

Promises

by AnnieSA

Part 1

“According to your Aunt Claire’s will, you have to stay on the farm with Charlie for one year before you get the other part of your inheritance, which is one half of the farm. After that time, you may sell your half, but Charlie has the option of first refusal, and the other way around. If you walk away before the year is over, the farm automatically becomes the sole property of Charlie.” Michael sat back placing the papers back into the folder.

“I have to do what?” yelled a very upset Megan. “She is insane, I mean she was insane. This is the twenty-first century for crying out loud. I am not about to give up my life for a year just to satisfy some whim that she had.” Megan got up and started pacing in front of the desk.

“There must be something I can do.” She opened her pack of cigarettes and took one out with shaking fingers.

“I know. I will have her declared crazy. I am not doing this, and I am definitely not sharing my farm with some stranger. If this Charlie thinks he can get away with manipulating my aunt into including him in the will, he has another think coming.” She ran her hand through her blond hair.

“You won’t get anywhere with that.” Michael pushed his chair back to sit more comfortably. Claire had warned him to expect such a response. She had said her niece had an explosive personality, and that went for her temper as well. She had loved her niece very much, but did not approve of her lifestyle. The only time she ever got to see her niece at all was when she went to visit her in the city.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Just what I said.”

“I must be stupid, because I don’t get what you said!!” Megan’s voice was getting high pitched.

“Please calm down. Your aunt even made a video tape. She anticipated your behaviour.”

“I want to see this video tape.”

“Let me just switch the TV and VCR on.” Michael switched on everything and sat back into his chair as Claire’s face popped onto the screen.

“My dear stubborn Megan. If you are watching this, it means that you have been giving old Michael a hard time. Not that I would expect anything less from you. You know I love you, but you also know that I have been trying to get you to change. I don’t blame you for who you have become, but I do expect you to learn from your mistakes. Your parents were very different from one another, but also very much the same. Your father was very driven and set in his ways. He was always right and the rest of the world was wrong, and the more he had, the more he wanted. Your mother was always interested in money and power, and to this day I still believe that she does not have a heart. You have your father’s stubbornness, but as you grew older you also became more like her. What ever became of the little girl that used to love life and everything in it? I’m certain that she is still somewhere underneath that person you are pretending to be. I may not have been able to save you while I was alive, but I will attempt it one more time. I also have a bit of that stubbornness that my brother had, so you can be certain of one thing, I have taken all the precautions to make sure that there is no way you can get that farm unless you do as I want. Knowing you, money is way too important to you these days to let it slip through your fingers.” With the smile still on Claire’s face, the screen went blank.

Megan watched in dismay. It was very clear now that she was not going to be able to get out of this one. Her aunt was right, if she wanted to keep the farm, she would have to go with her aunt’s wishes. It was way too much money to just give up. After selling her half she would be able to get back to her real life. She would just look at this as a vacation. She would ask Kelly to go with her. There was no way that she would allow this Charlie to get his hands on her inheritance.

“Kelly,” Megan called out as she walked into her apartment. She chucked her keys onto the side table in the hallway.

“Hello darling. So, how much did she leave you with?” Kelly asked as she came down the stairs from the bedroom.

“Twenty million, plus another ten million which I can’t touch just yet.”

“Don’t tell me you’re only going to get it when you are fifty?” Kelly stopped at the bottom of the stairs.

“No, something worse.” Megan looked at Kelly’s body appreciatively.

“What can be worse than being old, and not be able to make good use of your money?”

“Having to live on a farm in the middle of nowhere in order to get the money?” Megan held out her arms to Kelly who walked into them.

“You can come with me. It will be like a vacation for a year,” she said before she kissed Kelly.

Kelly held her at arm's length. "Going to ski in Switzerland is a vacation. Going to a farm in the middle of nowhere is certainly not!"

"Come on babe, I could give you my undivided attention for a whole year." Megan wiggled her eyebrows and smiled suggestively.

"I'd much rather share that attention with a five star hotel," Kelly pouted.

"I'll make it up to you." Megan wrapped her arms around Kelly again. "I'll take you shopping for a new wardrobe. That always makes you feel better." She kissed Kelly while her hand roamed over her back.

"You... know... me... too... well," Kelly said between kisses. "I have a better idea though." Kelly directed Megan's mouth to her neck while she spoke. "Why don't you go to the farm and let me stay here to look after things. I will come and visit you frequently." She started opening the buttons on Megan's shirt. "Someone has to look after your affairs while you are away." She pushed Megan's shirt off her shoulders who in return was hastily trying to remove Kelly's dress.

"My company and affairs run themselves, and these days technology allows us to stay in contact all the time." Megan lifted her eyes to look into Kelly's. She saw the disappointment in her face, but chose to ignore it. She ran her fingers from Kelly's face down to her breasts that were now only covered by a thin covering. Her eyes followed her hand, but stopped at one spot. She used her other hand to open the clip that allowed the covering to fall away. Her eyes were still focussed on one spot which undoubtedly looked like a bite mark.

"Have you been bored today?"

"No, Mandy came over and we had lunch together." Kelly was reaching for the clip on Megan's bra, but Megan took hold of her hands and pushed her against the wall. She slid her leg between Kelly's legs as she held her hands captive above her head.

"It looks more like she had you for lunch." Kelly froze when she heard the words.

"She's my best friend, how can you even say something like that?"

"Well, it's either her or the postman." Megan laughed sarcastically. "No matter how rough we got last night, I never bit you." Kelly tried unsuccessfully to squirm her way out of Megan's hold. "I promised you two things when we started this. One was that I would give you anything as long as you were with me, and the other was that I don't ever share, so if you cheated on me, you would be out."

"It's not what you think. Mandy's just a friend. We were just fooling around." Kelly desperately tried to find a way out of the situation, but only made it worse.

“How intimate must you get to be able to bite someone on the breast? Don’t take me for the fool you are. Get your stuff, and get out of here. I’m going for a drink at Oblivion, and when I get back, I expect you and all your stuff to be gone.” With this she let go of Kelly as if she burned her and turned around to walk away.

“But darling, you are the one I love. This was a tiny mistake. I promise it won’t ever happen again.” She grabbed hold of Megan from behind and held on tightly. “Let’s go upstairs and talk this out in the bedroom. We are so good together. Surely our time together deserves another try.”

Megan removed Kelly arms roughly. “You don’t seem to get it. The deed was done, now take what goes with it. I don’t ever want to touch or be touched by you again.” Megan grabbed her keys from the table and walked out of the apartment.

Kelly picked up the phone and dialled the all-too-familiar number. “You idiot!” she yelled into the phone when Mandy answered.

“What did I do?” Mandy asked, confused.

“I told you never to leave any marks on me. She saw your bite mark on me and kicked me out.”

“We don’t need her anymore darling. You’ve got enough money out of her to last us quite a while.”

“I say when it’s enough, not you. She just got herself another inheritance, and unlike her father’s money, part of it is not locked up in a trust. We can still make a lot out of her. I’ll just have to let her cool down for a while.”

“What do you plan to do then?”

“She will be pulling her hair out in boredom after a few months on that farm. I’m sure she will welcome me back with open arms.”

Megan felt like she had been driving up and down the same roads for hours. Everything looked the same. She was driving slowly, trying to read the map at the same time, when a movement to her right caught her eye. She braked, bringing the car to a stop. This was the first sign of life she had seen in three hours.

From the side of the road she could see more clearly. The stranger was busy fixing a fence. “Man, what a body,” she thought to herself. Even through the jeans and shirt she could see the muscular body outlined. “This guy must work out,” her thoughts went on, “and man, is he tall.”

“Excuse me,” she said as she got closer. “I’m lost and was wondering if you could give me some directions...” She stopped in her tracks as the stranger turned around. It was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. When she took her hat off, her long black hair fell over her shoulders. Megan felt like her heart had missed a few beats. “This year may not be so boring after all,” she thought to herself. “With someone like this around, I can have lots of fun.”

“I’d say you are definitely lost,” the stranger commented looking at the little red sports car and the number plate. “There are no shopping malls around here little girl.”

“I’m definitely not a little girl, and I can prove it to you in more ways than one,” Megan flirted tucking her short blond hair behind her ear while running the tip of her tongue along the bottom of her upper teeth.

Charlie ran her eyes over Megan from top to bottom and up again. The petite little blond was working on her nerves. She knew who it was, and so didn’t look forward to this day. She couldn’t believe that Claire had put her into this situation. She had known how much the farm meant to Charlie, and had used it to manipulate her. Since she had started working on the farm as the foreman fifteen years ago, she knew she had found a home. Claire was like the mother that she had never known, and the farm became a part of who she was. Claire had always talked about her niece and how much she loved her, but also about how she hated who her niece had become. She had blamed Megan’s mother for spoiling her rotten and allowing her daughter to follow in her promiscuous ways.

“I stopped playing with dolls many years ago, and you might just break if I touched you.”

“Listen you oversized Amazon,” Megan felt her temper flaring up. “I can handle your touch anytime of the day, but I wouldn’t let you touch me if you were the last woman around.”

“My, my, my, we do have a temper don’t we.”

“Stop treating me like a child. I’m twenty-six, not six.”

“Well, if you stop acting like a child, I’ll stop treating you like one.”

Megan stomped her foot on the ground. This woman was so arrogant, and she felt like she was getting nowhere fast. “Just calm down,” she told herself. “Just find out where you need to go so you can leave.”

“Could you just tell me how to get to Lentegeur. It’s a farm that’s suppose to be somewhere in this area.”

“I know where Lentegeur is, but has your mother never taught you manners?”

“I didn’t ask for a lecture, I just asked for directions.”

“Well, even that requires some manners and it never killed anybody to do so.”

“Fine, can you PLEASE tell me how to get to Lentegeur!”

“Now that wasn’t so bad was it? I would work on the attitude that went with it if I was you though. People in these parts don’t take kindly to strangers with attitudes.”

“Could you please stop with the lectures and just tell me where the hell the farm is!”

“Now now, calm down little girl. It’s about two miles straight ahead on your right hand side. You can’t miss it, and what do we say now?”

Megan forced out a “Thank you” under her breath. This woman was infuriating her to no end. The faster she got away from her the better. She almost ran to her car, and sped off with tires spinning.

“Well well,” Charlie muttered to herself. “I better get back to the farmhouse. This could be a very interesting year.” She jumped onto her horse and started riding in the direction of the house.

Megan was still fuming when she got to the Lentegeur turnoff. “It’s just my luck to run into the Amazon from hell,” she thought to herself. She came to a stop in front of a gate. “Brilliant, technology hasn’t reached this part of the world yet,” she shouted to no one in particular. She opened the gate, drove through and closed it again. Before getting back into her car she looked at her expensive shoes that now looked like they were made out of dust. “The first thing I am changing on this farm is installing an electronic gate.” With a determined look on her face she got in and drove off again. Her mind was still reeling with thoughts of her meeting with the stranger, and the more she thought about it the more upset she got.

She was so lost in thought while she was driving, that she didn’t see the next gate until she was almost on top of it. She braked and skidded to a stop barely inches away from it. “Who in their right mind would put a gate in the middle of nowhere!” she yelled in frustration. She got out and opened the gate in a defiant manner. She got back into her car and drove through the opening. She stopped to get out again, but decided against it. For all she cared this gate could stay open. With these thoughts she drove off again with a smile on her face. It didn’t take too long for her to come across another gate. “No way.” She slammed her hands onto the steering wheel in frustration. She got out of her car and walked towards the gate. Her attempt at opening it looked more like she was trying to rip it off the hinges. She got back into her car and sped off. This was it. Gates would be flying by the time she was done with this Charlie. She was driving so fast out of frustration that she could feel the back tyres skidding slightly from side to side as she was taking the corners. At this point she loved the feeling of controlling her car as it was on the brink of losing control on the road.

Charlie reached the house just as she could see a dust ball coming towards the house. “That little girl better learn to go slower before she causes an accident.” She handed the reins of her horse to Kevin, the stable hand, when he reached her. “Keep him close by Kevin, I’ll be leaving again in a few minutes.”

As Megan’s car came to a stop in front of the farmhouse, she smiled. The house and yard was absolutely stunning. She hadn’t expected to see something like this out here. As she got out of the car, she saw someone coming down the front porch. As the person came closer, her temper started flaring up again. Of all the rotten luck, it had to be the stranger from the side of the road. Well, she would show her who was boss on this farm. No employee of hers would treat her that way. “It’s payback time,” she thought.

The woman walked towards her holding her hand out to greet her, and before Megan could say anything she said, “Hi, I am Charlene Palmer, Charlie for short, and I presume you are Megan Callaway.”

Megan stopped in her tracks for the second time that day, and felt herself go ice cold from top to bottom.

“No way is this happening to me.” Megan felt like crying.

“I’m pretty sure it is happening to you,” Charlie replied with a grin on her face. “It’s really not that bad. All you have to do is give up your wicked ways for a year. I’m sure you’ll survive.”

“I’ll show you wicked ways,” Megan thought to herself. She was pretty sure that Charlie was going to try to make life difficult for her in order to get the whole farm for free. Mentally shaking herself she pushed her shoulders back and looked Charlie in the eyes.

“Hell will freeze over before I give you the satisfaction of me walking away before the year is over. She was my aunt and not yours. By rights this farm should be mine. I don’t know how you got her to leave one half to you... or wait, maybe I do. Could it possibly be because you rendered some ‘services’ when occasionally required?”

Charlie observed Megan as she ranted on. “She’s a little spitfire,” she thought, “Maybe I should try to get better acquainted instead of fighting,” but when she heard Megan’s last comment she saw red.

“Listen here you little spoiled brat. Your aunt was the most decent person I knew. She was like a mother to me, and I will not stand around while you shoot your arrogant little mouth off about her. She loved you dearly, how could you even be saying anything like that!”

“Just show me my room,” she ended up shouting back. “I don’t have to explain myself to you. I don’t answer to anyone, and least of all you. We might have to share this place for a year, but it seems big enough for us to be able to stay out of each other’s way.”

Charlie looked at her with shock on her face. She felt ready to strangle Megan, and it wasn’t even the end of the first day yet.

“Fine, the less I see of you the better. Through the door, up the stairs, down the hall, third door on your left. Better make sure you lock the door tonight little girl. I might not be able to control my murderous nature.”

Megan looked at her with a defiant expression on her face. She grabbed her bag from the front seat, and walked into the house without looking back. Charlie just looked at the retreating form as she was shaking her head. This was going to be one hell of a year; by the end of it, she might be insane, or in jail for murder.

Once Megan reached her room, she locked the door and leaned with her back against it. Silent tears ran down her cheeks. This was a side of her no one ever saw. “I will not give into this,” she said while wiping away the tears. “I will take control of this situation and make it work for me like I have done with everything else in my life.”

“How could you be so rude to our guest,” Katrina said sternly to Charlie. “You guys were so loud I could here everything in my kitchen.”

Katrina had been Claire’s housekeeper since she was about thirty-one. Now, at the ripe old age of fifty-eight, she had earned the right to speak her mind. Like Claire, she regarded Charlie as a daughter, but also had a lot of respect for her. At this point though, she wasn’t so sure about the respect part because she had never heard her treat another person like that before.

“She is the one with the problem.” Charlie closed her eyes. “She is so infuriating. It’s her own fault I treated her like that.”

“Charlene Palmer, shame on you. Since when do you blame other people for your bad behaviour? Ultimately you were the one doing it.”

“I’m sorry Kat. You are right as always.”

“I don’t think you should be apologising to me.”

“No way Kat. No way am I doing the apologising first. Sure, I probably didn’t behave appropriately, but she still started it.”

“Do as you please then, but I am going to go up to say hello to our guest in an appropriate way.”

“I have work to do,” Charlie mumbled as she started walking away. “I have wasted enough time as it is, so I won’t be coming back for lunch. I’ll see you tonight.”

Katrina made her way up the stairs to stop in front of the closed door. She knocked on it softly.

“Leave me alone,” she heard through the door. “I can only handle so much of your presence in one day.”

Katrina knocked again. She was definitely not planning on shouting through a closed door. Suddenly the door got thrown open by a very upset blond.

“I said I...” Megan stopped speaking when she saw the older woman standing in front of her.

“Hello my dear. I am sure you must be Megan Callaway. There is no way I can be wrong about that. Your aunt always talked about you, and she had your photos in her study, but I must say that the photos do not do you justice.”

Katrina saw the puzzled look on Megan’s face and realised that she hadn’t introduced herself yet.

“My name is Katrina, but you can call me Kat. I am the housekeeper, and have been for the last twenty-seven years.” With this she extended her hand. Megan looked at the older woman in amazement. For some reason the anger she felt earlier had disappeared. She smiled at Katrina and accepted her hand in a greeting.

“It’s nice to finally see a friendly face around here,” she couldn’t help but say.

“I really don’t know why Charlie behaved like that. She is normally such a kind person.”

“You sure could have fooled me.”

“None of that anymore.” Katrina placed her hand on Megan’s. “This day is only halfway done, so it’s time to prepare lunch. I am sure you must be hungry by now. Your aunt always used to laugh about your ability to consume so much.”

“Yes, I am kind of hungry, but I really do not wish to run into Charlie again right now.”

“Don’t you worry your pretty little head about that my dear. Charlie said she wasn’t going to be back until tonight.”

Megan thanked the gods for at least a little bit of luck on this day, because in all honesty she was really hungry.

Charlie was distracted by her own thoughts as she was riding back to the fence she had been working on when she met Megan. She couldn't believe how much Megan had affected her, and for some reason her thoughts kept on going back to that rather lovely petite body of hers. She could just imagine running her fingers over that smooth skin. All the anger from before was fast disappearing as her body was heating up over something completely different.

She was so caught up in her thoughts that she wasn't prepared for the sudden movement of her horse as it jumped in bewilderment to get away from the snake in its path. Her fall felt like it was happening in slow motion before everything went black as she hit her head on a rock.

A few hours later Charlie woke up with a pounding headache and a scorching pain in her ankle. She was lying between some rocks, and tried to get up but it wasn't easy. She could feel the wetness on the side of her head. She ripped a piece of her shirt off and tied it around her head. She then inspected her ankle and came to the conclusion that it was most probably broken. After looking around her in all directions, she saw a piece of a broken branch that she could use as a makeshift crutch, but it was about ten yards away. She tried to get onto her one leg. She was quite dizzy from the blood loss, and felt like she was going to pass out again when she tried to hop on one leg. She eventually decided to crawl to the branch.

Once she had her makeshift crutch working, she started her slow movement back towards the farmhouse. Looking at the bright side, she was quite thankful that she had only made it halfway towards the fence before the accident. At her current rate she would most probably take about two to three hours to get home. She knew no one would come looking for her, as it was her habit to take a swim at the dam before she eventually went home after a day's work.

Katrina and Megan were sitting on the porch chatting away at half past six when Megan's stomach made a grumbling noise.

"I can't believe you are hungry again after that big lunch," Katrina laughed. "We normally eat dinner at about seven when Charlie eventually gets back to the house from her swim at the dam."

"It's OK, I'll just snack on something in the meantime. Why does she swim at the dam when there is a perfectly gorgeous pool in the back?"

“She loves nature, and she knows that out there no one would bother her. She prefers to swim naked.”

“In a pond! That just can’t be pleasant.”

“She certainly enjoys it. Maybe you should try it one day.”

“There’s just no way I’m going to do that.”

They were still chatting when Megan saw a figure hobbling towards the farmhouse in the distance.

“It looks like one of the farm workers is having some trouble walking,” she mentioned to Katrina who turned to see who she was talking about.

“Oh my god, it looks like Charlie!” she yelled as got up and started running towards the figure as fast as her old legs would allow her to. Megan got up as well and ran with her.

As they got close to Charlie she stopped and waited for them.

“Now don’t you go and panic Kat,” she started. “It’s just a little bump on the head and a swollen ankle.”

“I’ll be the judge of that Charlene Palmer,” Katrina started ranting. “Knowing you, there is definitely more to it. Megan, run back to the house and get the truck. We have to get her into town.”

“We should take my car, it’s much faster.”

“It might be faster my dear, but there is no way we are going to fit Charlie into the back of that little thing.”

With that Megan ran back to the house to get the keys to bring the truck to where Charlie was. At least it was a twin cab so no one would need to sit in the bed.

“Katrina, you are making too much out of this. A few headache tablets, some ice for the ankle, and a good night’s sleep will make sure I am all well again.”

“You keep on telling yourself that, and I will keep on telling myself that I’m the tooth fairy.”

Charlie started laughing at that, then realised that wasn’t such a good idea. The threatening dizzy spells she had experienced on her trip to the house was back, and this time it made her knees buckle. The one leg that was supporting her was not holding up, so she sank to the ground.

“You still want to tell me you’ll be fine without seeing a doctor?” Katrina scolded her.

“I suppose you are right as always.”

“It’s about time you actually start listening to me then. How on earth did this happen to you anyway?”

“My thoughts were full of a little arrogant, infuriating blond.”

Before Katrina could say anything, Megan stopped the truck next to them and jumped out to open the back door. They helped Charlie into the back seat.

“I better drive my dear. You will be able to open the gates much quicker.”

“If you are referring to the two gates on the dirt road between the house and the entrance gate, you don’t need to worry. I left them open. Who in their right minds would have so many gates on one farm road anyway? I want to change the entrance gate to an electronic one. I can’t believe no one has thought of doing it yet.”

Katrina stopped her movements as she was about to get into the truck. She looked at Charlie’s face that had become even paler than it had been before.

“You ignorant idiot,” Charlie choked out. “My prized pure blood dairy cows are going to be mixing with the bulls. They are going to produce half-breeds and they will be worthless!”

“How was I supposed to know you self righteous Amazon? There weren’t any signs on the gates.”

“That’s because everyone knows there are reasons why gates are closed. Kat, please get Rubin to go and see what he can save out of this mess.”

“Fine, I know how important those cows are to you, but only if Megan takes you to the hospital right now. I will help Rubin, and then have him drop me off at the hospital afterwards.”

“Anything please.”

“OK Megan, Charlie can explain to you how to get to the hospital. Don’t worry about the gates on your way out, Rubin and I will sort it.” With that Katrina walked in the direction of the farm workers’ homes to get Rubin. She left a very embarrassed Megan looking at a very angry Charlie who looked like she was about to lose the lunch she never ate.

“Don’t say a word,” Charlie said when Megan wanted to start apologising. “Nothing you can say can make this situation any better. Just get me to the damn hospital before I forget I am suppose to be a civilised person.”

Megan got into the truck and drove in silence. She only asked the necessary questions to get the directions for the hospital.

Once there, she walked into the emergency room to get someone to help Charlie out of the truck. When she knew Charlie was in capable hands, she went to the waiting room and got herself a cup of coffee. This had ended up being the worst day in her life, and all she wanted to do was crawl into bed with the hope that when she woke up this would have all been a bad dream.

While sitting on the couch she closed her eyes and leaned back against the wall. Before long she was in dreamland with a very gorgeous six foot tall woman who had an amazing body which she was wrapped around. Charlie was planting light kisses along her neck down towards her breasts. Their bodies were rocking against each other as she moaned in frustration about their clothing barriers. She wanted much more. She was smiling as Charlie started tracing her shoulder with her fingers, but then for some reason she decided to start shaking her. At that Megan's eyes shot open and she looked into the smiling face of Katrina who was trying to wake her. "Oh my," she thought to herself, "What on earth was that about?"

She didn't have any time to think more before Katrina started talking.

"The bulls were having a merry time between the cows when we eventually found them. I don't think any of the cows got spared. Not that I think they were complaining, but Charlie will definitely not be making the amount of profit on those cows that she was hoping for."

"Don't you mean we won't be making the profit?" Megan questioned.

"No I don't. Those cows are Charlie's own property that she invested in. Claire left her enough money to buy you out at the end of the year, but Charlie wants to feel that she can hold her own. She saved for many years and invested in various small ideas that made her some profit. The cows were her first big investment," Katrina was still talking when the doctor came into the waiting room.

"Hi Kat, how wonderful to see you again," he said with a huge smile on his face. "We should stop meeting under these circumstances," he joked as he gave her a hug. "Claire has a nasty bump on her head and has lost some blood, so we will be keeping her for observation. Her right ankle was broken, so we will be putting a cast on it as soon as the swelling goes down a bit. She will have to take it easy for a while. She is sleeping now, and will most probably only wake up tomorrow morning, so you can go home to get some rest."

"Thanks Dave. I knew you would fix her up. We will be back tomorrow to check on her. I know she is in good hands as long as you are around."

Part 2

Megan took Katrina to the hospital the following day, but didn't go in herself. She used the time to wander around the small town and do some shopping.

Katrina came across a very annoyed Charlie as she was sitting in her hospital bed while the nurse was checking her vitals. When she saw Katrina she smiled.

"So what does Doc David say, are you going to live?" Katrina walked towards the bed and waited for the nurse to complete her check before she sat down on the chair next to it.

"He says I'll live, but he wants to keep me here for another two days. I'm not sure if I will survive that." She got a serious look on her face. "So tell me what the damage is."

"We don't know for sure right now, but it looks like it's all the cows."

Charlie's face wasn't giving away anything of how she felt at that moment. She silently reached for the glass of water on the bed stand and took a sip. She placed it back again before she looked at Katrina. "This is just a setback. My plans will take longer, but what's done is done. It doesn't help crying over it now."

"That's my girl." Kat leaned over and took hold of Charlie's hand. "Use the two days to rest. Rubin will look after everything while you are here. With a man like him around, you have no need to worry. That reminds me, all the workers send their love."

"As long as you keep HER away from everything on the farm I'll have peace of mind. She is a walking disaster waiting to happen."

Katrina laughed wholeheartedly. "We can't actually keep her away from anything. She does own half that farm until the year is over. She really isn't such a bad person. A bit misguided, but when you look under that hard-ass exterior of hers, I am sure there will be much more to find. Unlike you, she apparently started off as a nice girl and then became a bad-ass."

"I have no intention of looking under anything. I have enough trouble keeping my hands off that little neck of hers." Charlie held her hands out as if strangling someone. Kat just laughed again shaking her head.

"The two of you are surely going to make this an interesting year."

They talked until the visiting time was over, then Katrina met up with Megan in the hospital parking lot.

"I see you've been shopping," Kat said as she got into the car.

“Just a few things I needed.”

“If you forgot anything, you can pick it up tomorrow or the next day. She is still going to be in there for another two days.”

“Is she still upset with me?” Megan asked as she started driving.

“With Charlie you can never be sure.”

“I’ll just buy her some new cows.”

“Has money always solved all your problems?”

“What’s wrong with using it if you’ve got it?”

“Charlie will never allow you to do it.”

“I am not asking for her permission.”

“She’ll see it as a slap in the face. If you think you’ve seen a bad side of her, you have another think coming if you go ahead with your plan.”

“I don’t see why it will be such an issue. It’s just cows!”

It was very quiet in the little car. Katrina took a deep breath before she started speaking. “I think I need to tell you more about Charlie. It might make you understand her more.”

“Why should I need to understand her? She’s the one with the problem.”

Katrina smiled. “Your aunt was right, you are stubborn. I still think you need to hear Charlie’s story.”

“It’s an hour trip to the farm, so I suppose I am trapped and at your mercy until we get there.”

“Charlie believes very strongly that people should face up to their actions, although she wasn’t always like that. You two actually have something in common.”

“That is a scary concept.” Megan snickered.

“Charlie comes from a very rich and powerful family, just like you. She was an only child, and image was everything to her parents. She was spoiled rotten, and never knew the meaning of the word “no”. She got into trouble from a very young age, but her father’s money and influence always made it go away.

“She was sixteen when she realised that she preferred women over men. Unfortunately for her, this was the one thing her parents’ image couldn’t cope with. They gave her an ultimatum which she chose to ignore. She really didn’t believe that they would disown her.

“She was soon disillusioned. She found herself out on the street with nowhere to go. The moment her friends found out what had happened, they all disappeared. She had no idea what to expect on the streets and was completely vulnerable. She tried to speak to her parents, but they refused to acknowledge her existence. It wasn’t long before she was gang raped and beaten half to death.

“This was how Julia found her. She was the owner of the little shop next to the alley Charlie was left in for dead. She took her to the hospital, and afterwards took her under her wing. She helped Charlie deal with all her demons, and eventually became her lover. Julia wasn’t very rich, but they had a decent life.

“On Charlie’s twentieth birthday Julia wanted to spoil her, so she took her out to a rather nice restaurant. On their way back to the car, Julia got hit by a drunken driver and she died on the way to the hospital. Charlie was the only one that saw what happened. The drunken driver was her father. He made the whole thing go away as if Julia never existed.

“Charlie was devastated and she started drinking. She ended up going from place to place doing odd jobs to keep the liquor flowing. Claire came across Charlie while she was half drunk in the bar; in this small town the bar is also the best place to go for lunch. She asked Charlie what she was celebrating, to which she replied that it was her twenty-first birthday. Claire helped her celebrate, and eventually took a passed-out Charlie home with her. She insisted Charlie stay for a few days, but Charlie didn’t want to unless she could work for her stay.

“The few days turned into weeks, and Claire eventually asked Charlie to stay on permanently as her foreman. Charlie didn’t know anything about farming, but she took the chance. Charlie was the biggest reason the farm became so successful, and Claire loved her like the daughter she never had.”

Megan just gave her a sideways look when she finished the story, but didn’t say a word.

When Megan and Katrina got home after the second day, Megan took off looking for Rubin. She found him next to the vegetable garden.

“Hi Rubin, I need your help with something.”

“Sure Miss Callaway, what can I help you with?” Rubin was nervously moving from one foot to the other. Charlie had told him that she would skin him alive if he allowed Megan anywhere near anything.

“I need you to put these signs on the gates.” She held out a parcel in her left hand.

“Sure, just give them to me and I’ll put them up the moment Charlie gets home.”

“No!” Rubin nearly jumped on the spot. “You will come with me now and we will put them up.” The fire in Megan’s eyes and her stance soon convinced Rubin who he should really be afraid of. He knew Charlie wouldn’t really hurt him, but he wasn’t so sure about Megan.

“Yes Miss Callaway. I’ll just go and get some wire and a pair of pliers.” He ran to the shed and was back in five minutes.

Megan wanted them to start with the entrance gate first and work their way back towards the house. When they got to the entrance gate, Megan gave Rubin the first sign. He looked at it and gave a sigh of relief. “This isn’t so bad,” he thought to himself as he walked towards the gate. He attached the medium sized sign to the gate and stepped backward.

“Please close the gate,” Rubin read out loud. “I don’t think anyone will have a problem with that.”

Megan just smiled as she got back into the truck waiting for Rubin to follow her.

“Rubin, tell me a bit about yourself and your family.”

Rubin started fiddling with his pants at the request. He felt that Megan was up to something, but didn’t know what it was. “My wife Kathy and I have been working together on this farm for the last ten years. We have a son named Harry, age 8, and a daughter named Rebecca, age 5.”

“What did you do before you got to the farm?”

“I...I... didn’t...” Rubin was very uncomfortable, but he knew she would be able to find out anyway. “I got into some trouble as a kid, and it followed me wherever I went. It’s not easy to get back onto track when you’ve spent time in jail. My wife was the only person who believed in me until we met Miss Claire.”

Megan looked at him without saying a word. He almost forgot to breathe until he saw a smile form on her face. “Aunt Claire seems to have had a lot of faith,” she said as they stopped in front of the next gate. “Here’s the next sign.” She handed the sign to him with the smile still on her face.

Rubin felt more relaxed until he read the message on the second sign. He turned to Megan. "Maybe we should wait for Charlie before we put this sign up?"

"No Rubin. Like I said before, these signs are going up today." She now had a huge grin on her face. Rubin just shook his head and did as he was told. He knew Charlie wasn't going to be impressed.

When Rubin attached the last sign, he couldn't help smiling himself. He didn't feel like there was very much else he could do in this situation.

Charlie noticed the sign on the entrance gate when Katrina stopped the truck to open the gate. "Does she really think that is going to fix anything? She was the only idiot who didn't close the gates. The rest of the world has some common sense." She looked at Katrina who had a huge smile on her face and frowned. "There's nothing funny about this, so why the huge smile?"

"Oh, let's just say you haven't seen anything yet."

"I'm not in the mood for surprises Kat, what else has she done that you find so amusing?"

"You'll see for yourself now... and don't go getting upset with Rubin. He only did what Megan told him to do. If you ask me, I think he is afraid of her."

"Let's just go then if you're not going to tell me. Today is as good a day as any for a strangling."

Katrina felt a chill run down her spine at the menacing tone in Charlie's voice. She wouldn't want to be Megan today.

They drove to the next gate in silence. When she stopped the truck, Katrina gave Charlie a sideways glance. She wasn't surprised to find her looking like she was ready to rip the sign right off the gate. If it weren't for the crutches, and the problem she had getting into the truck with them, Katrina was sure Charlie would have jumped out and done just that. Katrina looked at the sign again and smiled. She actually thought it was funny.

"Beware: The Amazon from hell will make you regret not closing this gate!" Charlie read it out loud. "I'm sure she thinks she's hilarious, but it won't be a funny matter when I get my hands on her."

"Oh come on Charlie, it's not that bad. It's just a sign on a gate."

“You’re right. I’m getting all worked up over a silly sign. There are more important things for me to get upset about, like the fact that I can’t swim at the dam until this cast is taken off. Don’t know how I am going to survive without my afternoon ritual.”

“Megan thinks it’s a filthy habit,” Katrina said as she got back into the truck after closing the gate.

“Luckily I don’t have to worry about what she thinks. She is way too stuck up for her own good.”

“She might surprise you.”

“Not in this lifetime I’m sure.”

Katrina stopped at the last gate and waited for Charlie’s reaction.

“Why that little bitch.” Charlie’s words were no match for the look on her face.

“Watch your language Charlie.”

“Sorry Kat, but she’s the one calling me a dog!”

“She didn’t put your name on the sign.”

Charlie read the sign out loud, “Amazon watchdog on duty. It would be a good idea to close the gate or suffer the consequences!” She gave Katrina a stern look. “Who do you think she is referring to?”

When they stopped in front of the house Megan was standing on the porch with a self satisfied smirk on her face. Charlie got out of the truck and made her way towards the steps. She gave Megan a deadly stare and held her eyes while she was making her way towards her. Megan had to admire the fact that Charlie came up the stairs with crutches without ever looking down. Charlie stopped next to her and Megan’s breath caught in her throat when Charlie moved her head down towards her. It almost looked like she was going to kiss her, but she moved towards Megan’s ear who felt like she was rooted to the spot.

“My bite is worse than my bark. If anyone should be worried, it should be you.”

The whispered words sent a chill down Megan’s spine, but the breath that carried those words caused a different reaction. She felt a tingling warmth covering her body and her nipples awakened to the sensation.

Charlie straightened up and gave Megan a sweet smile before she moved into the house. Megan used trembling fingers to make sure her ear was still a part of her body, because for some reason it felt foreign.

Megan decided to go for a walk to calm her emotions. "If she can do that with her breath, I wonder what else she's capable of?" Her thoughts kept her busy, but her stomach started complaining. She headed back towards the house feeling a bit anxious about facing Charlie again while her hormones were acting against her will.

When she walked into the house, Charlie and Katrina were already seated at the dining room table.

"Hi Megan, you're just in time. We only sat down a minute ago." Katrina smiled while she gestured for Megan to sit down next to her.

"My stomach won't let me forget."

Charlie, who was reading the newspaper she had got in town before they came home, stared at Megan in disbelief. Megan was piling food on her plate like there was no tomorrow, and the look on her face was one of pure delight when she sat down and started eating. It seemed like the whole world was lost to her except for that plate of food in front of her.

She was still staring at Megan when Katrina interrupted her thoughts. "Have you taken your tablets yet Charlie?"

"No, I'm only supposed to take them after I've eaten."

Katrina leaned over and whispered to Charlie, "Then you'd better start eating and stop staring or you'll never get that far." Charlie felt a blush rising up from her neck at Katrina's words. She was thankful that Megan hadn't heard that comment.

The rest of the meal passed in silence, after which everyone went their own way.

The next morning, Megan changed into her bikini for a swim in the pool. When she walked out the door, she heard laughter coming from that direction. She came across a little boy and girl playing with a ball in the pool. She stood there for a few minutes just watching them. They looked so carefree and full of life.

When she walked closer, she also saw a woman cleaning the pool loungers. The little boy squirted the woman, who jumped in surprise, but laughed. The

little girl scooped up some water into her water gun and aimed it at her brother. He was still laughing at the woman he had squirted, when the little girl shot him on the back of the head.

“You little devil,” he laughed as he swam towards her. “Do you want to get dunked, or are you going to apologise?”

The little girl squirmed in her effort to get away from him. “You’ll need to catch me first.” She got out of the pool just as he was about to grab her. She ran to the woman who had gone back to cleaning the loungers and circled her arms around her legs. “Save me Mommy.” She moved around her when she saw the little boy coming closer. He had the water gun in his hands now and was aiming for her.

“That’s enough you two. I told you before that I don’t want you running around the swimming pool. If you don’t behave, there’ll be no more swimming.”

“Sorry Mom, we’re just having fun. We promise not to do it again.” The little boy was very apologetic.

“Yes Mom, we promise.” The little girl backed up her brother.

“I need to go and clean inside, so you two need to get out of the pool now anyway.”

“Aah Mom, we still want to play. I can look after Becca.”

“Harry, you’re way too young for such a responsibility.” The woman brushed the boy’s hair out of his face with her hand.

Megan felt a strange attraction to the two kids, who reminded her of the years before her cousin’s death. She stepped forward to make her presence known. “Hi, my name is Megan.”

The woman turned to her with a smile on her face. “Hi Miss Callaway. I’m Kathy, Rubin’s wife, and these two are our kids Harry and Rebecca.”

“Nice to meet you Kathy, and you can call me Megan. This “Miss Callaway” is starting to make me feel like a complete outsider.”

“What’s an outsider Mom?” Rebecca had a confused look on her face and Megan smiled.

“Someone who isn’t from here,” Megan said while hunching down to face her.

“Then you are an outsider aren’t you?”

Megan laughed. "I sure am. You are a clever one aren't you?" She straightened up again facing Kathy. "I've been here for four days and haven't seen you guys before. Is the farm that huge?"

"The farm is huge, but we haven't been on it for the last week. The kids and I have been to my mother's. It's school holidays and will be for another two weeks." Kathy was gathering up the cleaning materials she had been using earlier. "You must excuse us Megan. I still have to catch up on a lot of work."

"I'm going to have a swim, so why don't you leave the kids with me," Megan offered while looking at the kids who jumped with joy at her words.

"It's very nice of you to offer, but I can't expect you to do that. They're a handful."

"Aaah Mom," the kids responded in unison.

"It's not a problem Kathy. I can use all the help I can get to feel less like an outsider."

"Well, all right then." Kathy turned to the kids. "You two behave yourselves." She gave them each a kiss and left.

"Well now," Megan smiled at the two kids, "Let's see how much fun we can get up to."

Charlie was working in the study when Katrina came in with some coffee and a snack on a tray. "Kat, you really don't need to serve me."

"Oh yes? How are you going to manage a cup of coffee with a pair of crutches under your arms? You might think you are superwoman, but I know better." She sat down on the couch with her own cup of tea.

"Thanks Kat, I appreciate it." She sat back and took a sip of her coffee. "The kids sure sound like they're having fun in the pool this morning."

"Megan and the kids have been going at it the whole morning. I am quite amazed at her energy levels."

"With all the food that she devours, her energy levels must be sky high."

"There's nothing wrong with having a good appetite." Katrina got up. "That reminds me, I have to go and see what there is to make for lunch."

When Katrina left the study, Charlie got up and moved to the window in the dining room that looked out over the pool. She watched as Megan and the kids were building a human pyramid in the pool. It collapsed a second after it was up. She had to smile as the kids surfaced and tackled Megan, who didn't put up much of a fight as she got pushed under the water. She surfaced holding her hands up in defeat. It looked like it was the end of their pool party. Megan helped the kids out of the water, and then got ready to get out herself. Charlie had started turning to go back to the study when Megan emerged from the pool, which made her stop in her tracks. She couldn't help but stare at Megan's well toned body before it was covered by her robe.

"How desperate can I get?" she whispered to herself. "I really should get out more if that little squirt can get me all worked up more than once." She had a determined look on her face when she made her way back to the study.

Kat, I need to do some work, but I need to be connected to the internet. Where's a good place for that?" Megan was coming down the stairs with her notebook and briefcase.

"Charlie is still sleeping from the tablets she's taking, so the study's the best place to work without being interrupted."

"Thanks Kat. It shouldn't take too long." Megan walked into the study and placed her notebook and briefcase on the desk before moving some of Charlie's items out of the way.

"Are you planning to take over my bedroom next?" The icy words made Megan look up in surprise. Charlie was glaring at her from the study door.

Megan let her gaze run over Charlie from top to bottom and back up again. "Not if you were the last woman on this planet."

The words had Charlie seething. "You are very sure of yourself aren't you? You know that wasn't an invitation. I would rather invite a rattlesnake into my bed."

"Did you get out on the wrong side of the bed, or did you take the wrong medication?"

Charlie glared at her for what seemed like minutes before she spoke again. It looked like she was trying to control her anger. "What are you doing at my desk?"

"I'm tap dancing, what does it look like? This is my farm as well, so I'm sure I have a right to work in the study."

Charlie turned and started hobbling away. She hadn't got very far when she stopped and turned to Megan once again. "If we are both going to work in here, we had better bring in another desk."

Charlie made her way to the kitchen where she found Katrina, who immediately saw that something was wrong. "What's happened now?" she asked as she poured Charlie some coffee.

"She is infuriating. I don't know what to do around her. Whenever we are alone, she manages to rub me the wrong way. How am I suppose to handle her for a year?"

Katrina placed the cup of coffee in front of Charlie before she sat down herself. "Maybe you should just try not to handle her."

"I'll try, but I don't know if my patience is going to stretch that far."

"What about that charm of yours? It normally works on every woman you meet."

"Don't even go there Kat; she will take it and twist it into something else. You should have heard what she said to me this morning."

Katrina couldn't stop laughing when Charlie told her what had happened in the study. "She does have some sharp wit."

After telling Katrina the whole story, Charlie also laughed. It did seem quite funny looking back on it.

They were still laughing when Harry came running into the kitchen. "Aunt Kat, Dad says you must come quickly. Uncle Martin had an accident with the tractor."

Katrina ran after Harry, while Charlie followed on her crutches. Megan was looking through the study window when she saw Harry and Katrina running past it, and a few seconds later a hobbling Charlie. She got up and ran outside to follow them. When she caught up with them, they were already next to the tractor that was lying on its side with Martin trapped underneath it.

"Rubin, get Kevin to bring the other tractor around and some chains so we can try and lift it off him." Charlie was barking out instructions as she was kneeling next to Martin. She looked at Katrina who was comforting him, and then to Megan who was looking out of place. "Megan, run to the house and call Doc David. The number is next to the phone. Tell him what happened, and let him make the arrangements." She watched as Megan turned and ran before she looked down again. Martin was trying to smile while Katrina was talking to him.

“Hang in there Martin, we are going to get you out. Can you tell me where it hurts?”

“My leg hurts, and my chest feels like it’s on fire.”

Katrina looked at Charlie with a worried expression on her face, but was smiling again when she looked back at Martin. She continued to talk to him while Charlie got up to help Rubin and Kevin when they got there with the other tractor.

They attached the chains to various points on the tractor. Charlie moved back around to Martin’s side, but knew she wouldn’t be able to pull him out, and neither would Katrina be able to do it on her own. Kevin was driving the other tractor, and Rubin had to keep an eye on the chains to make sure that they didn’t come off. At that point Megan came running back. “Doc David has arranged for the helicopter. He said it should take about ten minutes.”

“Good, by then we should have him out from under the tractor. I need you to help Kat pull him out from under once the tractor is lifted, but you’ve got to keep him straight. We can’t risk trying to lift it off him while there is a possibility something could go wrong and it would fall back on him again, so it will be enough for you to pull him out.” Megan nodded.

Charlie moved to the side of the tractor in order to see Rubin as well. “OK Rubin. On my signal get Kevin to move forward, but very slowly.” She signaled, and the tractor started moving upward inch by inch as the other tractor moved forward. It looked like that tractor’s front wheels were about to lift off the ground. “Slowly Kevin, we don’t need another accident.”

It felt like forever before the tractor was lifted enough for Katrina and Megan to pull Martin out. It was an agonisingly slow process, but they eventually moved him out far enough. It was just in time as they could hear the helicopter approaching. Kevin reversed the tractor to let the other one back down again. He could feel that his tractor didn’t have enough power to pull it up completely.

The paramedics quickly took care of Martin, and had him in the helicopter in a few minutes. They told Charlie that Martin was very lucky. It looked like a broken leg and some broken ribs. After they had left, Rubin suggested that he would take Martin’s wife to the hospital and let them all know how it was going.

Charlie turned to Megan who looked very pale as she was staring at the departing helicopter. “Thank you for your help.”

Megan didn’t respond. She just stood there.

Charlie gave Katrina a puzzled look. They both moved towards Megan and Katrina was the first to reach her. “Megan?” She moved in front of Megan to look into glazed eyes

that weren't looking back at all. "Megan?" She gave her a little shake with her hand on her shoulder. Megan seemed to be coming out of her dazed state. She directed her gaze at Katrina and was shaking her head from side to side then she passed out. Charlie was standing behind her at the time, and caught her before she could fall to the ground.

Part 3

Megan woke up feeling disoriented. It took a while before she remembered what had happened. She couldn't believe how the accident caused all the old memories to come flooding back. She felt like it had all happened yesterday instead of when she was sixteen. Back then, she had sworn that she would never allow anything to make her feel so helpless again, but it all came back. The tears were running down her cheeks as she remembered her cousin's face while she was pleading for help. Katrina walked into the door with a glass of hot milk with honey. She wiped away the tears quickly, and tried to face her with a smile.

"Glad to see you're awake. You gave us a bit of a scare." Katrina placed the glass on the bedside table.

"I just wasn't feeling very well, but I'm feeling better now."

"Don't think that you can fool an old woman like me, child. The look in your eyes had nothing to do with not feeling well." Katrina pulled a chair closer to the bed. "So, are you going to tell me what happened?"

Megan looked at Katrina and gave her a sad smile. "It isn't really something I want to talk about right now Kat. Maybe in a while I'll feel up to it."

Katrina looked into Megan's tear-filled eyes, and knew that this wouldn't be the time to talk. She knew all about old wounds, and how raw they can be if opened unexpectedly. She got out of the chair and went to sit next to Megan on the bed. She pulled her into a hug and just held her while she cried. When Megan's body stilled Katrina let her go slowly and got up.

"Drink the milk, it will help you sleep. Tomorrow will be a new day and we'll take it from there." She ran her fingers down the side of Megan's face before moving towards the door.

"Kat." Katrina stopped as she was about to turn the doorknob. "Thanks for getting me out of my clothes. They must have been covered in dirt."

Katrina smiled. "No need to thank me, I wasn't here. Charlie took care of you while I drove with Rubin and Emma to the hospital. Emma was in such a state when she heard what had happened, I couldn't let Rubin take her to the hospital on his own." Katrina left a shocked Megan in the room.

Katrina stopped in the study door when she saw Charlie sitting at her desk with her head resting in one hand. She was deep in thought and didn't notice when Katrina walked further into the room. She was startled when Katrina sat down in the chair opposite her. "I didn't know we had mice in the house."

Katrina laughed. "I could have been an elephant, and you wouldn't have heard me come in. What's on your mind?"

Charlie blushed slightly. "Nothing much. Did you check in on Megan?"

"Yes. She was awake, and I think she'll feel a lot better in the morning."

"I'm starting to think she's a walking disaster. We sure as hell don't need to watch soap operas with her around, not that they are worth watching anyway."

"You leave my soaps alone. I'm not holding a gun to your head asking you to watch them. Have Rubin and Emma come back yet?"

Charlie sat back in the chair and stretched. "Yes, about fifteen minutes ago. Emma is much more relaxed, now that she's seen that he's fine."

"I'm glad. Today could have been so much worse. Megan has got me worried though."

"There is nothing physically wrong with her, she just fainted. It was probably because she didn't feed that stomach of hers enough today."

"It's not the physical I'm worried about, it's the emotional side. I know the signs, but she doesn't want to talk about what caused her reaction." She yawned as she got up from the chair. "It's time for these old bones to get some rest. Night."

"Good night Kat; sleep well."

Charlie wasn't sleepy yet, and pulled the keyboard and mouse closer to continue working, but as earlier, she couldn't concentrate on work. Being alone again brought her thoughts back to where they were before Katrina walked in, on Megan. She had tried not to take notice of Megan's body while undressing her, but it was impossible. She could still feel Megan's skin under her fingertips.

Charlie was rudely awakened from a very pleasant dream by someone screaming for help. She jumped out of bed and forgot about her crutches as she ran to the door. "Ouch!" she yelped in pain. "Someone better be dying!" In the hallway she could make out that the screaming came from Megan's room. She

rushed over as fast as she could and threw the door open ready to attack, but what she saw stopped her in her tracks.

Megan was lying in a foetal position crying and screaming, but still asleep.

“Someone help... O God... someone please help!” Megan was hugging her own body.

Charlie just stood in the doorway. She didn’t know what to do.

“I’m sorry Christine, I’m so sorry, it’s all my fault, please don’t die, I’m sorry.”

Charlie moved uncertainly towards Megan.

“HELP!!!!” The screams were gut wrenching.

“Christine, PLEASE don’t die.”

“Why am I so helpless?”

“Why can’t I move this bloody rock?!”

“Please Christine, just wake up and tell me what to do!”

Megan was now rocking herself from side to side. Charlie tried to wake her, but Megan was caught up in her dream. Still not sure what to do Charlie gathered Megan in a hug and was trying to calm her. “It’s OK Megan. It will be fine.”

“No, no it won’t. I can’t get you out from under this rock.”

“It’s only a dream. You need to wake up.”

“If only I can get you out, I’ll carry you down this damn mountain.”

“It’s OK Megan. We can wait, someone will come with help.” Charlie tried to calm Megan by pretending to be Christine.

“Why do you ever listen to my stupid plans? If it wasn’t for my ideas you wouldn’t be under this rock. ”

“It’ll be fine. Just rest a bit. Close your eyes and sleep. When you wake up, everything will be better.” Charlie was rocking Megan and gently running her hand up and down her back.

“Yes. Sleep is good....” Megan’s breathing became more regular until it was slow and deep.

Charlie laid her back down onto the pillow and pulled the covers over her. She walked back to the door, but turned around and looked back at the little blonde sleeping peacefully now. "You probably won't even remember this in the morning, and who the hell is Christine?" she whispered.

When Charlie got to the dining room, Katrina and Megan were already sitting there having their coffee. Katrina looked up at Charlie and gave her a questioning look when she saw the dark circles underneath her eyes. "It doesn't look like you had a good night's sleep at all Charlie. Is something wrong?"

Charlie yawned. "Too many things on my mind, so I couldn't sleep."

"Well, then you need a good hearty breakfast to get you going. I'll go and get it for you." Katrina got up to go to the kitchen.

"I can do that myself Kat."

"Nonsense. I'm still the cook in this house. You just sit yourself down in that chair."

Megan hadn't even acknowledged Charlie when she walked in, and was now ignoring her completely. Charlie was annoyed. "So what's eating you this morning?"

Megan glared at her. "I don't appreciate the fact that you undressed me."

"What?" Charlie was flabbergasted.

Megan's meal was forgotten as she lit into Charlie. "Did you get off on undressing me? Couldn't you at least have waited for Kat to come back to do it?"

Charlie was taken aback. "Why you ungrateful little shit."

"Nobody touches me without my permission." Megan was waving her finger in front of Charlie's face.

"How delusional are you? I wasn't touching you for pleasure, I was helping you!" Charlie was seething.

"Ha, don't tell me that. I remember you holding onto me and stroking my back. What does that have to do with undressing me?"

"I didn't..." Charlie stopped when she realised that Megan was thinking of the previous night and somehow mixing it into the previous day.

“You can’t deny it, can you?!” Megan said sarcastically

“Yes I can, but it wouldn’t help. I don’t need to defend myself to you. You need a shrink.” Megan was speechless.

Charlie got up from the table as Katrina walked in. “I’ll have my breakfast in the study Kat, if you don’t mind helping me to get it there please. I didn’t get all my work done last night. ” She didn’t wait for an answer as she turned and hobbled towards the study.

“No one tells me what I need!” Megan yelled after her.

Charlie stopped and turned around to face Megan again. “You wouldn’t know what you needed if it bit you in the butt. You will be better off in the city where you came from.”

“There is no way you are getting me to walk away, you arrogant arsehole. You just want this place for yourself without paying for it.”

“I don’t care what you do, just stay out of my way, and away from my stuff!” Charlie turned again and hobbled further.

“The further I can stay away from you the better,” Megan replied defiantly

Katrina just stood there looking from the one to the other. “Maybe Charlie is right,” she thought to herself. “We have our own soap opera here.” She didn’t know how else to describe Megan and Charlie’s behaviour. Here she had been, thinking things were going to be so great from now on, especially after she had gone to check on Megan last night and found Charlie comforting her. She must have missed something along the way.

Days went by, while Charlie and Megan stayed out of each other’s way as much as possible. Charlie arranged for another desk to be carried into the study for Megan to work at, but they were never there at the same time.

Charlie caught up on all the paperwork that she had neglected for so long, but was frustrated with not being able to just go about a normal day as usual because of the cast. She would drive around in the truck with Rubin, but wasn’t really of any use except for giving instructions.

Charlie got used to hearing Megan call for help every night after the accident. On the second night she tried to will herself not to listen, and just to go back to sleep, but she couldn’t. Eventually she got up and went to Megan’s room. She once again wouldn’t wake up, and Charlie just comforted her. It became a nightly

routine, and Charlie found herself lying in bed waiting for that call. During the day she would look at Megan, thinking how different she was when she was awake. Charlie thought of speaking to Megan about her dreams, but also felt that she would be losing something precious if the nightly calls weren't there.

Megan tried to keep herself busy with reading, and organising her business over the phone and internet. She made sure that she was never in the study when Charlie got there, and never went in if she was there already.

Katrina refused to let their actions get to her, so she went about her days as usual, and chatted to them as she normally did. She was going through some of her old recipe books when Megan walked in. "Hi Kat," she greeted. "I need some advice from you."

Kat smiled and gestured for her to sit down at the kitchen table. "I can definitely try."

"I need to find something to do, or I'm going to die of boredom. I've only been here four weeks now; how am I going to survive the rest of the year?"

"Have you thought of helping out on the farm?"

"No, I'm not really a hard labour person, and aren't there workers to do that?"

"Yes, they're working, but they each have their own duties. Even Charlie worked every day. Now we are two workers short because of her and Martin."

"What is it you think I can help them with?" Megan asked with a sceptical look.

"That you will have to ask Rubin, but I know they would appreciate any help."

"I suppose doing almost anything is better than sitting around bored out of my skull." Megan got up to leave.

"Wait, maybe you could help me first."

Megan stopped. "I can't cook."

"No, it's nothing like that. I need someone to help me clean the chicken coop."

"Why don't you just get one of the workers to do it?"

"Like I said before, they all have their own duties. I normally pay little Harry to do it for me when he's here, but the schools have started again. When Harry isn't here, Charlie normally helps me, but now she is out of action."

Charlie walked into the kitchen as Katrina spoke about her. "I'm out of action for what?"

"I just asked Megan to help me clean the chicken coop, seeing that you can't do it."

Charlie looked at Megan, then back at Katrina again. "Her?" She nodded towards Megan with her head. "In the chicken coop?" She laughed "Not in this lifetime."

"Don't be nasty Charlie." Katrina could see that Megan was not happy with Charlie's remark. The last thing she felt like now was seeing another argument between the two of them. "Megan has already said she'd help." Katrina sent up a silent prayer that Megan wouldn't correct her statement.

Charlie laughed again, shaking her head. "That I have to see."

"You're so full of yourself aren't you?" Megan said coldly. "I'm not here for your entertainment, and if I say I'll do something, I will." Megan just hoped that her words wouldn't come back to bite her, because she had no idea what the cleaning process would entail.

Katrina moved towards Megan and took her by the arm. "Let's go Megan. There is no time like the present." They were walking away when Megan turned to Charlie who was hobbling afterwards. "You were not invited. Go and find something else to amuse you."

"At this moment, I can't think of anything else that will be more amusing," Charlie said with a smirk on her face.

"She's right Charlie, go and find something else to do." Katrina was trying to defuse the situation, because Megan looked like she was ready to explode and afflict some bodily harm on Charlie.

Katrina and Megan walked towards the chicken coop that was about five minutes walk away from the house.

"Why do you have chickens when this is not a chicken or an egg farm?"

"I only have enough chickens to supply everyone on the farm with fresh eggs and chickens. You've seen our vegetable garden, which is here for the same purpose. For me, part of the joy of living on a farm is having everything fresh. There's nothing better."

"What does this cleaning process entail?"

“Not much. Cleaning the feeding and watering units, sweeping the floors, and then using the water hose on it.”

“That sounds simple enough.”

When they reached the chicken coop, Katrina showed Megan where all the cleaning tools were. She also gave her a pair of rubber boots and gloves to put on. “Will you be ok doing this on your own?” Katrina tried hard to keep a straight face when she saw the consternation on Megan’s. It looked like she had serious reservations now about her offer to help.

When Megan saw what the chicken coop looked like, with all the chicken manure on the floor, she felt nauseous. She was trying to think of a way to get out of this, but when she thought of the self-righteous smirk on Charlie’s face earlier, the need to wipe it off her face was more important than all the chicken shit in the world.

“Yes, I’ll be just fine. You go and do whatever you need to. This will be done in a jiffy.”

“OK then. I’ll have a nice lunch ready for you when you’re done.”

Katrina walked back to the house while Megan put the rubber boots and gloves on. This was not something she was looking forward to. She started with cleaning the feeding and watering units, and refilling them. She couldn’t believe that it took her about forty minutes just to do that. She looked at the floor, and then at the hard bristle broom and the water hose Katrina had told her to use. “These people should think more productively.” She had a smile on her face as she thought of her plan. “Why would you want to sweep first, and then use the hose? It would be simpler just to use the hose, and increase the water pressure. It will definitely clean everything.”

Megan got to work on her plan. What she didn’t realise was that using that amount of water on the chicken manure, without sweeping it away first, was making the floor very slippery.

When Katrina got back to the house, she went looking for Charlie whom she found working in the study. “Do you have to be so mean towards Megan all the time?”

“She is the one with the attitude.”

“Blaming other people for your behaviour again?” Katrina was standing with her hands on her hips. “We have talked about this before Charlie. This is not the

person you are, and if Claire had to see you now, she would be turning in her grave.”

“Kat, there is just something about her that makes me want to climb the walls. I can’t help myself.”

“Then maybe you need to look where these emotions are coming from, because it isn’t healthy for anyone.”

“Then you should talk to Megan as well. She jumps down my throat even when I haven’t done anything.”

“We are not talking about Megan, we are talking about you. You are a grown woman, not a child. Start acting like one. I’m the cook in this house, not the psychologist.”

“You know you are more than the cook in this house Kat. This is your home, and you are part of the family. Your advice means a lot to me.”

“Good. It only has to start from one side. You will see what a difference it will make.”

Megan had got about three quarters of the way through when her feet slipped out from under her. In pure cartoon character style, she was in the air for a second before she came crashing down onto her back. She hit her head on the floor and felt like she was caught in a slow motion moment.

When she realised she was lying in wet chicken manure she jumped up, but the quick movement just made her slip again, but this time forward. She was covered in chicken shit, and completely pissed off at herself. She crawled to an area where she could get up without going down again. She looked around the coop, and then down at herself. She thought about just getting out of there as quickly as she could. She could slip into the house from the back, and get cleaned up before anyone could see her, but that would mean that she would have to finish cleaning the coop first.

When she was done, she made her way back to the house. She could see Katrina and one of the workers in the front garden. She thought about just going in there, but didn’t know where Charlie would be, so she went towards the back entrance. As she crept around the corner, she found Charlie lying on one of the pool loungers in her bikini. It looked like she was asleep. Megan wanted to turn around, but couldn’t. Her eyes were fixed on Charlie’s perfect body. She ran her eyes over Charlie’s body from her broad shoulders to her breasts that were moving up and down as she was breathing. Megan could feel herself heating up

from inside. She ran her eyes further over the washboard stomach to the muscular thighs. The only thing that looked like it didn't belong there was the cast.

Megan was shocked out of her daze when Charlie moved. "Get a hold of yourself." She was upset about her reaction to seeing Charlie like that. She moved quietly towards the door that opened into the dining room.

"I wouldn't go into the house like that if I were you."

Megan jumped at hearing the words.

"Let me guess. You decided to hose the floor without sweeping it first?" Charlie said in an even tone.

"Laugh and get it over with. This is what you waited for I'm sure," Megan said accusingly, but her voice had a defeated tone to it.

"I'll only laugh if you laugh with me. You have to admit, you do look funny with all that chicken shit on you."

Megan glared at Charlie and saw that she wasn't laughing. She turned towards the window and saw her reflection in it. She was covered in wet manure, and her hair was stringy with more pieces of manure hanging from it. She smiled and turned to Charlie. There was something strange between them right now, and Megan just felt like going along with it. "I sure do." She started laughing, after which Charlie joined in.

"Glad I could add to your amusement today by looking like a sewer rat," Megan said jokingly.

"A cute sewer rat," Charlie added.

Megan looked at her reflection again, and shook her head. "I don't think I have ever seen a cute sewer rat, and I sure don't see one now."

"Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. But even though I think you look like a cute sewer rat, I think we need to get you cleaned up before you go into the house."

Megan looked at Charlie sceptically. "How do you propose we do that?"

"There are two ways. Either you go and take a dip in the pond with clothes and all, or you stand there while I hose you down. The choice is yours."

Megan thought about it for a few seconds. "I think the hosing is a better option. I don't like the idea of getting into water when I can't see what's at the bottom."

"The hose it is then," Charlie said as she got up and walked towards the outside tap with the hose attached to it. She liked the light atmosphere between them. She was aware though that it would have been different if she had just laughed at Megan, instead of talking to her first.

Charlie hosed Megan down while she turned around under the stream of water, trying to get all the chicken manure washed off. Charlie's breathing got heavier as she watched Megan laughing and turning around like a kid. The cool water was making her nipples stand out, and now that she was completely drenched, they were more prominent. She quickly turned the water off and turned to put the hose away.

"I don't think I'm completely clean yet." Megan remarked when the water stopped. She had enjoyed Charlie's eyes on her, and knew what they had been fixed on.

Charlie refused to turn around. "You're clean enough to go into the house. You can use my towel lying by the lounge."

Megan flinched at the tone in Charlie's voice. She could feel that the comfortable air between them was gone. She thought about saying something, but decided against it. She walked towards the lounge and picked up the towel. Without looking back she walked into the house.

Charlie had an internal battle with herself. She wanted Megan so badly, but she knew she couldn't give into the urge. Her feelings for Megan ran deeper than just a need. What was scaring her was the idea of seeing Megan walk away after the year was done.

"Just keep it cool Charlie," she told herself. "She'll only cause you pain. All she wants is to get through this year, and then be on her merry little way back to the world that she belongs in."

Charlie watched Megan walk back into the house with the towel wrapped around herself. She felt an immense loss, but knew that the hurt would be more if they did start something, and then she had to lose her..

Charlie spoke to Katrina about Megan's nightmares. She felt she couldn't be the one to comfort Megan anymore and begged Katrina to speak to her, but she refused

"Megan will speak when she is good and ready to do so."

“But Kat, what do I do in the meantime? I don’t even think she remembers having these nightmares.”

“You do what you have been doing every night since it started. She will remember when her mind feels she can cope with it. The body’s defence mechanisms are wonderful things.”

“I can’t. You don’t understand.”

“I might be old, but I am not blind. Why don’t you just speak to her about it?”

Charlie sighed. “No, I feel too much. I can’t allow her to have that much power over me. I will be the one suffering in the end.”

“Then let time tell. She might change.”

“Thanks Kat. I don’t know what I would have done without you and Claire in my life. Between the two of you, you have been my saviours.” Charlie hugged Katrina and gave her a kiss on the forehead..

The antagonistic relationship between Charlie and Megan changed. Charlie didn’t make any more smart remarks to Megan. Megan knew that things had changed, but didn’t like it. At least when they fought, she had a reaction from Charlie. Now she didn’t have anything. She even tried to provoke Charlie a few times, but to no avail. Nothing seemed to matter to Megan anymore. All she could think of was the look in Charlie’s eyes when she hosed her down. All she wanted was to have Charlie look at her like that again. A few times she even thought that she saw a glimpse of it, but it never remained.

Even after the chicken coop experience, Megan went to Rubin in order to help with the farm work. She didn’t think that there could be anything worse than that. Rubin was happy to show her the ropes. Harry and Rebecca got in on the training process as well when they were on the farm. It was great fun for them to show Megan, who was a grownup, how to do things. Harry even taught Megan how to milk a cow, which was another one of Katrina’s ideas to keep everything fresh. At least there were only four cows for milking.

Megan enjoyed learning, and spent a lot of time outside. Rubin and his kids were great teachers, and the other workers helped where possible. She got to know each of them individually, and ended up having respect for what they did. Eventually she realised that she didn’t miss her hectic life in the city. She really enjoyed getting up mornings, and didn’t even feel the weeks turning into months.

She felt frustrated with Charlie, but over time the emotion changed into anger. “Well, if that is what she is going to be like, then to hell with her.” She was pacing up and down in her room while talking to herself. “We could have had a good thing going during my stay here, but it’s her loss, I’m not running after her.””

Megan was repairing an area in the fence on the north side of the farm. One of the bulls has decided to try and ram the fence in search of greener pastures. Megan was convinced the greener pastures were actually the cows on the other side of the fence that the bull felt obligated to service. She smiled at her own thoughts. It was a stunning day with no wind. The sun was high, and the sweat was running down the side of her face. She was using her shirtsleeve to brush it away when she saw the rider approaching.

“About time,” she yelled at the person she thought was Rubin. “My stomach’s feeling like my mouth’s on strike.” She turned around again and continued her work.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” The words didn’t sound friendly at all. Megan just stood there without moving.

Charlie got off her horse and walked until she stood right behind Megan.

“I asked you a question.”

“I’m repairing a fence, what does it look like to you?” Megan responded in a mellow tone as she continued working.

“There are qualified people on this farm who get paid to do this.” Charlie grabbed Megan’s hand as she spun her around. “You have no business trying to mend fences.”

“I can do it as well as any of them, but for your information I am helping Martin out. He wanted to surprise his wife with a special anniversary gift. I gave him advice on what to get, but he needed time to go into town to get it.” She was getting angry and shoving her finger into Charlie’s face. All the built up frustration was pouring out in her words. “I don’t even know why I am defending myself. You don’t want anything to do with me, so what I do does not concern you. I make my own choices and I live with them. I do what I want, when I want, but I do consider the people around me. If anything, life on this farm has taught me that.” By now she was pushing Charlie backwards as she moved into her space. “But you wouldn’t know anything about that would you? You have been treating me like I have the plague or something worse these past few months, and all you can do is come down here and insult me some more.” Megan was past reason.

“Stop pushing me and stop yelling,” Charlie said in a rather calm voice.

“I will stop when I am ready, and not you or anyone else will tell me when that is.”

“If you don’t stop I will use other methods to make you stop.”

“Oh now you want to go all Amazon on me. You do not scare me. I have had enough of your attitude. There is just no pleasing you and I...”

Megan’s words were cut short as Charlie roughly pulled her into her arms and kissed her. She was responding to the kiss before she even registered what was happening, but once she did she wrapped her arms around Charlie to get closer to her. This was even better than her dreams.

Charlie couldn’t believe the response she was getting, and she couldn’t get herself to move away either. She had thought about doing this so many times, but never thought it would be like this.

Charlie eventually pulled away when she felt the need for air. She quickly turned around and walked to her horse without saying a word. Megan stared at her in disbelief. Once on the horse Charlie turned to Megan.

“Next time you should stop when I tell you to,” she said with a self-satisfied smirk on her face before she rode off.

“If that’s your method of shutting me up, I think I’ll soon be holding the record for the person that spoke the most,” Megan whispered, looking at Charlie’s retreating form..

Part 4

Megan tried to get back to work after Charlie rode off, but she found herself staring at the tools not knowing what to do with them. The only thing she could think about was that kiss. She couldn’t believe that one kiss could make you feel invincible. She felt like she could take on the whole world, and still walk away smiling. She convinced herself that it was due to the fact that she hadn’t been intimate with anyone in months. Eventually, she found herself sitting on a rock staring at nothing, while daydreaming about possibilities that included her and Charlie anywhere they could be horizontal – or vertical for that matter. Her mind was reeling, and her body heat was rising.

She didn’t even realise she’d been ignoring her stomach, until Rubin stopped by with lunch. He had to laugh at the silly expression on her face that once again confirmed his wife’s remarks about him not understanding women. He had never seen any of the men on the farm looking like that while they were working, especially not in the hot summer sun.

Charlie rode off with the smile still on her face, but it soon disappeared. She got angry with herself for losing control. “You just had to go and do it didn’t you?” she whispered into the air.

She had thought she was handling things well, up until the moment she stood in front of a ranting and raving Megan. All those evenings that she’d been spending holding and comforting a sleeping Megan had taken their toll. She wanted to hold her while she was wide-awake and responsive to her touch. She couldn’t keep her eyes from the lips that were yelling at her. She felt a desperate urge to taste those lips, and feel that body pressed up against her with need.

When Charlie walked into the house, Katrina knew something was wrong. “What happened Charlie?”

“I just made a huge mistake.” Charlie was shaking her head from side to side. “How could I let my heart betray me like that?”

“Tell me what happened.” Katrina pulled out a chair to sit next to Charlie at the dining room table.

“I kissed her, and it was so much more than I ever dreamed it could be.” Charlie crossed her arms on the table, and let her head rest on them while looking sideways at Katrina.

“Why do you think that it was a mistake if it felt so right?”

“I know what she’s after. I recognise the signs. I was right before, all she wants is a good time. I’ve done it so many times to other women in the past few years, but I can’t allow her to use me like that.”

“Why not enjoy it for what it is then?”

“Because I think I’m in love with her Kat. That little spitfire has managed to walk right into a corner of my heart that I thought was gone.”

“I still say that you should give her some time. She has changed a lot in the last few months already.”

“I think I need to go and cool down in the pond.”

“Don’t be silly Charlie.” Katrina couldn’t believe Charlie was being so thoughtless. “It’s only one thirty in the afternoon. The UV levels are way too high now. You of all people should know the sun has no mercy this time of day. Skin cancer is not something to mess around with.”

Megan drove home in the truck, with Charlie still occupying her mind. It wasn't the end of the day yet, but she couldn't wait to get home and explore some of the possibilities she'd been daydreaming about all afternoon.

When she walked into the house she went looking for Charlie, but couldn't find her anywhere. She ran into Kathy and asked her if she knew where Charlie was, but she said she didn't. She found Katrina in the kitchen preparing some freshly picked green beans.

"Hi Kat, have you seen Charlie?"

"She's swimming in the pond."

"This early?"

"If I hadn't stopped her, she would have been in there at lunch time already. As if she doesn't know this African sun by now. I don't think she was thinking rationally at the time."

Megan smiled when she heard the words that showed their kiss definitely had an effect on Charlie as well. "It's been a long hot day. I think I should go for a swim as well."

"Maybe I'll come and join you in the pool after a while."

"Well, actually, I was thinking of taking a dip in the pond as well."

Katrina's eyebrow lifted when she heard the words. "I thought you didn't think it was hygienic to swim in a pond."

Megan took a green bean out of the bowl. Katrina playfully made an attempt to stop her from taking another one. "Things change." Megan wiggled her eyebrows. "I'm even enjoying all this freshness around me. I'm starting to wonder how I'll survive in the big city without you. Maybe I should buy a place with a big yard, and steal you to come and live with me. You can have chickens and whatever else you want." She pulled the sitting Katrina into a hug from behind.

Katrina laughed. "I don't think the big city is ready for me walking down the street with a cow on a leash, nor a rooster waking them up when the sun rises. I saw a TV show once where a city man shot a rooster off the fence pole to shut it up. That is most probably what would end up happening. Maybe you should just stay here."

“I have come to enjoy it on the farm, but I’m still a city girl and I have a separate life out there.” Megan sighed before she let go of Katrina “But let’s not wonder about what still lies a few months ahead of us. The here and now is more exciting right now, so I’m just going to get a towel.”

Katrina looked at Megan’s retreating form while thinking about Charlie’s words. She knew now that Charlie had been right with her presumptions. She liked Megan very much, but Charlie was like a daughter to her as well, and she didn’t want to see her get hurt, although she knew she couldn’t make her choices for her. She was still holding on to the hope that Megan would realise what was really important in life, because that’s the only way she could see this situation having any chance of a happy ending.

Charlie was still fighting with herself over her earlier actions. “Why the hell did I grab her? She keeps on telling me that I’m like an Amazon, and then I go and act like one. I might just as well have hit her over the head with a wooden bat, and dragged her by the hair like a caveman.” Charlie threw her hands up in the air as she shouted the words for the skies to hear.

“I kind of liked the Amazon idea, but I don’t know about the caveman thing.”

Charlie froze as she heard the words. She spun around. In front of her stood a very naked Megan with a huge smile on her face.

“I don’t think the whole dragging me by my hair thing would be good for me, but seeing that I am already here, the whole thing is unnecessary.”

Charlie could only stare at Megan with her mouth hanging open. She took a few steps closer to Megan until she was only knee-deep in the water. The fact that she was naked herself seemed to slip her mind.

“You should really close your mouth... and nice body by the way.” Megan looked at Charlie’s body in appreciation.

“You... can’t... be... here,” Charlie stuttered.

“Oh yes I can, and I can do much more.” Megan smiled suggestively

“Megan?” Charlie was still bewildered.

Megan walked up to where Charlie was still standing in the water, but when she got closer Charlie started retreating slowly into the deeper water. This whole thing was moving a little too slowly for Megan, who was hoping for a more fiery response from Charlie. Megan was covered in water up to her breasts now. She

thought it was time to wake Charlie up. She moved forward quickly and placed her hands on both sides of Charlie's face and pulled it down. She kissed her softly until she felt Charlie respond. The kiss grew more intense, and they were soon touching each other all over.

Charlie lost her reason. All her carefully laid plans for keeping Megan at arm's length were buried under their passion. Charlie's strong arms encircled Megan's waist, and she picked her up to straddle her hips. She let her hands roam over Megan's back while holding her. Megan managed to get one hand in between them, and was cupping Charlie's breast. She pinched her already erect nipple, which brought a deep moan from Charlie. Megan let her hand travel further down between their bodies, which drew more moans from Charlie. When Megan cupped her mound, Charlie couldn't help but dig her nails into Megan's back, who then slipped a finger between Charlie's folds. Charlie's groan into Megan's mouth fired her up even more. Megan used her thumb to slide up and down the shaft of Charlie's clit while she positioned one finger to enter her. Even in the water she could feel that Charlie was ready, and so was she. When she entered her, Charlie's legs became weak. They tumbled into the water together and both came up gasping for air.

The cold water over Charlie's head brought her back to her senses. "We can't do this."

"Why can't we do this? We've already been doing it." Megan glared at her in disbelief.

"I'm not some toy for your amusement."

"I didn't think I was the only one getting the 'amusement'. What is wrong with it anyway?" Megan moved closer to Charlie again.

"No!" Charlie almost shouted. "Keep away from me. Nothing good can come from this." Charlie rushed out of the water and quickly pulled her clothes over her wet body.

Megan was speechless as she watched Charlie dress. She got the idea that Charlie was scared of having physical contact with her. "Interesting," she whispered as she moved to get out of the water herself. Previously she had only thought of having some fun with Charlie to pass time, but now it was something else. She felt the need to conquer her. She was not used to women turning her down. She had an idea that she held a power over Charlie and planned on using it to her benefit. "I'll get what I want, I normally do."

Charlie prayed that this would be one of the nights that Megan didn't have her nightmare. In the beginning it had happened every night, but with time it happened less, maybe once or twice a week at the most. She hadn't learned anything more about Christine through Megan's dreams, because it was the same thing over and over again.

Before today it had already been difficult to hold Megan in her arms to comfort her, but now, after they had been so intimate, she was scared of her own reactions. Twice now she had given in to her body's needs, but she knew it was more than that. She had never been one to lose control, not even over her body's sexual need. Her mind was definitely being overruled by her heart and body.

Charlie didn't get much sleep. She kept on waking up at every sound, expecting it to be Megan. The next morning at the dining room table she looked ready to fall over.

"You know, getting rid of pent up frustration is an easy way of ensuring a good night's sleep." Megan had a self-satisfied smile on her face. "Give me a shout if you need some help with it."

This was enough to get Charlie to burst. "You're still a selfish little bitch. You're the only reason I have sleepless nights."

"I can't see why I should feel bad because you can't stop thinking about me."

Charlie was momentarily speechless. She just stared at the smiling Megan in disbelief. She felt the need to wipe that smile of her face. "Who's Christine?" she asked coldly.

Megan went pale. It looked like she wanted to say something, but no sound was coming out. She closed her eyes and clenched her teeth. When she opened her eyes again she grabbed hold of the sides of the table and lifted slightly off her chair. "That is none of your damn business."

Charlie jumped up and threw her napkin on the table. "You make it my damn business every time you have that nightmare about her." Charlie hadn't thought Megan could turn any paler, but she did.

"I don't remember having any dreams or nightmares these last few days."

"Rather try the last few months."

"You're lying!"

"I'm not. It started the night of Martin's accident."

“Then why in the hell have you never said anything, or even just woke me up?”

“Because I thought I was doing the right thing.”

“You obviously have no idea what the right thing is.”

Charlie looked like she was about to inflict bodily harm on Megan. “Fuck you!”

“You wish!”

They just glared at each other before they stormed off in different directions.

Megan almost walked into Katrina who was on her way back to the house from the vegetable garden with some tomatoes. “Wow, I’m way too old to try and jump out of your way.”

“I’m sorry. I wasn’t looking where I was going.” Megan used her sleeves to wipe away the tears.

“What’s wrong?” Katrina brushed the hair out of Megan’s face with her hand.

“Have I been having nightmares since Martin’s accident?”

“Yes, but Charlie says that you are having them less frequently.”

“Why didn’t she just tell me?” Tears were running down Megan’s face again.

At that moment Harry and Rebecca came running around the corner of the house. When they saw Katrina and Megan they turned towards them.

“Charlie’s taking us horseback riding today,” Rebecca shouted while she was running towards them.

“And then we’re going to have a picnic,” Harry added by the time they stopped in front of them. “Are you coming with?”

“What’s wrong Aunty Megan?” Harry asked when he saw Megan’s tears.

“You must tell Mummy where it hurts. She fixes it with a plaster and a kiss. It always works,” Rebecca said with a proud voice.

“I’m fine.” Megan tried to smile. “You two go on and enjoy your day. Maybe I’ll join you for the picnic.”

“OK,” they said in unison.

When the kids turned around and ran towards the stable, Megan started crying all over again. Katrina led her towards the garden bench and sat down next to her.

“Why don’t you tell me what all this is about?” Katrina had her arm wrapped around Megan’s shaking shoulders.

Megan looked up into Katrina’s sincere eyes, and knew that this was one person that she could talk to. She tried to calm herself down. “It was so long ago, but it still feels like yesterday. I can’t believe the nightmares have started again. They used to be very bad after the accident. But maybe I should rather start at the beginning.”

“The beginning is always a good place to start.”

“Christine was my cousin on my mother’s side. My uncle and his wife lived only a few blocks away from us. We were the same age, and were best friends since forever. We were about seven years old when her mother died from cancer. Her father was a kind and gentle person, nothing like my mother at all, and he was so in love with his wife. After her death he was devastated. Christine spent more and more time at our house, and we grew even closer. We felt like sisters instead of cousins. We were practically inseparable.” Megan couldn’t help the tears that were still running down her cheeks. She wiped them away again.

“We were known as the Callaway sisters. I think only the teachers knew what Christine’s actual surname was, but she didn’t mind.” Megan gave a sad laugh at the memory.

“We loved life. I would come up with all the harebrained ideas, but she would rationalise them. We did anything and everything we could possibly think of in our years together. We always said we should try everything at least once. They were the best years of my life, but it also contained the worst day of my life.” Megan’s tears flowed more strongly again, and it took her a while to calm down again.

“When we were sixteen, I suggested we go for a day walk on Table Mountain instead of going up and down using the cable car. I’d heard so much about it, and was told that if we stuck to the paths that I had heard about, there wouldn’t be any need to climb. This was great, because I have a fear of heights. It would be like going up steep stairs for the first part, and then eventually it would be like an open field. When we came down, it would have been a steep zig zag path down the gorge, but still no climbing.” Megan took a deep breath and let it out again to try and control her emotions.

“We went on a Saturday morning, and it was great. The back part of the mountain was beautiful. It honestly didn’t feel like we were on a mountain. We were still walking along the path when we heard cries. It wasn’t human, but it was heart wrenching. We couldn’t just walk away. We followed the cries, but it came from the side of a ledge. Christine leaned over to see what it was, and saw a plastic bag just barely hanging onto a root that was sticking out between some rocks. The sounds were clearer, and we were sure it was at least two or three puppies. It was obvious that someone had tried to dispose of them, but that the bag had got caught on the root.”

“I crawled to the side on my stomach to see what the situation was, and told her that we had to do something because the way the puppies were moving around in the bag would eventually cause the bag to slip. I figured that we just had to climb down onto the ledge to be able to reach them. The ledge was pretty wide, and looked stable and easy to get to. Christine said that it was too dangerous, and that there were reasons why we should stick to the paths. I told her that we couldn’t just leave the puppies like that, and said that I would climb down myself. She knew I was determined, even though I was afraid of heights, so she told me not to be silly and that she would do it. She climbed down, but the rocks on the side weren’t stable. She fell backwards onto the ledge with a few rocks on top of her.” Megan’s bottom lip was quivering as she was trying to keep control.

“I was calling out to her to speak to me, but there was nothing. I could see that her eyes were closed and that there was blood on the side of her mouth. I shouted for help, but there was no one around. I don’t even know how I got down to the ledge, but I did. My fear of heights was nothing compared to my fear of losing her. I tried my best to get the rocks off her, but the biggest one was just too heavy. I couldn’t move it. It wouldn’t even budge.” Megan couldn’t control the tears anymore, and was sobbing. Katrina just held her in her arms until she was calm again.

“I wanted to go back up again to try and get some help, but I couldn’t make it up again. I was shouting for help for hours, but nothing. I felt so helpless, and it became dark and very, very cold. I heard later that they couldn’t start a rescue search for us because the mountain was covered in a white cloud, which meant zero visibility with a helicopter. They came looking for us the next morning. I was almost frozen due to the temperature dropping so rapidly up on the mountain at night, and according to them, Christine died sometime during the night from internal bleeding. It was all my fault.” Megan clung to Katrina. She wasn’t trying to stop the tears anymore.

“After that, life was never the same again. I didn’t feel that I deserved to live, so I tried to take my own life. My father and mother would have none of that. They sent me from one clinic to another. It was hell. I eventually realised the only way to get out of my hell, was to become like my parents who felt nothing, but controlled everything. That is who I’ve been ever since. It has worked, because I

was able to live life knowing I caused the death of my best friend.” Katrina wouldn’t let go when Megan tried to move away.

“No one’s life is cast in stone Megan, and I’m sure Christine wouldn’t want you to live your life this way. It’s not the way she should be remembered. Your friendship defined who you were, and by giving up on that, you gave up on her.”

Part 5

Megan’s dreams became intense and frequent again. She woke up every night screaming and sweating. The dark circles under her eyes became more and more prominent. She had spoken to Katrina again, but Katrina told her that she had to deal with the issue or go and see someone for help, but Megan refused to be drawn back into her childhood hell. She would find a way to deal with it, but she wouldn’t see someone again. Some nights she found herself wishing that Charlie would be there to comfort her again, but her anger towards Charlie would quickly drive those feelings away. It didn’t stop her from having those feelings again though. Although she couldn’t remember the previous dreams, she knew something was missing, but hell would freeze over before she would approach Charlie again. She felt humiliated in more ways than one.

Charlie woke up every night from Megan’s screams as well. It took a lot of self-control not to give in to her desire to go to her. She was angry at herself for her body’s betrayal, and didn’t want to risk it again. She knew she loved Megan, even after what had happened, but she still wouldn’t allow herself to be used.

Days went on, and things got back into a normal routine except for the nights that still held Megan’s screams. Charlie’s cows were calving, and things weren’t looking as bad as she had thought. The new vet in town came by to introduce herself and she took an immediate liking to Charlie who in turn thought she might be a good distraction. They were sitting on the porch with Katrina when Megan came around the corner. She looked very dishevelled after spending most of the morning with Harry and Rebecca in the field on another picnic.

“Megan!” Katrina motioned for her to come join them on the porch. “Come and meet Allison and have a cup of tea with us.” Megan walked towards Allison with an extended hand.

“Megan, this is Allison Montgomery, the new vet in town, and Allison, this is Megan, the other owner of the farm.” Allison gave Megan the once over and smiled, but Megan could feel the woman’s antagonism and an ice-cold chill went down her spine. She gave a fake smile and went to sit down on the chair next to Katrina.

Allison took a sip of her tea and turned to Charlie. “You must let me know if there’s anything I can do to help you. I’ll be on twenty four hour call whenever you need me.”

She completely ignored Megan and Katrina, and laid her hand on Charlie's. "Maybe when you have some time, you can show me around this little town of yours."

"I have time tonight. Why don't you join me for dinner? We actually have a nice little restaurant in this town of ours."

"That'll be amazing." Allison smiled from ear to ear. She was running her fingers up and down Charlie's arm.

Megan felt a twist in her stomach when she saw how Allison flirted with Charlie. She didn't like what she saw at all. She felt suffocated and wanted to get away from them as soon as possible.

"I need to get cleaned up, so please excuse me," Megan said as she got up to walk away.

Allison gave her a smile. "It was nice meeting you Megan. Maybe we can get to know each other a little better before you leave at the end of the year."

Megan immediately felt anger building up in her. "Who says I'm leaving at the end of the year? I haven't finalized any of my plans, and people shouldn't presume what they don't know."

Charlie and Katrina looked up at Megan in shock.

"But aren't you selling your half of the farm to Charlie?" Allison looked from Megan to Charlie in puzzlement.

Megan glared at Charlie. "Do you go out of your way to tell every stranger about our business?"

"I didn't know it was a state secret. You implied that you would only be here for the year." Charlie glared back at Megan.

"It's my life, and I can change my mind without asking your permission. Don't presume that you can drive me away so easily."

Megan turned to Allison with a cynical smile. "Don't sharpen your teeth for Charlie just yet, she's frigid."

There were several moments of shocked silence after Megan's declaration, during which she turned and walked away..

That evening Katrina and Megan had dinner on their own after Charlie left to have dinner with Allison.

“Charlie looked very nice tonight.” Katrina sounded like a proud mother. “I haven’t seen her put so much effort into her looks in a long time.”

“I don’t know what she sees in that vet.”

“Why Megan, do I detect a bit of jealousy?” Katrina was smiling.

“There’s nothing to be jealous about.”

“That’s not what it sounds like from this end.”

Megan looked at Katrina for a long while before she spoke again. “What’s wrong with me?”

“What do you mean?”

“What’s wrong with me that she doesn’t want to touch me?”

“That’s something that you would need to discuss with her.”

“No way am I discussing anything with her!”

“Then you will just have to keep wondering, or forget about it.”

Katrina had a faint smile on her face through the rest of the meal. “It’s about time,” she thought. “Those two broken souls will one day be one. Claire’s idea wasn’t so harebrained at all.”

After their dinner, Allison invited Charlie to her house for coffee. Once inside, Allison made sure that Charlie knew what her real intentions were. She wrapped her arms around Charlie and pulled her closer. She pulled Charlie’s head down to her and explored her lips. The kiss grew more intense as Charlie participated, but it wasn’t very long before Charlie pulled away.

“I can’t do this. It isn’t fair to you.”

“Why not? We both want it.”

“I would just be using you, which is exactly what I was accusing Megan of.”

“But I don’t mind being used by you until you know what you want.”

“That’s just it, I know what I want. I want Megan.”

“Feelings change.”

“Yes they do. Mine has changed into the love I feel for her. I don’t know what tomorrow holds, and I don’t want to hope for too much, but I can’t be untrue to my heart.”

Allison got upset. “If that’s the case, then run back to her. She was so jealous that anyone who didn’t know better would have thought she was your girlfriend.”

“Don’t get upset Allison, we both knew what we let ourselves in for... uhmm, what do you mean she was jealous?”

“Oh come on. Anyone could have seen it a mile away.”

“Anyone but me,” Charlie muttered.

Charlie drove home with her mind running through the day’s events. She still couldn’t believe that Megan had blurted out that they shouldn’t presume that she was leaving at the end of the year. She had to admit that Megan had been very antagonistic toward Allison from the start, and maybe it was because she was jealous. Charlie smiled at the thought. Maybe there was some light at the end of this tunnel after all..

Megan couldn’t sleep. It was after one in the morning, and Charlie still wasn’t home yet. “Why am I letting this upset me so much? We’re not involved. She doesn’t owe me anything. She has a right to see whoever she wants, even if it isn’t me.” Megan looked at her watch again. “They’re probably having sex right now. What the hell does she have that I don’t?” Megan was getting all worked up again. “I have a good body, I know I’m worth looking at, and I wasn’t asking for any commitment. What more could she ask for?”

Megan got up from her bed to get herself another drink. “A few more of these might get me a night’s sleep, and then I might stop talking to myself.” She laughed at herself as she walked down the stairs with the whisky glass in her hand. She was halfway down when she bumped into Charlie. With the feelings of anger still fresh, she smiled sarcastically. “Well Charlie, I didn’t take you for the fuck them and leave them type. Are you losing your edge?”

Charlie’s looked at the half drunk Megan. “Maybe you should leave the comments to tomorrow and get some sleep.”

“You have no right to tell me what to do. I’m not part of your life; I’m not even good enough to have sex with.”

“I think you really need to stop talking.” Charlie just looked at Megan in amusement. It looked like Allison was right.

“Stop telling me what to do!” Megan was shoving her finger in Charlie’s face again.

“Didn’t I tell you before not to do that?”

“Oh, I almost forgot about that. It just means that the experience was nothing worth remembering.”

Charlie had a wicked grin on her face. “Is that so?”

“Yes,” Megan responded defiantly. “I don’t even know why I was ever interested in having sex with you.” Megan was right in Charlie’s face by now. She was pushing her finger into Charlie’s chest, but her finger managed to miss the spot and land on a full breast. Even in her alcohol induced state, the feel of Charlie breast under her finger sent a tingle through Megan’s body.

Charlie let out a soft moan and closed her eyes for a second. “Then maybe we need to do something to remedy that fact.” She pulled Megan towards her. “I can’t have you going around thinking I don’t know how to please.” She brought her lips down onto Megan’s who waited in anticipation. Her mind was a bit fuzzy, but she knew she wanted this more than anything else.

Megan was breathless by the time Charlie pulled away. She was swaying slightly. Charlie took the glass out of her hand before she turned Megan around and pushed her back upstairs. Megan’s mind was still spinning and she just went with the flow.

Once outside Megan’s door Charlie gave her a soft slap on the behind. “Now, go and sleep it off like a good little girl,” Charlie said as she turned around and walked to her room.

Megan just stood in place, completely taken aback by Charlie’s behaviour. Once the clouds in her mind started clearing a bit, she shouted towards the now closed door to Charlie’s room, “You arrogant asshole, you don’t know what you’re missing!”

She only heard laughter coming from behind the door, after which she marched into her room and slammed the door shut.

Megan looked and felt like death the next morning when she eventually got up. Even in her drunken state, she wasn’t able to get away from the nightmare. She was cradling her head in her hands as she was sitting at the dining room table. Harry and Rebecca chose that moment to run past their mother shouting out loud on their way to find Charlie who had promised to take them horseback riding. Megan felt ready to accept death over the pounding in her head. Hopefully the aspirins she had taken would eventually work.

“Are you coming horseback riding with us Megan?” Harry asked excitedly.

“I’m really not a rider.”

“Charlie promised me that I could ride with her on Mobius. Maybe she could teach you like that as well.” Rebecca’s innocent remark made Megan groan inwardly.

“Oh, I don’t think so.” Megan tried to smile. “I’m sure Charlie has more important things to do.”

“As a matter of fact, I don’t.”

Megan stiffened when she heard the words before she looked up to see Charlie casually walking into the dining room with a wide smile on her face. “We’d be happy to have you join us.”

Megan glared at Charlie. “I don’t own riding clothes.”

“No need for them. You can come as you are.”

“Please!” Harry and Rebecca said in chorus.

“I really don’t think it’s a good idea.” Megan continued to try to get out of it.

“Come on kids, let’s leave her to sleep some more. At least you guys aren’t scared of horses.” Charlie took Rebecca by her hand as she moved towards the door.

Megan’s face turned red at the statement, and she was boiling inside. She really wanted to swear at Charlie, but had enough self-control not to do it in front of the children. “I’ll meet you guys at the stable in ten minutes.”

Charlie looked over her shoulder at Megan with a huge grin on her face. “Take your time, we’re in no rush. It’s Sunday after all.”

By the time Megan got to the stable, Harry was already on a horse named Matilda. Charlie was leading the horse to get Harry comfortable in the seat, not that he looked uncomfortable at all. He looked like he was born in the seat. When they saw Megan approaching they stopped.

“I have a horse all saddled up for you.” Charlie walked towards one of the open stall doors and led out a horse that looked very calm. “You shouldn’t have any problems with her.”

“Granny’s great to learn to ride on Megan. She doesn’t do anything but walk.” Harry smiled proudly. “That’s how I started.”

Megan looked at Charlie and gave a big smile, but her eyes told a different story.
“Great!”

Charlie could see the fire burning in Megan’s eyes, and decided to test it a bit more. “You could always learn to ride with me on Mobius. I’ll even let you sit in front.”

“No, it’s fine. Granny will do.”

After riding for an hour they got back to the stable, where Charlie suggested Megan should stay with her for another lesson. The kids agreed that it would be a great idea, because if she could learn to ride better, they could actually ride a bit faster instead of just letting the horses walk.

“Unless you aren’t up to it?” Charlie asked.

Megan wished she could wipe that smirk off Charlie’s face. “I’m up to anything that you can suggest.” Internally she just wanted to get off the horse, because she had stopped feeling her behind thirty minutes ago.

Charlie’s one eyebrow lifted up a notch. “Very good to know. How about a different horse? Maybe one a little bit faster?”

“Bring it on!”

Charlie arranged for Thunder to be saddled. When Megan saw the horse her eyes widened. “You call that a little bit faster? The horse doesn’t look like it knows how to stand still!”

“Thunder’s a gentle horse once you’re on him. He just needs to get used to you, so come closer.” Charlie could see Megan swallow a lump in her throat. “If you’re scared, just say so.”

“I’m not scared,” Megan said a little too quickly.

“Maybe we had better get Granny again.”

“No, I’m fine with him.” Megan walked closer to the horse while trying not to think of him biting her.

“This might help.” Charlie handed Megan an apple. “He loves these. Mobius is a sugar freak, but Thunder prefers the healthy things in life.”

The lesson went well. Being on a horse that actually had some spirit made a difference for her. Before long they were trotting at a steady pace. Megan was enjoying it so much that she even forgot about not being able to feel her behind.

They stopped at the river to give the horses a bit of a rest, but Megan and Charlie walked in opposite directions after they agreed to meet back at the spot in twenty minutes. As Megan walked away she could feel the stiffness setting in, but tried to walk normally.

After twenty minutes they both got back to the horses, except that Thunder was nowhere to be found. "Something must have scared him. I'm sure he'll be at the stable when we get back."

Megan was panicking a bit. "Great, and just how on earth am I suppose to get back?"

"Well, you have two choices. You can either walk or ride with me. I wouldn't suggest the walking part, the sun is way too hot."

"Why can't you ride back to the stable and come back with another horse?"

"Don't be silly Megan. There is enough space on Mobius for both of us."

"That's the horse that threw you off isn't it?"

"Yes, but only because I was distracted when it got a fright."

"If I have to choose between the combination of you and your horse, versus the sun and walking, I think I'd rather be walking." Megan turned around and started walking in the direction of the house.

Charlie ran after her. "That's just stupid."

"You need to make up your mind whether you think I'm silly or stupid," Megan said without looking back.

Charlie reached Megan and stopped her with a hand on her shoulder. Megan turned around as she sighed. "You also need to make up your mind if you want me or not. I'm tired of these games."

"I don't want you in the way that you think." Charlie couldn't look into Megan's eyes as she said this.

"Great, just great. At least now I know where I stand." Megan was seething. She spun around and started walking again. "What other way could you be wanting me if it's not sexually? Why do you feel the need to play with words? Just tell me you're not interested, and at least have the decency to act like you don't want me as well!"

“Megan, you have it wrong.” Charlie rushed after her and stopped her again.

“Get your hands off me! I don’t ever want you close to me again.”

“Stop acting like a child.”

“Stop telling me what to do, and leave me alone!” Megan spun around again.

“That’s it. I’ve had enough.” Charlie rushed after Megan again, but this time she came to a stop in front of her which made Megan bump into her. She grabbed Megan by the waist and pulled her over her shoulder and walked back towards Mobius. Megan tried with all her might to get off, but she couldn’t budge. By the time they reached the horse she had given up fighting.

“This day just keeps on getting better and better. Are you getting in touch with your Amazon roots again?” Megan glared at Charlie when she lifted her onto the horse.

“You’re the only person that pushes me to extremes like this. I’m sure that deep down in that little mind of yours, you’re enjoying every minute of this.” Charlie silently cursed herself for even thinking that her plan would have a good outcome, but chasing Thunder away in order to force Megan to ride with her had backfired. She mounted Mobius to sit behind Megan who looked like she had a broom up her behind. “You better hold on.”

Megan tried to have as little contact with Charlie as possible on the ride home, but when Charlie brought Mobius to a sprint she was leaning back and clinging onto Charlie’s thighs. Charlie automatically brought her arms down tighter to create a more secure circle for Megan. Even in their angered state, both of them were very aware of each other and every part that was touching.

Once they reached the house, Megan almost jumped off. She was inside the house and on her way to her room before Katrina, who was sitting on the porch, could even say a word. Katrina turned her attention to Charlie who dismounted slowly. “Should I even ask what happened this time?”

“Well, I’m rusty to say the least. I think I need to go and read a manual on how to be romantic, and she needs to take a Valium or two. She’s strung tighter than a bow; it’s a wonder I still have a head on my shoulders.

Part 6

Megan was like a bear with a sore foot for the next few days. She kept herself busy night and day between the farm work and running her company, not that she needed to do much on either side, but she found things to do. She once again tried to stay away from Charlie as far as possible, but she just couldn’t prevent herself from feeling anger and yearning at the same time. She eventually felt the need to speak to someone, so she went looking for Katrina who she found in her vegetable garden.

“Kat, can I speak to you?” she asked not really sure where to begin.

“You’re already speaking to me,” Katrina replied laughingly.

Megan had to smile. “You know what I mean Kat.”

Katrina stopped what she was doing and got up. “I was wondering when you were planning on opening up. Why don’t you grab that shovel over there and come and help me? Kevin wasn’t too impressed this morning when I chased him out of my garden. He seems to think I’m too old to be bending over.” Katrina laughed again shaking her head. “You would swear that I would break the way he went on, but I made it very clear that I’ve been attending to my vegetable garden while he was still sitting in the school benches. He seems to think that it supports his argument instead of mine.” Katrina removed the glove from one hand to push a strand of hair behind her ear. “There’s an extra pair of gloves next to the gate.”

Megan took the pair of working gloves and picked up the shovel as she walked towards Katrina. “My mother would never have been caught dead near a garden, never mind a vegetable garden. You’re an amazing person Kat.”

“Thanks, but I prefer to think that I’m just normal. You can start on that side. I need a trench all the way to the bottom of that row.” Katrina showed Megan where the trench needed to be before returning to what she was busy with. “I take it this conversation is going to be about Charlie?”

Megan looked up quickly, but only saw concern in Katrina’s eyes. “I’m starting to think you know me better after only a few months than my mother who knew me for years.” Megan sighed. “I just don’t understand what I’m going through. I thought it was lust, and then I thought it was my bruised ego, and now I just don’t know. I want her so much, but she also manages to make me so angry. I’ve never been so out of control when it comes to my emotions. I’ve always been in control. I started relationships when I felt like it, and I ended them when I felt it was over. I must admit though that my relationships were more about a physical need than anything else. I also have to admit to myself that I’m jealous for the first time in my life. This is so unlike me. I’m feeling helpless, and I swore that I’d never feel that again. It’s not the same thing as all those years ago, but the helpless feeling is the same.”

The more Megan talked the deeper she was pushing the shovel into the ground. Katrina saw this, but knew that it was a good thing. Working out the anger she felt was better than her lashing out at everyone the way she had been doing the last few days. “Do you think it’s love?”

“Love is a feeling of weakness, and I prefer not to feel it.”

“That’s where you’re wrong Megan. You can’t decide to feel or not feel love. You just feel it. Love is a beautiful thing.”

“No it’s not. Love equals pain and disappointment.”

“Are you referring to Christine?”

“Yes. It wasn’t just the feeling of helplessness that upset me so much. She was like a sister and best friend rolled into one. She gave me the love that nobody else did, and what did I do?”

“Megan, we spoke about this before. You need to work through your feeling of guilt. I know that your dreams haven’t stopped, and also that they won’t stop until you deal with this. Love is a beautiful thing, and there are many levels of it. I’m sure that even after Christine’s death you have loved people in various ways. There is your aunt for instance. She loved you very much and wanted to help you. I’m sure you loved her in a way. Then there are all the people on this farm. You’ve been here for a few months already. I’m sure if you really think about it, you would realise what you feel for these people. You can’t tell me that those two kids haven’t climbed into your heart with their dirty little feet and all.” Katrina had a smile on her face thinking about Harry and Rebecca running through her kitchen with their dirty feet leaving marks all over the floor. “I’ve seen you with them. Those were not the actions of a person that’s indifferent to them. You just can’t see it because you don’t think you deserve to feel or receive love.”

Megan stopped what she was doing and just stared at the ground. “So, you’re saying that what I’m feeling towards Charlie is love, even though I don’t want to feel it?”

“I’m saying it’s a possibility. All the signs are there, and once again you can’t dictate love. It has a way of biting you in the butt when you try.”

Megan’s face was a picture of confusion. “So, a little thing like love can make me feel all these emotions and cause all this confusion?”

“You should never underestimate love. The strongest of people has fallen because of it, but it has also lifted the weaker ones to victory. Love can make you weak or strong, it just depends on what you do with it. Do yourself a favour and just accept it as a possibility, and see where it takes you.”

“Thanks Kat. If I had had people like you in my younger years, I might have turned out as a better person.”

“You can only blame your behaviour on others for so long. What you make of the circumstances is what moulds you. Everyone is different and all will react differently. You can be a victim for the rest of your life, or you can choose not to be. You can also choose to use other people or be supportive of them, but once you become the supportive and uplifting one, it takes you even higher. Also remember it’s never too late to change.”

Megan smiled at Katrina. “You should have been my psychologist all those years ago.”

“I’m just glad that I can help you now.”

Megan took her gloves off as she walked towards Katrina with tears starting to run down her face. “You are an extraordinary person Kat, never mind what you think about being ordinary.” When she reached her Megan wrapped her arms around Katrina and just held on to her as the tears fell.

As the days went by Megan became calmer. She was only now learning to understand her own heart, and it was a scary feeling for her. Everyone could see the change and welcomed it, although they did wonder about it, especially Charlie. Megan seemed to be trying to spend more time in her company, but Charlie was wary. She knew what she felt for Megan was love, but decided not to force anything. She was very glad that the dreams became less frequent again.

One evening Katrina walked into the study where Charlie was catching up on some paperwork. “Do you know it’s Megan’s birthday in two days?”

“No, how did you find out?”

“I might be old, but I have my ways,” Katrina grinned.

“So what do you think we should do about it?” Charlie closed the book she was working in.

“I thought that we might have a spitbraai on Saturday afternoon and invite all the people that she has met in the last few months including the farm workers. I don’t think we should invite Allison though.”

“Oh, and why not?” Charlie feigned innocence.

“Don’t you start something Charlie. You were present at their last interaction. Do you want a cat fight?”

“Well now, that could be interesting!” Charlie had a huge grin on her face.

“Don’t you even dare!”

“Ahhh, but it could be fun.”

“Charlene Palmer, you will not find amusement at the expense of Megan.”

“Wow, I’m just joking.”

“Then stop joking and let’s start planning.” Katrina sat down opposite Charlie.

After a while they'd finished all the planning and just had to put it into action the next day. "Remember not to say anything to her," Katrina said as she walked out of the study.

"Now the only question is what am I going to get her?" Charlie said out loud. She pulled the paperwork towards her again and continued her work. By the time she had finished she knew exactly what she wanted to give to Megan. She switched off the light and walked up the stairs with a smile on her face.

Saturday morning Megan awoke feeling a bit disappointed. It was her birthday and no one knew about it. The previous years she had normally organised a birthday party for her friends to attend at her expense.

She got dressed and walked down to the dining room, but didn't find anybody there. She went into the kitchen looking for Katrina, but she wasn't there either. She was still looking around when she heard a commotion just outside the front door. She walked out onto the porch to find Katrina and all the farm workers standing on the porch and Charlie walking towards them leading a beautiful black horse.

"What's all the commotion about?" Megan asked from the door. Everyone fell silent when they realised Megan stood there. Nobody said a word until Charlie stopped in front of the porch with the horse.

"You can do the honours Charlie," Katrina said when Charlie gestured that she should speak.

"I only got a doll on my birthday," Rebecca whispered to her brother, but it was loud enough for everyone to hear, including Megan. It was dead silent for a second before Katrina burst out laughing and everybody else did the same. Megan stood there flabbergasted.

"Happy birthday Megan," Charlie eventually said when she stopped laughing. "Her name is Melody, and she's a two year old filly."

Megan walked down the porch steps towards Charlie and the horse without saying a word. When she got to them Charlie handed her some sugar cubes. "Sorry, this one's got a sweet tooth like mine."

Megan gave Melody the sugar cubes and ran her hand down the front of her head. "What am I suppose to do with a horse?" she asked Charlie in a whisper.

"I think the idea is to ride on her," Charlie whispered back with a smile.

Megan turned to the people behind her. "Thank you all very much."

“That’s not all you’re getting,” Rebecca happily shouted out.

Everyone laughed again. “With this child around, no secret is safe. It’s a good thing she only found out this morning,” Kathy apologised.

“So what else am I getting or shouldn’t I risk asking?” Megan was enjoying the situation.

“We’re having a spitbraai this afternoon!” Harry yelled out in excitement, not allowing his sister to have all the fun.

“A spitbraai?” Megan asked with a puzzled expression.

Charlie looked at her with shock. “You can’t tell me that you’re a South African and don’t know what a spitbraai is?”

“Yes I can. So what is it?” Everyone laughed causing Megan’s cheeks to turn red.

“Do you know what rotisserie chicken is?” Charlie asked.

“Yes.”

“Well, we’ll be doing that to a whole sheep over hot coals.”

Megan had a shocked expression on her face. “You have a barbeque that big?”

“Yes we do, and we’ve invited everyone you know from around here. By the way, around here you better talk about a braai and not a barbeque. People will think you’re foreigner.”

“You’ve invited everyone?” Megan asked apprehensively.

Charlie bent down and whispered in Megan’s ear. “Don’t worry Megan, Allison wasn’t invited.” She pulled back and Megan could see the amused gleam in her eyes.

Megan glared at her in mock anger and whispered back, “Won’t you be a bit lonely tonight then?”

Charlie looked deep into Megan’s green eyes for what felt like an eternity. Megan swallowed deep unable to tear her eyes away. Charlie placed her hand at the small of Megan’s back before she whispered again, “No, I have everything I could ever want right here.” She left her hand there for a few more seconds before she pulled her hand away and took the reins from Megan’s unmoving fingers. “What do you say you and I go for a ride?”

Megan was still in a state of shock at Charlie's words and didn't respond. Charlie took it as a no. "Fine, I'll take Melody back to the stable then."

"No!" Megan almost shouted out. Everyone fell silent at the outburst. They were looking from Megan to Charlie and back.

"I mean, yes, let's go for a ride."

Charlie smiled and the rest of the people went back to their own conversations.

Charlie and Megan were stealing glances at each other when they thought the other one wasn't looking. They'd been riding around for about half an hour already, and the atmosphere between them was tense, but for completely different reasons than ever before. They eventually came to the same spot next to the river where they had stopped before. Megan suggested they get off and give the horses a chance to drink some water. She had a sly smile on her face when she turned away from Charlie.

Charlie turned and led Mobius to the water expecting Megan to do the same, but instead she heard a slap and then the sound of a horse running. She spun around to see Melody already heading back the way they had come, and Megan standing there with a way too innocent look on her face.

"Oops. I guess she's a bit jumpy. It looks like you will have to give me a ride back home again."

Charlie was dumbfounded.

"I promise I won't be kicking and screaming this time."

Charlie still couldn't get herself to speak, or do anything else for that matter. She knew Megan had chased Melody away on purpose, but didn't want to allow herself the luxury of imagining why.

"We could even ride a bit more. We don't have to head home straight away. I'm sure there is still plenty to see on this farm that I've never been able to reach with the truck," Megan said, still the picture of innocence.

"Uhm... I guess I can take you to see the little cabin halfway up the hill on the south side." Charlie didn't know why she had even mentioned the cabin. It was her sanctuary, and apart from Katrina and Claire, no one else had ever been there.

"A cabin sounds interesting. Is that where you disappear to every now and then?"

“Yes, it’s got an amazing view of the farm.” Charlie got her verbal ability back completely. She didn’t want to hope for too much, so she was planning on playing it cool and just acting like nothing was wrong. “Come on then. Let me help you onto Mobius.”

Megan shook her head from side to side. “I prefer to sit behind you if you don’t mind. I’ll feel a lot more secure there, and I think I will enjoy the ride much more.”

Charlie felt a tingling feeling running down her spine at the way Megan let the word ‘ride’ run off her tongue. She shook her head slightly. “Your mind is playing games with you again. Don’t presume or hope for anything,” Charlie scolded herself.

“What’s wrong Charlie? Don’t you want me to ride on the back?”

Charlie shook her head again. “Yes... uhm... I mean no... Oh fuck. I mean yes, you can ride wherever you feel comfortable.”

Megan smiled. “Thank you, the back it is then.”

Charlie mounted Mobius before extending her hand to help Megan up effortlessly to sit behind her. She stiffened slightly when Megan’s hands came to rest on her hips. All she could do was pray for strength.

As they were riding, Megan’s hands began to travel, but she did it very slowly and lightly. She moved her hands slightly to the front and left them there for a while, but eventually started moving them up until they were brushing Charlie’s breasts. She could feel the effect she was having on her as she felt Charlie shiver slightly underneath her hands. She became bolder and cupped her breasts lightly while pushing herself against Charlie’s back, who froze for a second before relaxing into the embrace. Charlie could feel Megan’s hard nipples pressing into her back, and she didn’t care anymore. She had been trying to control herself for so long, but she just couldn’t anymore.

“Let her use me, I don’t care. At least I will have something to hold onto when she’s gone.” Charlie gave up on her internal battle.

Megan felt Charlie’s surrender as she pressed back into Megan’s embrace. This was all the encouragement she needed. She cupped Charlie’s breasts more firmly and let her fingers play with the nipples through her shirt and bra. They were hard in no time, and she moaned as she felt herself straining against her clothes. She could feel a pulse start deep within her. She was very thankful that Mobius was lazily walking along on the way to the cabin, for there was no way that she could stay in control and steer him.

Megan felt slightly frustrated at being short, but it didn’t last very long. She pulled Charlie further back into her embrace and kissed her on the back of her neck. Charlie moaned as Megan worked her way up towards her ear to kiss and play with her earlobe before she sucked it into her mouth and slightly bit on it. That sent another shiver down Charlie’s body, but it did the same for Megan. She smiled before she made her way to the

other ear. She let her hands move down, and just as she was about to suck the other earlobe into her mouth she cupped Charlie's mound, who took in a deep, loud breath at the simultaneous pleasure. Megan rubbed her hand up and down with her middle finger applying more pressure than the others. As she continued her assault on Charlie's neck and mound, Megan used her other hand to undo the buttons on Charlie's jeans. Once open, she slid her hand in to find a very wet and warm welcome.

Charlie was beside herself. She had never felt anything like it. Her hands were limply holding onto the reins with no purpose at all. The only thing she was capable of was moaning at every new sensation, and there were so many of them. While Megan's lips were moving from one side of her neck to the other, her right hand was teasing her nipples in turn and her left hand was buried in her heat. With this, there was also the movement of the horse that was making her rub against the saddle. She never stopped moaning.

Megan let her fingers push deeper into Charlie. She spread the wetness over Charlie's clit, and then pulled it slightly. Charlie bucked forward, but Megan held her back. She stroked and pulled, working Charlie into a frenzy. She kept her movements synchronised with those of the horse. This caused her hand to be pressed harder into Charlie's mound whenever they moved forward. It didn't take very long before Charlie stiffened in the saddle. Megan kept her hand buried in Charlie's heat feeling the ripples running through her. Charlie slumped backwards, letting the back of her head rest on Megan's shoulder. "What are you doing to me?" she asked in a hoarse voice.

"Making you realise how much I want you and want to be with you." Megan kissed the side of Charlie's face.

"We still have three more months in which you can convince me some more." Charlie sighed. "I know I said before that I couldn't allow you to use me until you leave, but I was wrong. I'm willing to be used."

Megan pulled Charlie even closer to her. "I don't want to use you, I want to stay with you."

Charlie bolted up and pulled the reins causing Mobius to stop, and then turned in the saddle. "What did you say?"

Megan laughed. "I said I want to stay with you. I don't want to leave the farm. I want to see where this will go, and I want you to kiss me."

Charlie looked around to see exactly where they were. "Can you hold that thought for two minutes and hold on tight to me? As much as I enjoyed our little ride, I need to get somewhere more comfortable."

Megan nodded and held on tight to Charlie as Mobius went into a sprint.

About two minutes later they stopped in front of the cabin. “Welcome to my sanctuary. It is small, but comfortable. Claire encouraged me to build it when I started working here. She knew I needed a place to escape to, away from everyone and everything. I don’t use it that much anymore, but right now I am very pleased that it’s here.”

Megan had a wicked little smile on her face. “What size bed do you have in there?”

“That’s for me to know and for you to find out.” Charlie pulled Megan into her arms. “But first things first.” She brought her mouth down to Megan’s in a scorching kiss that left them both ready to strip from the heat.

Charlie grabbed Megan’s hand and pulled her into the cabin where she pinned her to the door after closing it. “You’re so beautiful,” she whispered into Megan’s ear as she kissed her down her neck. She pulled Megan up into her arms and guided her legs around her hips, but Megan didn’t need much encouragement. Charlie grinding her body into hers, and kissing her senseless, was something she was longing for.

Between kissing her, Charlie removed Megan’s shirt and bra. She held onto her and turned towards the bed and moved slowly towards it. She never stopped kissing Megan. When she felt the side of the bed against her knees, she pulled her leg up to bring her knee down on the bed before she lowered them both onto it. Once on the bed, Charlie kissed her way down Megan’s body while bringing her nipples to a stand with her hands. When she reached the top of Megan’s jeans, she used both hands to unbutton them while quickly moving up for another heart-stopping kiss. She moved back down again, pulling Megan’s jeans and underwear down in one movement. Megan grabbed hold of the bedcover with both hands when Charlie breathed upon her. She spread her legs slightly more to give Charlie better access, and when Charlie drove her tongue into her wetness she bucked upward, balling her hands into fists around the bed linen. Charlie used only her tongue. She licked Megan like an ice cream cone, and then stiffened her tongue to put pressure onto her clit. She ran it down the side of the shaft, and then into the folds to end up pushing it into her. She kept on bringing Megan close to the edge this way, and then pulling away to blow hot air onto her already heated centre.

Megan cried out in frustration, “Please....”

Charlie just smiled and hummed as she licked Megan again. The sensation sent Megan over the edge. Charlie rode the storm with her, and when they calmed down she kissed her way up again and enfolded Megan in her arms.

After a while Megan opened her eyes and looked at the surroundings she never saw when they entered. “Wow, a cabin with a king size bed.”

Charlie kissed her softly and smiled “Anything smaller would have my feet sticking out, but looking at the condition of the bedding, I’m sure that you must also need one. You might be small, but you sure make good use of space.”

“What else could I have done with such a talented tongue working its magic on me?” She ran her hand through Charlie’s long hair.

“I would love to show you what else it can do, but we need to get back. Your party is about to start in an hour. I’m sure Kat is already wondering where we are.”

“No she’s not.”

“And why not?” Charlie’s right eyebrow lifted slightly.

“Because she’s the one that suggested I get you to show me the cabin, after she told me that you where the one that bought Melody and I said that I wanted to thank you in a very special way.”

“Am I going to get thanked for organising the spitbraai as well?” Charlie wiggled her eyebrows.

“Oh yes, but I think you need to come to my room tonight for that thank you.”

“That’s a date then.” Charlie gave Megan another kiss that left her breathless. “But until that time, we will be dancing the night away, so we need to get going.”

When they got home Katrina welcomed them with a big smile on her face. From the way they were sitting on Mobius when they arrived at the house, she could see that Megan’s plan had worked. “You got what you wanted Claire,” she whispered into the wind.

The spitbraai was a major success. Megan enjoyed it so much she made Charlie promise that they would do it again soon. By the time everyone had eaten the sun was setting, so all the lights were switched on and the music started playing. Couples were heading towards the dance floor and Megan grabbed Charlie’s hand.

“Miss Palmer, I believe we have a date on the dance floor,” she said seductively.

“Well Miss Callaway, I believe you’re right.” They made their way to the floor where they encircled each other’s waists. Megan had already organised with the DJ to play as many slow songs as possible. The other people didn’t seem to mind either. Charlie and Megan’s bodies moved together as if one. They only had eyes for each other, and their hands moved over each other as much as possible without giving the people around them too much to see; there were children there as well after all.

They were still dancing together when Katrina came towards them with another person at her side. “Megan, here’s someone who came all the way from the city to congratulate you on your birthday.”

Megan looked up and went pale. “Kelly....”

Charlie let go of her to see who she was looking at.

“Megan, darling. I’ve missed you so much. My bed has been so empty without you, that I decided to take you up on your invitation and join you here in this godforsaken place until the year is over.” She rushed over to the shocked Megan and pulled her into a kiss.

Megan stood wide-eyed and motionless while Kelly kissed her. The only thing she was focused on was the hurt look on Charlie’s face, and then her back as she turned around and walked away.

Part 7

When Megan finally got over the initial shock of seeing Kelly standing there next to Katrina, she was furious. She forced Kelly’s arms away from her. “Don’t you ever touch me again.”

“But darling, surely you can’t still be angry about my little mishap before you left.” Kelly smiled flirtatiously, but inside she was very unsure of herself after seeing Megan in the arms of the tall woman.

“I’m not angry, I’m grateful, but right now I could cause you some serious bodily harm if you don’t get out of my way this instant.” Megan sidestepped Kelly as she ran after Charlie.

Kelly had a confused look on her face as she watched Megan run away. “If she’s not angry, I can make it work for me,” Kelly whispered to herself as a smile formed on her face.

When Megan caught up with Charlie, she was about to close the study door behind her. “Stay away from me,” she yelled as she saw Megan behind her.

“Not until you listen to me,” Megan replied adamantly while following her into the study.

“I think your girlfriend said enough, don’t you?”

“She’s my ex-girlfriend, and she doesn’t speak for me.”

Charlie was fuming as she opened and closed desk drawers looking for nothing in particular, but needing something to do. “It didn’t look that way.”

“If you had stayed around a few more seconds, you would’ve seen more.”

“No thanks. Her arms wrapped around you, and her lips all over your face were enough for one evening.”

Megan threw her hands up in the air. “What must I say to make you believe me? Stop being so stubborn and think. Was I kissing her, or was she kissing me?”

Charlie looked at her and answered sarcastically, “Let me think. I didn’t see you fend her off. Mmmmmm, what on earth should I have thought?”

“You didn’t wait long enough to see me throw her arms off me!”

“I don’t care. I saw what I needed to see.”

“Well I care, and you only saw what she wanted you to see!”

“Just give up while you still have some dignity left. Run to your girlfriend, because this entertainment booth is closed for business.”

“I can’t believe you would say that. I told you that I wanted to stay with you.”

“Believe what you want, because I don’t believe you!” Charlie slammed a drawer shut and almost pushed the chair into the wall as she rushed past Megan to get out of the study.

For the second time that night Megan found it impossible to move. Her mind was racing to find something else to say to Charlie as she was walking out, but she couldn’t think fast enough. She slipped into the chair behind her as she found her legs unable to hold her anymore. After sitting in silence for more than an hour, she eventually got up and moved to the liquor cabinet where she poured herself some whisky. She swallowed it in one go, just to pour another and do the same. After the fourth one she took the bottle in one hand and the glass in the other as she made her way to her room. She stopped at least twice to pour more whisky into the glass and swallow it before she made it to her room. Once inside, she placed the bottle and glass on the nightstand beside her bed before stripping and getting into bed with only her underwear on. She took hold of the bottle and glass once again and kept on drinking as she stared into the darkness.

Katrina offered Kelly a room for the night because she didn’t know what else to do. She was hoping that the whole mess would be sorted in the morning. After Charlie and Megan rushed off, Katrina played host to the rest of the people until they eventually left. She was very worried, but knew that it wasn’t the right time to approach either of them.

At three in the morning, when the house was silent, Kelly got up and made her way to Megan’s room. She had conned Harry earlier into telling her which room Megan slept in. She had a wicked smile on her face as she found the door unlocked. “Life just keeps on going my way,” she thought as she moved into the room. She found Megan asleep against the headboard with an empty whisky bottle in one hand and a glass in the other.

She gently removed the items from her hands, but soon realised that Megan was completely out of it. She lifted the covers and helped Megan out of her bra before she undressed herself completely and got into the bed next to her. She wrapped her arms around Megan and waited for the long day to take its toll.

Charlie made her way to the kitchen early the next morning where she found Katrina already nurturing a cup of coffee. “Hi Kat.”

“Morning Charlie. How are you feeling?”

“I’ve had better days in my life.”

“Have you spoken to Megan yet?”

“Not really, and I don’t want to either?”

“Why not? It wasn’t her fault.”

“How can you say it wasn’t her fault? She invited her girlfriend who showed up. What more is there to it?”

“I can’t believe your attitude Charlie. She loves you for crying out loud!”

“She doesn’t love me, she just used me.”

“Charlene Palmer, if I was in my prime I would take you by the shoulders and shake some sense into you.” Katrina slammed her cup down onto the kitchen table.

Charlie jumped at the sudden anger in Katrina’s voice. She had never seen this gentle person in such a state. “Kat, calm down.”

“Don’t you tell me to calm down. Everyone else could see that she was as shocked as you were when Kelly showed up. Everyone else could see that Kelly was pinning her down in front of you without her permission. You seem to be the only one who was oblivious to it. Don’t let your pride and stubbornness ruin your chance at happiness. You both deserve it!”

“But Kat...” Charlie tried to get a word in.

“Don’t you ‘But Kat’ me. Today you keep quiet and listen. She loves you. She might not have known it, but I’m telling you she loves you and I know you love her. You can’t fool this old woman, I’ve been on this earth a lot longer than the two of you.”

“But Kat, she’s never told me that she loves me.”

“And you did?”

Charlie dropped her head and looked at the floor. “No, I didn’t.”

“So you haven’t told her, but you love her nonetheless?”

“Yes.” Charlie gave a frustrated sigh. “You’re right. I’m so stupid. I need to make this up to her before it’s too late.”

“That’s more like it. I suggest you organise her some breakfast in bed.”

Charlie got up and wrapped her arms around Katrina. “You’re just an old romantic aren’t you? Who’s making breakfast?”

Charlie knocked softly on Megan’s door while balancing the breakfast tray in her left hand. She didn’t hear any response, so she opened the door and walked quietly into the room and turned to close it again. She turned towards Megan’s bed and was frozen on the spot. The breakfast tray fell out of her hands and landed with a bang on the wooden floor and the sound of breaking glass tore through the room.

Megan sat up in a flash and grabbed her head with Kelly following. “Who’s making so much noise?” Kelly asked with a yawn.

Megan looked at Charlie’s shocked form standing in front of the bed and closed her eyes again. She opened one eye and looked down at her half naked form, and then to the body that was sitting next to her. “What the fuck...” she started, but grabbed her head again as the sound of her own voice made her wince in pain.

“I came to apologise for not believing you last night, but I see no apology is needed; I was right.” Charlie had a defeated look on her face as she spun around and left the room. “I need to get away from here,” she muttered under her breath.

Silence fell over the room again before Megan spoke in a very calm voice, but it was too calm for Kelly’s comfort so she moved slightly away from her. “What the fuck are you doing in my bed?”

“You said you weren’t angry at me, so I thought we could sort things out this morning.”

“You really are one of the most stupid or the most thick hided people I’ve ever known. I don’t want you in my life; sex will not solve our problem. What part of this do you not understand? And get your ass out of my bed. It wasn’t invited! I’ve always been able to destroy my own happiness, I really don’t need any help from you.” Megan got out of bed and walked towards her cupboard to get changed. “When I turn my back, you better be

gone, because bodily harm is nothing compared to what I'm thinking of inflicting on you."

Katrina saw Charlie walk past her with an overnight bag over her shoulder. "Where are you going?" She almost had to run to keep up with Charlie.

"Your idea didn't work. I couldn't have been a bigger fool if I tried." She stopped in her tracks and Katrina almost bumped into her. "I found them in bed together."

Katrina was shocked but tried to calm Charlie down. "Don't do anything stupid. There might be a good explanation for it."

"No chance of that, and I already did the stupid part. Now I just need to get away, but I can't go to the cabin." Charlie had a wry smile on her face. "I took her there. Every time I walk in there, I'll be reminded of her. I need to find another place to get away to."

"How will I contact you?"

"I'll call you when I get to wherever I'm going."

"You can't just up and leave. You have a farm to look after."

"You know as well as I do that between Rubin, Martin, and Kevin, this farm will run just fine without me for a while."

By now they were outside and Charlie unlocked the truck. She threw her bag into the back and got into the driver's side. "I'll be back once she's gone." With that she started the truck and drove off.

Katrina walked slowly back into the house. She couldn't believe that she could be so wrong about a person. Megan almost crashed into her as she came running down the stairs holding onto her head with one hand. "Where's she going?"

"Away from you. How could you do that Megan?" Katrina asked in disbelief.

"I didn't do anything but drink myself into a stupor after Charlie refused to believe me." Megan was close to tears. "Kelly snuck into my bed last night after I passed out. I only woke up when Charlie dropped the tray this morning. I swear nothing happened."

"I had my doubts, but I knew there had to be an explanation for it." Katrina opened her arms and wrapped them around Megan as she walked into them.

"I need to find Charlie. She just has to believe me." The tears were running down Megan's cheeks now.

“She wouldn’t tell me where she was going, but she’ll phone me once she gets there. Don’t worry, we’ll find a way to fix this. Let me get you something for that hangover in the meantime. To fight a battle like this, you’ll need all your strength and need to look your best.” Katrina smiled as she pushed Megan away from her and wiped the tears away with her hand.

They walked into the kitchen where Katrina prepared a drink for her. “I used to be young and wild you know, so I lived on this stuff. All these new wonder drugs today don’t mean a thing next to this.”

Megan smiled as she sat down at the kitchen table while watching Katrina. “Oh Kat, what would I have done without you in my life?”

Megan pulled a face as she drank the offered wonder cure. “Are you sure that you’re not trying to kill me?”

“Stop moaning and drink up. You’ll feel better in no time.”

“I don’t think I’ll feel better until I’ve sorted this mess with Charlie. I love her so much, and I can’t believe that I haven’t even told her.”

“Love is not about a spoken word Megan. When spoken it’s only because people feel that they need to hear it to be convinced and feel secure. It’s the deed that should be the most important part. If you tell someone you love them a thousand times over, but never show it in your deeds, they only need to see you in the arms of another once to make all those words meaningless. You haven’t really had time to show your feelings yet. Unfortunately Charlie got misled into thinking what she saw was true, but even if you had told her you loved her yesterday, or if she had done the same, the deed would most probably have had the same consequences.” Katrina smiled again. “My point being, Kelly’s timing stinks.”

Megan couldn’t help but laugh at Katrina’s words. She was about to comment when Kevin ran into the kitchen. “Kat, who drove the truck?” he asked gasping for air.

“Charlie. Why?” Katrina asked concerned.

“Because I’m sure I saw it spin off the road in the distance while I was working in the first camp. It looked like it went into the trees at the third camp.”

“No,” Megan whimpered.

“Let’s not think of the worst right now.” Katrina tried to keep her voice calm, but she didn’t feel that way. “Megan, take Kevin with you and get there as quickly as you can. Phone me to let me know what’s happened. There is only room for two people in your car, and Kevin is stronger than me.”

Megan and Kevin got into her car and sped off on the dirt road. Kevin was holding onto anything he could find. “Megan,” he started nervously, “We’re not going to be of any help to her if you kill us on the way there.”

Megan clenched the steering wheel as she slowed down a bit. “You’re right, I’m sorry. I just can’t handle the thought of her being hurt because of me.”

“She was driving, not you.”

“Yes, but I’m the reason she was driving.”

“There!” Megan jumped when Kevin shouted. “The truck doesn’t look damaged from here.”

“I hope you’re right,” Megan whimpered. When they got to the truck, she braked and almost skidded right into it. They jumped out of the car to find an unconscious Charlie slumped over the steering wheel.

“Charlie!” Megan shouted as she tried to get to her from the other side. She realised that the truck had slammed sideways into the trees. She moved around to the passenger side while taking out her phone. She tossed it to Kevin. “Call Kat and tell her to get the helicopter here.” She got into the truck and tried to examine Charlie as best she could without moving her. She established that she was breathing, but her stomach turned when she saw the piece of glass embedded in the side of her head. “She has a piece of glass in the side of her head and it’s bleeding badly. Tell them to hurry up.”

She tore a piece of her shirt and tried to keep some pressure around the wound. “I’m sorry Charlie. I know this must hurt, but I can’t remove the glass. It will just bleed more.” She brushed away some of the hair that had fallen into Charlie’s face, and couldn’t keep the lump in her throat back anymore when she saw the tear-stained face. “This was all my fault again. Please don’t die. I can’t go through life knowing that you’re not in it.”

“Kat says the helicopter is on the way. She got hold of Rubin, and they are on their way now as well. Is there something you want me to do?” Kevin felt like crying himself when he saw Megan’s face and the emotions on it.

“No, I don’t think we should move her. She might have damaged her neck or spine. Keep an eye out for the helicopter. I’m just trying to keep the wound from bleeding too much.”

“OK, but I’ll stay within hearing distance if you need me.”

Katrina and Rubin got there before the helicopter did. When they saw the scene in front of them, they knew there wasn’t much that they could do except to wait. Katrina stood at the truck next to the passenger side. “Don’t worry Megan, Charlie is a strong one. She won’t give up a fight easily.”

“She gave up on me,” Megan said softly. “And why not? Look at what I’ve done to her. All I do is bring pain to those I love.” A new flood of tears ran down her face.

“Don’t talk like that Megan. Things happen when people live. You can’t control it all.”

They heard the sound of the helicopter approaching. When it landed, the medics took over and got Charlie in the air within minutes. Katrina arranged with Rubin and Kevin to stay on the farm while she and Megan drove to the hospital. She would phone them the moment they knew what the situation was.

When Megan wanted to get into the driver’s seat, Katrina took the keys from her hands. “Although I think you handled the situation well, I don’t think you’re in any condition to drive right now.” Megan didn’t put up any fight.

By the time they made it to the hospital, Charlie was already in surgery. They once again found themselves in the waiting room. After two hours Doctor Dave came out to speak to them. “That Charlie is one lucky lady. The glass didn’t go in very deep, and I think it caused minimal damage, but we can only really be certain once she wakes up because that was a hard knock that she took to the side of her head.”

“Thank you Dave. Can we see her?”

“Unfortunately, not until she comes out of the post operation unit. Once she gets moved into intensive care, you can see her one at a time, but only for five minutes. It might look promising, but we can’t take any chances.”

“We’ll be here waiting,” Megan said softly.

“Fine, but you might be waiting for a while though. I need to run, but I’ll see you both later.”

Katrina took a magazine and made herself comfortable on a couch while giving Megan a worried look as she saw her take a seat and stare at nothing in particular. The most worrying part was that Megan had a strange calmness about her since they had got in the car to drive to the hospital.

“Do you want some coffee Megan?” she asked, trying to get Megan to talk after a while.

“No thank you.”

“Do you want something to eat?”

“No thank you.”

“Do you want to go for a walk in the hospital garden? I think we need some fresh air.”

“You can go if you want.”

“I really think you need to get out of this waiting room for a bit.”

“No.”

“Megan, stop treating me like a stranger. All I’m getting from you are short remarks. Talk to me, tell me what is going through that head of yours.”

Megan looked up at Katrina with a dazed look in her eyes. “I’m leaving.”

“OK, let’s go for that walk then.”

“No, I’m leaving Lentegueur as soon as she wakes up.”

“Megan, don’t be silly; Charlie will be fine.”

“She’ll only be fine if I’m not around.”

“How can you say that?”

“Because it’s the truth. I have done nothing but bring her pain, both physical and emotional. This is the second time she’s in hospital because of me. She could have been dead right now, and don’t tell me that it wasn’t my fault. If it wasn’t for me, she wouldn’t have driven off this morning.”

“Yes, but it wasn’t you who created the circumstance under which she left. You were oblivious until that moment.”

“No matter what you say, it will always come back to me. If I hadn’t drunk myself into a stupor, I would’ve woken up when Kelly got into bed with me.”

“Megan, you can’t argue like that. What happened is over and done with. There is nothing you can do now to change it. The only thing that you can do is look at the future and work on it. You can’t do that if you leave now.”

“Her future will be much better if I’m not in it. I love her too much to cause her any more pain.”

“If you love her that much, you should stay with her and try to sort it out.”

“No, she’ll get over me and get on with her life.”

“Why don’t you give her the chance to tell you what she thinks about your idea?”

Megan just shook her head from side to side. “No, if I talk to her again, I won’t be able to walk away.”

“What about your part of the farm then?”

“I don’t give a damn about the farm; all I want is for her to be safe.”

“You’re making a big mistake Megan.”

“I’ve made plenty of those in my life that I have to live with. At least it won’t be a mistake that will cost her her life.”

Katrina stared at Megan not knowing what else to say. The conversation was going around in circles and getting to the same wrong conclusion every time. “Well Charlie, you better wake up soon, because you’ll be the only one to talk some sense into her,” she thought as she got up to get herself some coffee.

Charlie eventually got moved into a normal room when she was out of immediate danger, but she hadn’t woken up yet. Megan had refused to go home with Katrina after seeing Charlie. Katrina agreed to bring her some clothes after Megan promised to book herself into the local hotel to get some sleep, because she didn’t want to be too far away from the hospital. She stayed next to Charlie’s bed holding her hand instead of leaving.

“Please wake up,” she whispered with tears forming in her eyes. “Show me that you’re fine.” She brushed her fingers along Charlie’s cheeks where she remembered the tear tracks were. “No more tears I promise.” She took Charlie’s hand in hers again and placed a light kiss on it before she rested her head on it.

This is how the nurses found her the next morning. They pushed her out of the door to do their normal checks on the patient, after which she insisted on being let back in. This is where Katrina found her.

“Megan, you promised to get some rest.”

“I did sleep,” Megan defended herself.

“You might have slept, but I don’t think that you really got any rest.”

“Please don’t fight with me Kat,” Megan pleaded.

“Why are you staying with her if you are planning on leaving?”

“Because I don’t think I can go on if I don’t see her wake up with my own eyes.”

“Megan, I must be honest. You’re not thinking straight. All your arguments are half hearted ones.” Katrina placed the bag with Megan’s clothes in front of her and the one for Charlie next to the bed.

“They may be half hearted, but I’ll do anything to prevent her from hurting anymore.”

“You leaving will hurt her tremendously. Did you even think about that?”

“Yes, that’s why you mustn’t tell her the truth about how Kelly got into my bed.”

Katrina was flabbergasted. “Why not?”

“She already got hurt after she saw what she thought she saw, so if she doesn’t know the truth, she won’t care that I’m not there anymore. If she stays angry at me, it will be better.”

“I disagree, but it’s obvious that nothing I’m going to say will make you change your mind. Why don’t you go and book yourself into the hotel and get cleaned up. You can come right back after you’re done and I’ll stay here in the meantime.”

“Thanks Kat, but please let me know the minute something changes.” Megan took her bag and walked out of the room briskly.

“Well Charlie,” Katrina turned towards the bed, “This is one fine mess you got yourself into, and you better get out of it fast. I don’t know what to do.” She gave a frustrated sigh.

This routine continued for five days before Charlie eventually woke up. It was four in the morning when Charlie eventually won her fight against the darkness. She felt like she was in a dream that she couldn’t wake up from, and no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t make a sound. She could hear a voice continuously calling her, but the hands of darkness kept on pulling her back in. She knew she needed to get to where the voice was, because it promised her no more tears and she was desperately trying to get that.

When she opened her eyes she needed to close them again. There was a faint light next to her, but it was too strong. She slowly opened one eye, and then the other again. She tried to focus on anything and found a figure next to her bed. She tried to move her hand towards it, but found she couldn’t, because the figure was on top of it. She closed her eyes again and re-opened them, which helped her to focus. She could now see that the figure was a woman sleeping with her head on Charlie’s hand. Charlie tried again to pull her hand out, which made the woman stir and wake up. Before long Charlie was looking into Megan’s green eyes with confusion in her own.

“I’ll get the nurse,” Megan whispered as she got up quickly and left before Charlie could say anything.

Shortly afterwards a nurse came in to check on her. While she was doing her checks Charlie kept on checking to see if she could see Megan, but she never came into the room again. Two hours later Charlie asked the nurse to please ask her to come back in, but the nurse informed her that she was gone. Charlie wasn't very impressed. "Did she go to the toilet or something?"

"No," the nurse replied. "She thanked us for all our help and left the hospital."

"Why..." Charlie was interrupted when Katrina walked through the door.

"Charlie, I'm so glad you finally woke up. You had us a bit worried for a while, but I knew you would come out of it." She placed a kiss on Charlie's forehead. "You always come out on top eventually."

"Thanks Kat, but maybe you can answer a question for me. Was Megan here all the time?"

"Uhhmm... well... I'm not sure..."

"Don't lie to me Kat. You're most probably the world's worst liar. Please just tell me the truth." Charlie looked at her pleadingly.

"Yes, Charlie, she refused to leave your side. I almost had to force her to take a shower and eat."

"I'm sure Kelly couldn't have been too impressed about that."

"Well, she wasn't but... I mean..."

Charlie gave a sad chuckle. "Out with it Kat. You should really think what lies you want to tell before you start, because that's a dead giveaway. What is the 'but' for?"

"Well, seeing that you are forcing it out of me." Katrina gave a mock sigh. "She was furious when she left the house according to Kathy. On the way out she told Kathy that she was crazy for working there, especially with people like Megan who had murderous tendencies. I'm just glad she left before I got home, or I would've shown her what murderous tendencies really were. What she did to Megan was unforgivable and... oh shucks." Katrina placed her hand over her mouth.

Charlie looked at her with a bit of amusement showing on her face. "You got that far, don't stop now. What unforgivable thing did she do?"

"I wasn't supposed to tell you this." Katrina looked sorry for herself.

"Like I said, you already went too far. You might just as well continue, because I will get to the bottom of it."

“From what I understand, Megan drank a whole bottle of whisky after you left her in the study on her birthday. Kelly sneaked into her room and into her bed after she passed out, and that’s how you apparently found them. The murderous tendencies apparently got shown at that point.” Katrina laughed.

“Where is Megan now? The nurse said she left the hospital shortly after I woke up.”

“She didn’t just leave the hospital Charlie, she left Lentegeur for good.”

“How could she do that?”

Katrina sighed. “I tried Charlie, but in her head she is doing this for you.”

“How could this be for me?” Charlie asked amazed.

“She now, more than ever, believes that she brings pain to those she loves. She thinks if she stays away from you, your life will be better.”

“I should be the judge of that. She sat here for days promising me no more tears. It wasn’t my imagination. I need to go after her.” Charlie made a move to get out of the bed, but she had to sit back quickly when her world started spinning.

“Haste hasn’t done anything good for either of you. Get yourself well before you attempt anything.” Katrina leaned over and pulled the covers back over Charlie. “We can start planning once you get home.”

Charlie had been home for four days, and she couldn’t wait to go after Megan, but she had promised Katrina that she would rest for a week as the doctor suggested before taking on the trip. She was resting on the porch couch when she saw Megan’s car approaching. “She’s back.” She almost fell off the couch in her attempt to get up. “Kat, she’s back,” she yelled again into the house.

Katrina came running out of the house breathing heavily. “Don’t give an old woman such a scare.”

“But she’s back Kat. That’s her car on its way here.” Charlie couldn’t keep the excitement out of her voice, but her face fell when she saw that the driver wasn’t Megan, but a middle aged dark haired woman.

The woman got out of the car once it stopped in front of the porch, and smiled at the two women staring at her. “Hi, I’m Belinda, Charlie’s personal assistant.” She stretched her hand out to greet the two women.

“Welcome. I’m Katrina and this is Charlie. What do we owe this pleasure to?” Katrina asked politely.

“Megan instructed me to get these documents to Charlene Palmer for signing the moment they were ready.” She looked back at the little sports car. “She told me to use her old car as a company car, because she bought herself a large 4x4 truck. It’s quite funny seeing her behind the wheel of something so big.” She chuckled. “Anyway, I decided to make the trip myself seeing that I’m on holiday for the next week, and she told me I could use the car during that time as well.”

“How’s Megan doing?” Charlie asked with a strained voice.

“Working herself to death on some new project. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her like this.”

“What do you mean? What’s wrong with her?” Charlie moved closer to Belinda who took a step back.

“Maybe I said too much already.” Belinda swallowed hard. She was very good at her job, but she did have a reputation for talking way too much.

“You will tell me!” Charlie was about to grab Belinda by the throat when Katrina stopped her.

“Charlie, calm down. That’s not the way to go about it.”

Charlie closed her eyes for a second and opened them again. She seemed more in control of her emotions. “Belinda, it will be in your best interest to tell me how Megan is doing.”

Belinda looked a bit nervous, but decided to tell them. “In all honesty, she doesn’t look too good. She walked back into the office three weeks ago, but she’s not the same person. Her fiery personality is gone. She used to scare people to death, but now she treats everyone around her like a person. We’re all speculating about what happened to her, and most people are convinced that she’s dying from some terminal illness and is now trying to make up for her past. She surely looks the part. She’s worse now than she was two weeks ago. She’s lost weight, and has permanent dark shadows under her eyes. She’s the first person at the office, and the last to leave. Sometimes it actually looks like she never went home in the first place.”

“I’m leaving now,” Charlie said as she quickly turned to walk into the house.

“Charlie, wait.” Katrina followed her. “You know what the doctor said.”

“I’ve listened to you and the doctor now for two weeks. I’m not dead, and I’m feeling much better. If that piece of glass in my head couldn’t kill me, there’s no way this trip

will. The woman I love is killing herself, so there is no way that I'm going to sit around here waiting to feel a little better. She's the only one that can do that."

"You're right. Let me know what happens." Katrina gave her a quick hug.

"I'll do better than that. I'll bring her home," Charlie said in a confident voice.

Back on the porch, Belinda couldn't believe her ears. She had had the good fortune to get this piece of information first-hand, and knew just who to call. When Charlie came back out of the house she gave her the papers. "Maybe you could take these back with you and sign them there."

"What are they for anyway?" Charlie asked

"Something about her giving you everything that was left to her in Claire's will."

"Like hell she will," Charlie said determinedly. "How long is the drive back to the office?"

"It's about four hours. I left home at six this morning to have a nice quiet drive. I really love driving and especially in that car. There is just something about that amount of power under your control, and the feeling of complete..."

"Just explain to me how to get to your office," Charlie interrupted her. "You can explain your driving pleasure to Kat once I'm gone."

Belinda gave Charlie all the information she needed, and Charlie worked out that she should most probably reach Megan after four.

When Charlie got out of the elevator, she was even more stunned than when she had walked into the front of the building. From what Megan had said, she knew that she had to be successful, but obviously she had no idea how successful the company was. She walked towards the woman who sat at a desk in front of the office that was marked with Megan's name. When the woman saw her, she almost jumped out from behind the desk.

"Good day Miss Palmer, I'm Wendy, Miss Callaway's secretary," she greeted her with a huge smile on her face. Charlie lifted her eyebrow in confusion. "Don't worry, Miss Callaway doesn't know you're coming. Belinda phoned me this morning to inform me about your trip. Unfortunately, Miss Callaway is in a meeting in the boardroom, but should be out shortly." She indicated for Charlie to follow her. "You can wait in her office, and I'll make sure you're not interrupted." She winked at Charlie with a broad smile on her face.

“Wow, thank you very much Wendy.” Charlie walked into the huge office and took a seat in front of Megan’s desk. She looked around the spacious room while waiting. She decided to move the chair and sit just out of view next to the door.

It took about twenty minutes before she heard Megan’s voice as she talked to Wendy. It took a lot to restrain herself from jumping up and grabbing her. Megan walked into her office reading a note that Wendy had given her. She automatically closed the door behind herself before she walked towards her desk. She visibly stiffened when she heard the click of the lock behind her, but before she could turn a bunch of papers landed at her feet.

“You don’t honestly expect me to sign that do you?” There was no mistaking who was standing at her door. Megan picked up the papers, but didn’t turn around.

“You shouldn’t be here.”

“Because you decided what’s best for me?”

“I didn’t decide, my life did that for me.”

“Well, I have news for you. I decide about my life, no one else. If I want to throw myself off a bridge, it’s my choice. If I want to climb in a car and drive while I’m in no state to do so, it is still my choice. Guilt will not rule my life, and I won’t allow it to rule yours,” Charlie said determinedly while taking a step closer to Megan.

“No, please don’t come any closer,” Megan pleaded.

“What are you scared of? That you might actually have to feel something?”

“No, that’s the problem. I feel too much, and I know it will hurt you.”

Charlie took another step closer to Megan. “I think I’m strong enough to look after myself.”

“But I’m not strong enough to see you hurt again.” Megan’s voice was bordering on breaking as she tried to keep the tears back.

Charlie took another two steps towards Megan. “Together we can be strong enough. We can be there for each other.”

“But I’m not someone you can rely on. I’ll fail you.” Megan’s knees almost gave in when Charlie took another step towards her and was breathing down her neck.

“Let me be the judge of that,” she whispered in Megan’s ear.

“No, I can’t.” Megan quickly moved out of reach and turned to face Charlie for the first time. They both let out a gasp.

“What have you been doing to yourself?” Charlie took another step closer to Megan while she tried to keep her emotions under control. Megan looked even worse than Belinda had described her. “Have you gone on a no-sleep, no-food strike of some kind?”

“Charlie, please leave. You’re just making it worse.” Megan moved to stand behind her desk.

“No, you’ve already done that. Do you really think I’m going to leave after seeing you like this?” Charlie moved towards Megan again, but this time she didn’t stop. She kept on advancing towards Megan like a hunter towards its prey. Megan gave another whimper as she quickly retreated again, but never took her eyes off Charlie. For every step towards her, she took one back.

“Charlie, why do you have to be so difficult? What do you want from me?” Tears started flowing down Megan’s face when she felt the wall behind her. She had backed herself into a corner.

“I’m not being difficult, I just know what I want, and it’s right in front of me.” Charlie quickly closed the gap between them when she realised Megan was stuck. She stopped in front of her and placed the palms of her hands on the wall next to Megan’s shoulders.

“I will not allow you to walk away from me again.” She leaned her body closer to Megan, with just millimetres between them, but didn’t touch her.

“I love you and I know you feel the same.” She moved her face to whisper into Megan’s ear. A shiver ran through Megan’s body when she felt Charlie’s breath on her skin.

“Even if it takes the rest of my life to convince you, I’ll show you that we belong together, no matter what lies in our future.” She moved her lips down Megan’s body towards the front of her neck, but still didn’t touch her. All she did was breathe on her skin.

“I’ll show you that you can’t be without me, the way I can’t be without you.” She continued her path downwards towards the cleavage between Megan’s breasts. She saw another ripple run through Megan’s body, and she smiled while blowing hot air down her cleavage.

“I want to wake up every morning with you in my arms after a night of passionate lovemaking.” She moved back up again, but still didn’t touch any part of Megan’s body.

“I want to take you to the cabin, and ravish you for days on end without any interruptions. I want to go for long rides with you, preferably with us both on one horse.” She could see another ripple run through Megan’s body.

“I want to swim naked in the pond with you. I want to clean the chicken coop with you.” She moved towards Megan’s other ear now.

“I want to milk cows with you, I want to work in the vegetable garden with you, I want to sit on the front porch with you, I want to spray water all over you just to see your nipples harden.” Her voice was sultry in Megan’s ear, who wasn’t sure if it was the words or the breath on her skin that was holding her against the wall, because it definitely wasn’t any part of Charlie’s body. Megan closed her eyes in frustration.

“I want to open the gates for you, I want to dance with you pressed against my body, I want to lose myself in your body, I want to stare into the endless depths of your eyes.” Megan opened her eyes when nothing more was said to find Charlie eyes right in front of hers.

Charlie stared into her eyes for what seemed like an endless time before she spoke again. “I want you to be my wife.” Her words were barely a whisper spoken onto Megan’s lips, but still no part of them touched.

Megan couldn’t take anymore. She wrapped her arms around Charlie and pressed her body into hers. “Please touch me,” she begged breathlessly.

Charlie kissed her as she allowed her hands to roam over Megan’s body. She pushed her up against the wall, but it didn’t take very long for Megan to turn the tables. In a quick move, she turned Charlie around and had her pinned to the wall while running her lips down Charlie’s neck. When she reached Charlie’s shirt, she released her hands and ripped at the shirt to send buttons flying.

Charlie helped her to remove the shirt, and used the opportunity to step behind Megan and push her against the wall as she ripped at her shirt. She also managed to get Megan’s bra off before she got roughly shoved in the direction of the desk. She stumbled against it while Megan managed to get hold of her bra and pulled at it until the snap gave way.

“You do know we’ll have a problem leaving your office if we continue like this,” she whispered while nibbling on Megan’s ear.

Megan pushed her all the way onto the desk while pushing things off her desk at the same time. She smiled at Charlie. “At this point, I don’t give a damn if I have to walk out of here covered in a plastic bag.” She got hold of Charlie’s pants as she pulled her back towards her.

“You’re quite forceful aren’t you?” Charlie laughed as she felt herself move over the desk and Megan unzipping her pants.

Megan’s hands stilled and she looked up into Charlie’s eyes with a naughty smile on her face. “Will you please shut up and start living up to those promises you just made? We can start with a night of passionate lovemaking, and take it from there.”

The End