop your butt off at the church in two weeks. Unless of course you want to go home and try to work things out with your parents?" she added, hoping that perhaps the blonde would reconsider her rash decision.

"No Maxie?" Elise slurred before she began to pout.

"Okay, no more tequila for you," Veronica reasoned as she snatched the glass from the blonde's hand.

"No Maxie?" the blonde slurred once again.

"Time to go," Veronica quickly suggested. "Just in case someone is monitoring McBride's calls."

"Right," the blonde shouted as she slapped her hands on the wobbling wooden table. "Back to the Bat mobile, Robin."

Veronica guided the woman out of the restaurant. She had purposely parked the white minivan a few parking lots away by Pier One just in case. Loading the now badly singing blonde into the van proved to be an exercise in patience and agility. She finally abandoned the attempt to load her into the front and settled on strapping Elise into the back. She was about to offer to turn on the small television mounted on the ceiling when Elise promptly passed out.

Later that night Veronica was flipping through the channels on the television while she sat on her

bed in the Malden Motel just off of Route One. While she munched on a bag of Cool Ranch Doritos, Elise snored loudly on the bed next to her. "This really is some great vacation," she muttered as she turned the volume up in an effort to drown out Elise's thunderous snores. "Maybe next year I'll go to Chernobyl."

The following morning the brunette harshly shook the still-slumbering blonde after exhausting all of the polite means of trying to awaken her. "Come on, Elise. We need to check out and get going," Veronica loudly pleaded.

"I'm up," Elise moaned as she lifted her head off her drool-stained pillow.

"We need to get going. It's checkout time," Veronica asserted.

"Where are we?" Elise mumbled as she finally sat up. "What kind of place is this?"

"It's a motel off Route One," Veronica explained as she tried pushing the blonde towards the bathroom.

"Good. Order us some breakfast. I'll be much more human after a shower," Elise muttered as she climbed off the bed.

"Did you miss the part where I said this was a motel off Route One?" Veronica tried to reason with the woman. "Most of these places rent by the hour."

"Why would you only need a hotel room for an hour?" Elise yawned and stretched her arms above her head. Veronica enjoyed the view as the blonde's shirt rode up, revealing her well-toned abdomen. The blonde's movements halted as a blush covered her delicate features. Veronica was amused at the sight of the embarrassed woman suddenly realizing why someone would rent a hotel room for an hour. "Oh," she mumbled.

"Don't bother with the shower; we don't have time," Veronica informed her. "Just wash your face and brush your teeth."

"Why the rush?" Elise protested. "I thought you said most of these places rented by the hour?"

"I didn't choose one of *those* places," Veronica tried to explain as she glared at her watch. "This place might not have room service, but there's nothing crawling across the sheets."

Elise seemed to accept her explanation for the moment and complied with her request. After Veronica reloaded the minivan, she managed to convince Elise to ride in the back, hoping that the television with a built-in DVD player might keep the girl amused and she wouldn't chatter on endlessly. "Where are we going?" Elise demanded.

"Cape Cod," Veronica supplied, thinking it was a reasonable question. She would have preferred that blonde ask her for the information and not demand it. "It's off season and hopefully we can find a place that we can afford to hide out in for the next couple of weeks. Speaking of which,

how much cash do you have on you?"

"Cash?" Elise blinked in confusion.

"You know, that green paper stuff most of us mere mortals carry around to pay for things," Veronica prodded her.

"Oh, just some pin money," Elise said with a shrug. "Why?"

"Because I only have what I was planning on spending on my vacation," Veronica explained. "Which isn't much for two people to survive on without being able to use our credit cards."

"Are you quite certain we can't use our credit cards?" Elise argued.

"Yes. Before I called McBride yesterday I called and canceled the cabin I had rented and the desk clerk told me there was some guy asking around for me," Veronica explained tersely. "So how much cash does 'pin money' translate into?"

"I don't know," Elise shrugged. "I'll have to look."

Veronica drove carefully through the bustling traffic on Route 128 while the blonde searched her belongings. "Three hundred and twenty dollars," Elise sadly informed her as if it was a mere pittance.

"That's what you call pin money?" Veronica choked.

"Well, yes," Elise responded blandly. "It's just in case of emergency. I'm bored," Elise huffed.

"Watch the television," Veronica suggested.

"It isn't designed for reception, just playing DVD's," Elise informed her an annoyed tone.

"So put in a DVD," Veronica instructed her.

"The only ones back here are for children," Elise argued.

"Perfect," Veronica chuckled.

"Fine, Miss Bossy," Elise agreed with an evil smile.

For the next hour Veronica was forced to endure listening to Barney sing. "Please put on the headphones," she begged once again.

"No," Elise flatly refused.

Veronica gripped the steering wheel tightly as she drove on. Finally she pulled into a rest stop

and was free from Elise's endless chatter about Max and Barney telling her that he loved her. "If I ever find the sick bastard who invented the big purple freak, I'm going to beat them to death," she muttered as she rushed to the ladies room. Her ire only grew when she failed to find Elise in the minivan. She searched the rest rooms and the vending machine area only to discover the annoying little blonde at the payphone. "I miss you too, Maxie," the blonde cooed into the telephone. Veronica didn't miss the dim shadow that suddenly crossed the blonde's face as she spoke to her fiancée. Unaware of Veronica's presence, the blonde continued chatting for a while before hanging up the telephone. Elise frowned for a moment, lost in thought before turning around to find Veronica glaring at her. The blonde yelped in surprise.

"What are you doing? Eavesdropping?" Elise said accusingly.

"Nope," Veronica responded dryly.

"Oh, so now I get another lecture about how I'm ruining your vacation?" Elise snapped bitterly.

"You are," Veronica informed her. "I'd rather be relaxing by a fire in my nice little cabin reading Proust instead of acting like I'm James Freaking Bond trying to keep you away from your parents. What I don't understand is why I'm babysitting you when you don't care if you get caught or not."

"I had to talk to him," Elise argued. "This is the man I'm about to marry in a little over a week. Plus I seriously doubt that Daddy has wiretapped his telephone."

"Perhaps not," Veronica agreed. "If you were my kid, I would."

"Thank goodness you haven't reproduced," Elise snapped as she stormed over to the minivan. Veronica followed the blonde, praying that Warren Manning was already on his way. "You're just like my parents. They're always telling me what to do. Why can't they trust me? This isn't like the other times."

"Other times?" Veronica stammered as she unlocked the minivan. "You've been engaged before?"

"Yes," Elise sheepishly admitted. "Twice."

"And your parents stopped the weddings?" Veronica asked against her better judgment as they climbed back into the van. She ignored the fact that Elise chose to sit up front with her.

"No," Elise responded in an evasive manner.

Veronica caught the car keys before they slipped out of her hand. Her jaw was hanging open as she turned towards the blonde. "You've been married twice?" she sputtered. "How old are you?"

"I'll be thirty a week from Friday," Elise groaned. "Can you believe it? Thirty! It's positively disgusting."

"So you'll have had one husband per decade that you've been alive?" Veronica processed.

"What?" Elise choked as she held her chest. It was more than obvious to the brunette that her little friend hadn't done the math before.

"It doesn't matter," Elise argued, still gasping for air. "Max is the one. He's bright, ambitious and . . ."

"Max?" Veronica laughed. "Max McBride?" She laughed once again as she started the van. "How long have you known him?"

"Eleven glorious days," Elise sighed as she smiled. There was something about the smile that just didn't ring true. Perhaps it was the way it didn't reach the blonde's emerald eyes. The brunette seriously worried about the blonde's future. She debated telling her the truth about Max then changed her mind; it was none of her business.

The rest of the trip proceeded much as the day before with Elise prattling on and on about Max. Veronica bit her tongue each time the girl told her something she knew was a lie. Max seemed to have weaved quite an interesting story about his life and achievements. Each time Veronica reminded herself that it really was none of her business. The only thing the tall brunette wanted was some peace and quiet, not the migraine that was keeping a steady beat with the techno music Elise had found on the radio. The only difference between her first day with Elise and the second day was that she didn't abandon her by the side of the road.

Finally, just outside of Orleans, they found a cabin rental that was in their price range and looked respectable. They paid for the next thirteen days in cash plus a deposit. The small cabin was clean; it had a fireplace, electricity, no telephone, and one bed. "Houston, we have a problem," Veronica muttered when she realized they would be bunking together.

"I knew you weren't paying attention," Elise grumbled from behind her as she dragged in a portion of her luggage. "We can't afford one of the cabins with two beds. It's this one with the full size or head back out on the road again."

"I can't drive anymore," Veronica groaned. "I'm exhausted."

"Didn't you sleep well last night?" Elise asked.

"No, I didn't sleep at all last night," Veronica bitterly informed her as she tossed her share of the bags down onto the floor. "Someone's snoring kept me awake all night."

"I don't snore," Elise snapped, horrified at the very suggestion.

"Yeah, and your roots aren't showing either." Veronica chuckled as the blonde's hand flew up and covered her head.

"Well, this is going to be fun," Elise growled as she quickly stepped over to the mirror to examine her hair. "No television, no telephone, and since it's the off season, everything remotely interesting is closed. You said you brought books - anything good?"

"Proust, Thomas Mann, and some trashy romances," Veronica informed her as she picked her one bag up off the floor.

"Now why do I think your trashy romance novels are a lot different from mine?" Elise said, smiling for the first time. Veronica was taken aback by how pretty Elise was when her face lit up. "Hey, I'm not complaining. After a couple days, I'll probably be ready to read the back of a cereal box. Let's unpack."

Veronica tore herself away from staring at Elise and dumped her bag onto the bed. "Done," she proudly announced.

"You're a barbarian," Elise scolded her as she pushed the brunette aside and began to organize her things. "Why don't you just climb into bed and I'll unpack for both of us."

Veronica agreed to the suggestion as she tried to understand why her body still tingled from Elise's body brushing against her own. "I must be tired," she reasoned.

"No small wonder with all the driving and no sleep," Elise concurred. "Go take a shower. I can handle this. Trust me; packing and unpacking are two things I do very well."

The first night in the cabin Veronica fell fast asleep while Elise read *Swan's Way* by the fire the brunette had lit. She awoke a few hours later to find the blonde plastered against her body snoring loudly. She finally shoved the blonde to get her off of her. "What?" Elise sleepily groused.

"You were snoring," Veronica informed her.

"I don't snore," Elise argued.

"Fine, then tell the moose in heat to get the hell out of here," Veronica snapped before rolling over. She tried to sleep but her body missed the feel of Elise pressing against it. "I'm in hell," the brunette finally concluded.

On day two of their captivity Elise almost set the cabin on fire while trying to light a fire in the fireplace. On day three they argued over bathroom privileges. On day four Elise started a brawl in the local bar when they went out to relax and enjoy each other's company. Veronica had no idea why the blonde started swinging since it was her ass that the guy pinched. On day five Veronica went for a long walk to get away from the blonde's endless chatter; she was almost tempted to keep going until she was back in Boston. On day six Veronica discovered that Elise was not only a snuggler in bed but a blanket thief as well; she seriously considered sleeping during the day and giving the annoying woman the bed at night. On day seven they called a truce and spent a relaxing day just reading and talking. The following two days proceeded in the same

manner and Veronica was beginning to worry about how much she enjoyed being around the blonde and how much she really enjoyed sleeping next to her. By the tenth day Veronica realized that Elise hadn't mentioned Max or the wedding since they'd arrived. Then she made the mistake of bringing it up. On day eleven they were no longer speaking after Veronica tried to clear up the misconceptions Elise possessed about her fiancée.

"But he's in investments," Elise argued.

"The only thing that lazy pretty boy is invested in is living in his parents' basement and sleeping all day until it's time to go out to the clubs," Veronica corrected her.

"You don't know him," Elise coldly responded.

"No, you don't know him," Veronica regrettably concluded.

On the twelfth day, for some unknown reason, Veronica missed the sound of the blonde's voice. So she apologized. "I'm sorry. It's none of my business," she offered humbly.

"He's out of work?" Elise shyly asked. "He lives with his parents?" Before Veronica could confirm the blonde's suspicions, Elise came up with her own theory. "Well, with all the cutbacks these days, it's not uncommon. He was probably too embarrassed to tell me."

"I know I'm going to regret this but here goes," Veronica carefully began. "To be cutback, you actually need to be doing something in the first place."

"What are you saying?" Elise asked in genuine concern.

"He's never had a job. Not even a paper route," Veronica clarified.

"Never?" Elise stammered. "But with his education, he could be doing anything."

"Seven years of junior college?" Veronica inquired.

"What?" Elise asked as her face turned ashen. "It doesn't matter. I love him," she quickly added.

The conversation regarding Max was over. They once again fell into a comfortable routine and Veronica realized that she was seriously lusting after her boss' son's fiancée. By the last day Veronica doubted her sanity when she decided to patch things up with Elise while the blonde resumed chatting nonstop. By the end of their last day together Veronica's nerves were frayed. They were dressed for bed in nightshirts and boxer shorts sitting by the fire and Elise hadn't stopped to breathe.

No longer able to listen to one more word about the color of the bridesmaid dresses, the tall brunette stood, walked over, and while Elise kept talking, captured her face in her hands and kissed the blonde. Somehow in Veronica's overwrought imagination she'd convinced herself that she was only kissing the other woman to silence her and not to find out if it was as nice as she

imagined it would be.

The kiss was more than nice as Elise's soft warm lips melted against her own and the blonde's hands came to rest on her hips. Veronica was lost in the sensation of Elise's mouth responding to her kiss as the brunette parted the blonde's lips with her tongue. Elise released a needy moan as they sank onto the floor in front of the fire. Veronica didn't stop to think about what she was doing as her fingers slipped under the blonde's nightshirt. Her fingers tingled from the feel of Elise's skin dancing under her touch. The kiss deepened as Veronica continued to explore the blonde's body.

Veronica was the one to moan this time as she felt Elise's hands drifting down her back. They were gasping for air as the kiss came to a reluctant end. Veronica was a mass of confusion as she looked down at Elise. The smoky emerald gaze looking back at her erased any doubts from her mind. Elise reached up and cupped the brunette's face, her lips parted. Veronica leaned down and reclaimed the blonde's soft mouth as her hands continued to drift up Elise's body. She slipped her thigh between the blonde's as Elise trembled from her touch.

The brunette brushed aside all thoughts of how wrong it was to touch Elise and gave in to the fire burning inside her. Their hips began to sway slowly against one another as Veronica ended the kiss. Elise reached between them and without saying a word she removed her nightshirt. Veronica drank in the beauty of her lover's half-naked body as her hands roamed freely across her skin. The subtle gasps Elise uttered fueled the brunette's desire. Veronica brushed the palms of her hands across Elise's dark nipples.

Elise's arching body and her smoldering gaze encouraged Veronica to continue teasing her nipples. A shy tug on the hem of her nightshirt ceased her movements briefly. Veronica pulled away and removed her nightshirt. Elise's eyes darkened as she ran her hands slowly along the brunette's exposed flesh. Veronica inhaled sharply as her body quivered from the blonde's touch.

Veronica cupped one of Elise's firm breasts in the palm of her hand while the blonde was running her fingers along the swell of the brunette's breasts. Veronica began to tease Elise's nipple until she felt it harden from her touch. The blonde moaned once again as she brushed her thumbs across Veronica's nipples. The brunette bit down on her bottom lip to keep from screaming out.

Veronica was reeling from Elise's touch as she leaned down and began to kiss the blonde's neck. Elise's moans encouraged her to kiss her away up to her ear. She nibbled tenderly on the lobe as her lover continued to tease her now erect nipples. As they ground against each other, Veronica began to kiss her way across her lover's soft white shoulders. She could feel the smaller woman's desire caressing her thigh while her own passion painted her lover's skin.

Her skin tingled as she felt Elise running her fingers through her long dark hair while Veronica's mouth slowly tasted its way down the blonde's body. She ran her tongue along the valley between Elise's breasts as her lover's hips thrust harder against her body. Veronica didn't stop to think about her actions or how this beautiful young woman wriggling against her body was about to take her third husband; instead she flickered her tongue across a nipple before capturing it into

the warmth of her mouth.

Elise's body arched and her thigh pressed against Veronica's aching center. The brunette hissed against her lover's skin. She suckled her nipple greedily as her lover's body thrust against her in a wild rhythm. She felt her lover trembling as she feasted on her breasts, moving from one to the other. Elise gripped her shoulders as she tried to guide the brunette to move even further down her body.

Veronica eagerly accepted the invitation and began to kiss her way down the blonde's firm body. She tasted every inch of exposed flesh as her lover moaned with pleasure. She playfully dipped her tongue in the blonde's navel before running it along the elastic band of Elise's boxer shorts. Slowly Veronica lowered the flannel shorts down her lover's body. She could feel Elise's stomach quivering as she gently lowered the shorts. Once she freed the blonde of the last of her clothing, she flung the shorts aside and began to kiss her way up Elise's legs.

Veronica worshiped the blonde's legs with her mouth and hands until she cupped her firm round backside and nestled her body between Elise's quivering thighs. The musky scent of her lover's arousal assaulted her as she kissed the inside of her thighs. She looked up and found her lover watching her with a delighted smile. Elise cried out as Veronica dipped her tongue into her wetness and ran it along her sex.

Veronica licked and tasted her lover's passion as the blonde draped her legs over the brunette's broad shoulders. Veronica was lost in her lover's taste as the blonde pressed herself closer to her. Veronica eagerly feasted upon Elise. She captured the blonde's throbbing clit in her mouth as she pressed two fingers against the opening of her warm wet center. Elise jerked her hips, trying to capture Veronica's fingers inside of her. The brunette entered her lover as she suckled her clit.

Veronica's mouth and fingers moved in rhythm with Elise's hips. She was drowning in her lover's desire as she felt the blonde's body tense around her. Veronica held her lover tightly as the blonde exploded against her. She continued to pleasure Elise as the blonde legs tightened around her. Elise was crying out in ecstasy when Veronica finally stilled her movements. The brunette rested her head against the blonde's stomach as Elise rode out the last waves of passion.

Elise pulled her up into her arms and began kissing Veronica deeply. The smaller woman yanked the brunette's shorts off and straddled the taller woman's body. Veronica could feel the heat from the fire while her lover teased her clit with her fingers. Veronica mirrored her lover's actions. They continued to kiss while they pleased one another. Veronica was ready to explode when they entered each other's wetness and began to plunge in and out of one another in perfect unison.

The sounds of their passion filled the tiny cabin as they exploded against each other. They still hadn't spoken other than to cry out. They managed to stumble to the bed caressing the other's body as they walked across the room. As they collapsed on the bed they melted into the other's touch. Their bodies became one as they rocked wildly against one another. Elise proved to be an eager and apt student as they explored one another fully.

In the morning they pulled away from each other. They were unable to meet each other's gaze as they showered separately, packed up the van, and drove off.

### *The present*

"You didn't talk at all?" Saul asked.

"Not a word," Veronica confirmed. "Not even when I dropped her off here. I've been sitting on the curb since I exchanged McBride and Debbie's keys. Right now she's in there getting married and I feel like a complete idiot."

"You're doing the right thing, baby," Warren Manning shouted from inside the church just as the doors burst open. Veronica and Saul jumped to their feet.

Veronica's eyes widened in surprise as Elise, dressed in a long white gown, came barreling out of the church followed by the entire wedding party and the few guests that had been invited. "Stop! You don't want to do this!" the senior McBride pleaded.

True to form Elise spun around and tossed the bouquet at the pudgy man. "What's going on?" Veronica asked bemusedly as Elise raced towards her.

"I can't do this," the blonde blurted out.

"Then don't," Veronica reassured her as her hands clasped the blonde's hips.

"Okay," Elise agreed. "I don't know what I want, but it isn't him. I think it's you. I'm not sure. All I know is that I really need to get out of here."

"Let's go," Veronica offered as she took the blonde by the hand. "Wait! I don't have a car."

"We can take the limo," Elise suggested. "It's stocked with some very good champagne and two tickets to Aruba. Mind if I join you on your vacation again? I promise it'll be a lot of fun this time."

The limo driver opened the door as Veronica led the bride over to the car. "Walker, you do this and you're fired," McBride threatened her.

"I guess I'm fired," Veronica conceded before kissing Elise softly before a stunned crowd. She was surprised at the only two people who weren't shocked. Elise's parents were smiling at them. "They knew." She laughed. "Imagine that."

"Don't worry about finding a job, Miss Walker," Warren Manning said with a wink. "You two have a nice vacation."

"Ready?" she asked the smiling Elise.

"I'm still not sure what I want, but I'm more than ready to find out," Elise vowed as she climbed into the limo, pulling the stunned brunette behind her.

The End

Send comments to [findingmavis@comcast.net](mailto:findingmavis@comcast.net)

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