

Justice Served

This is yet *another* in the Next Door Neighbor series; reading those stories isn't strictly **necessary**, but would probably be helpful.

I met Lucy when the two of us were next door neighbors in an apartment complex. I'm a free-lance computer programmer, and work from home; so when it had been raining one day, I let her daughter Robyn come inside my apartment to get out of the rain and dry off when she'd forgotten her key and couldn't get into her own apartment. While she was waiting for her mother to get home, Robyn got interested in what I did for a living. We got to know a little bit about each other, and she became interested in me. I also got to meet Lucy, and the two of us became somewhat friendly.

Over the weeks that followed, Robyn and I got better acquainted. **Much** better acquainted. Enough so that she'd first let me become familiar with her cute little 13-year-old body, then on to the point where she gave me her virginity. Robyn and Lucy both each came to me at different times and told me that they were having trouble communicating with each other. Acting as a mediator of sorts, I was able to get the two of them talking.

Shortly after that, Robyn's friend and 15-year-old cousin Sandra came to visit them; at Robyn's urging, I became *almost* as intimate with Sandra as I was with Robyn. Lucy and I had established a relationship by the time she found out that the two youngsters and I had become at least somewhat intimate; because of the relationship between us, she was at least tolerant of the intimacy I had with them. When Lucy was called out of town on business, she agreed to let me "watch" the two little sex bombs - fully expecting that I'd wind up in bed with them. When it was discovered that there was a problem on the job she'd been sent on, she'd called me in as an "independent" party to figure out what was going on. Along the way, Lucy had come clean about knowing what the girls were doing with each other - and with me; then she'd gone on to become just as involved with them as I was. What the problem turned out to be was a major criminal operation that involved us getting protection from the FBI - and helping one of the Bureau agents protecting us (Amy) get over a dislike of intimacy with men. By the time it was all over, I'd earned myself a multi-million dollar fee after I showed Lucy's employer where over a quarter of a BILLION dollars had gotten off to. I proposed to Lucy, and she agreed to marry me.

Some time later, I got a call from Amy; she needed help in dealing with the computer systems being used by a miniature drug cartel in the area. Lucy had encouraged me to help her; in the process of doing that, I found myself becoming *very* good friends with two MORE Bureau agents - with Lucy's encouragement and support. Sadly, Sandra's parents were killed as part of an attempt to force me to stop helping the FBI - something that had just the opposite of the effect. I didn't hesitate to adopt Sandra after the death of

her parents, with the permission of her only living relatives: a pair of elderly grandparents who didn't have the wherewithal to take care of her. I went back to work for the FBI with a vengeance, and eventually was able to provide them with the information they needed to stage a nation-wide drug bust.

I got involved in a *third* pass at helping the Bureau when the local Special Agent in Charge asked Amy for help with a problem HE was having. She directed him toward me; Lucy, the kids, and I found ourselves providing protective custody - in our own home, no less - for a woman and her daughter that were key witnesses against a local gang leader: the woman's husband. While she was with us, she discovered the degree of intimacy between all of us; after initially objecting to it, she finally came to understand the nature of it. Understanding enough, in fact, that she encouraged me to agree when her daughter asked me to be the one to deflower her at fifteen. That little adventure ended with the woman and her daughter going into the witness protection program, where the woman found the kind of husband she deserved.

A few years later, Lucy and I took the time to be by ourselves and have fun traveling around the country in a big motor home - kind of a year-long road trip. In Idaho, we came across a young girl hitchhiking; despite our agreement not to pick anyone up, Lucy had me stop for this one. Once she was inside, we found out that she was trying to get away from a corrupt and bullying county sheriff - who caught up with her, and us, a few minutes later. Lucy and I had the misfortune of learning what kind of reprehensible animal he was before our close association with the FBI caused him to release us. We also insisted on the sheriff turning the girl loose after we saw how he abused her; there wasn't any doubt that it would only be worse for her if she had to stay. With Lucy and I both angry about what was happening, we stayed in the area - with the girl's mother, actually - and started trying to find out what was going on. We finally discovered that the sheriff was kidnapping young girls that had run away from home and was selling them into an underground slave market. With the prospect of jail time ahead of him, the sheriff abducted Lucy and tried to make an escape; I caught up with him in the Idaho wilderness and stopped him before he did any serious damage to Lucy. Before the whole thing ended, Lucy and I had both made love with the girl's mother.

It was rapidly approaching summer a couple of years after Lucy and I had gone out on our grand tour of the United States. Sandra was finishing her Junior year of college and Robyn doing the same for her Freshman year. They were sharing an apartment not far from the college; both knew they were MORE than welcome to live at home with Lucy and me, but as Robyn had put it "Dad, both of us are going to have to go out and live on our own sooner or later, any way. Why not let us start now, while we're close, so you can help if we have any problems while we're learning to take care of ourselves?"

Neither Lucy nor I were all that enthusiastic about the idea - but what Robyn said simply

made too much sense. There had been some negotiating about the arrangements - amusingly, Lucy and I were having trouble getting them to accept as much help as we wanted to give them, while they were adamant about taking as little as they could get away with. It finally settled out that Lucy and I would pay for their tuition and books; they would accept an "allowance" equal to forty hours a week at minimum wage for each of them. Lucy and I managed to fudge things a bit in the process of getting them to accept it by not telling them about the assorted taxes that were deducted from an actual paycheck; that way, we were able to send them a bit more than they'd indicated they were willing to accept. From that allowance, they were to pay their rent and utilities, as well as any entertainment, food, and miscellaneous school supplies such as notebooks and the like. Their apartment was smaller than the bedrooms they had in our house, but it was *theirs*, and they were happy with it.

Both of them were over having supper with us one Friday night when I suggested that all of us spend the summer visiting different parks, and camping out. It had been a while since we'd done anything like that, and both girls were enthusiastic about the idea. Lucy was too, but doubtful that the company where she had risen to a vice-presidency would be particularly thrilled at the idea of her taking an entire summer off - particularly so soon after she'd been gone a full year so we could tour the country.

I snorted and told Lucy "Get things set up so you can, then tell them you're going. If they fuss too hard, tell them to get stuffed. Its not like you *need* the job!"

That earned me a laugh from her - with the twenty-million-plus paycheck I'd gotten from working for her the first time, none of us *needed* to work, ever, as long as we were alive.

"I don't think it'll come to that, Dan - but if it does, I'll keep what you said in mind", she told me, smiling. Robyn and Sandra just grinned at me; as much as they knew I loved them, they also knew that I could be a contrary, obstinate bastard when it suited me. That's probably the nicest part about having a nice chunk of money: if somebody gets too annoying, you can just tell them to buzz off and not have to worry about it afterwards.

With that out of the way, we finished supper talking about other things; both girls were doing extremely well in school, and Lucy and I had already met their current boyfriends - the girls invariably brought potential boyfriends over because they trusted Lucy, and particularly me for some reason, as good judges of character.

When supper was finished, we all chipped in to clear the table and clean things up. Afterwards, it was into the family room to watch a movie; the girls didn't have anything near the setup in their apartment as we did at home, so when there was something they *particularly* wanted to watch on video they'd bring it with them.

As Robyn was getting it set up, Sandra unhesitatingly planted herself in my lap and pulled my arms around her. I kissed her ear and told her I loved her; she just smiled and snuggled into my chest in reply. When Robyn was done, she went over to park herself

next to Lucy, and each of them put an arm around the other.

When the movie was over, I waited to see what Sandra and Robyn would do. With their own apartment, they'd started living their own lives; most of the times that they came over, they'd go on back to their apartment after they'd visited for a while - but every so often, they'd stay the night so they could share Lucy's and my bed. As it turned out, that was going to be one of those nights.

Turning her head and kissing me on the cheek, Sandra asked "Is it okay if we stay with you tonight, Uncle Dan?"

I wasn't her uncle biologically, but when I offered to adopt her after her parent's death, she'd asked me if she could call me that. Touched deeply, it had taken me no time at all to agree. She called Lucy "Aunt"; there *was* a biological connection, but it was tenuous. For her part, Robyn called me "Dad" because she said that I was more of a father to her than Lucy's ex-husband had EVER been. I was proud that she thought well enough of me to address me that way.

I kissed Sandra on the lips and told her "Of course it is, dear. You know you're *always* welcome here or in our bed, for **whatever** reason."

I sat there for a second, just looking at her. With her pale, pale blonde hair, clear complexion, and brilliant blue-gray eyes, she looked incredibly like Elke Sommer. For as long as I'd known her, she carried herself with a kind of quiet dignity, and had shown that she was all but unflappable in a number of circumstances - including some rather extreme ones.

She slid off my lap and extended her hand toward me; I took it and stood next to her. As we started to leave the family room, I saw Robyn stand and head for the video center while Lucy got to her feet.

As Sandra and I made our way upstairs, Robyn and Lucy weren't far behind us with an arm around each other.

In the bedroom, Sandra had me stand next to the bed while Robyn did the same with Lucy on the other side, then she smiled and began undressing me. It was something she liked to do for some reason, so I simply cooperated with her until the only thing I was wearing was a smile of my own. At that point, she guided me to lie down on the bed, just as Robyn was doing with Lucy. Then the two of them moved to the foot of the bed where Lucy and I could both see them, and began undressing each other - not as a striptease for me and Lucy, but doing it for each other, knowing that we were watching. That made it even more erotic to watch as first Robyn's medium bust and small dark nipples came into view, then Sandra's slightly larger breasts capped with areolas that were barely darker than her skin. Following that, each removed the others panties, letting Lucy and me see their small, tight asses; when they turned, the thatch of hair that each had at the apex of

their thighs, the same color as on their heads.

With each of them as naked and Lucy and me, they clambered onto the bed and made their way up to us: Robyn to Lucy, Sandra to me. I happily took my adopted daughter into my arms and kissed her - softly at first, then with growing desire. From the time each of the girls had started college, there had been a gradual decrease in the frequency with which they shared Lucy's and my bed; so having them there that night was something of a treat for Lucy and me.

As Sandra and I kissed, I relaxed my arms from the hug I'd been giving her and began using my hands to reacquaint myself with her body - from her small firm ass to her delicate neck, and everything I could reach in between. Her skin was soft and smooth, unmarred by any blemishes; it was cool and responsive to my touch as the two of us kissed more frequently, and with rising passion. When she lifted herself up, I could see that Sandra had already started to develop a little bit of a blush from her arousal. Raising herself even further, she also scooted up a bit so that she brought her firm breasts and hardening nipples within range of my eager mouth.

I quickly fastened onto one nipple, softly sucking on it as I gently chewed on the pale areola it rose from; Sandra's response was to put her hands in my hand and hold me there in encouragement to continue.

It didn't take me long to get her nipple erect and move on to the other with a soft moan of pleasure from her. When the second was ready, I returned to the first to bring it fully to life again. Back and forth I went until the ends of both her breasts were shiny with my saliva and peaked in her excitement. My next considered action was to softly nudge her forward again - she quickly understood what I wanted, and eagerly moved to straddle my head, making the area between her thighs available to me.

Lifting my head, I didn't hesitate to extend my tongue and draw it through the cleft between her labia. From the bottom of her mons to the top, my tongue collected its first sample of her woman's essence; delighting me again with the unique flavor of her before I softly fluttered my tongue across her visible - but not yet erect - clitoris. It took only a couple of minutes of my oral attentions before she was moaning her pleasure as she opened herself to me even more. Next to me, I could hear the panting and moans as Lucy and Robyn renewed their intimacy, as well.

I continued lapping at Sandra's vaginal opening, with side trips to clitoris, and expanding my efforts to include putting my mouth over her entire opening and trying to suck all of the oils she was producing. It didn't work, but it was fun trying. My efforts were rewarded a few minutes later when she had a powerful orgasm, pressing herself down onto my mouth as she gasped and groaned her way through her release.

When she was done, she carefully moved from over my head and kissed me before moving to lie down with her head by my waist. Once she was situated, she leaned over

and took my semi-erect penis in her hand and lifted it so she could take the head of it in her mouth. With her body no longer blocking my vision, I could turn my head and watch as Robyn and Lucy engaged in a passionate '69' with each other. I could clearly see where Lucy had her head between Robyn's thighs and watched as she happily engaged in trying to bring her daughter to a climax. Between that vision, and the feeling of what Sandra was doing to my penis, it didn't take long before I was fully erect.

Sandra continued her efforts a little longer before deciding that it was time for more. Releasing my manhood from her lips, she quickly sat up and moved to position herself over me, facing my head. Holding me steady, she lowered herself enough so that the head of my erection was pressing against her opening; then, looking it my eyes with a lusty grin on her face, she lowered herself even further - taking my entire length in a single, slow motion. It was *terrific* from my perspective, and judging from the smile on her face, felt pretty good to her, too.

With her firm ass settled onto my legs, she held herself steady for a bit before leaning over to support her body by putting her hands on either side of my chest. That left the front of her available for my attentions - and attend to her I did. Cupping her breasts in my hands, I gently ran my thumbs over her nipples as she raised herself again and began arching her back to slide herself up and down on my penis. That left the upper part of her body steady, making it easy for me to expand my touch on her breasts to include caressing them and gently squeezing them and softly pinching her nipples. We brought our heads together so we could share a deep, passionate kiss before both of us looked down to where we were joined: watching as she slid her tight, wet sheath up and down my length. When she rose up, we could both see her vaginal lips extend as they clasped at me; when she lowered herself again, they would disappear as though guiding me deeper into her. At the top of her cleft, I could see that her motion on me was causing a small amount of pressure to be applied to her erect and visible clitoris. With that added stimulation for her, I knew it wouldn't take her long to find her pleasure.

As I continued to molest her mammaries, Sandra lowered her head in invitation - and the two of us went back to kissing each other as the pace of her movements on me steadily increased. Our kisses finally had to end simply because of her increased arousal and excitement - she was panting with her efforts, and moaning in pleasure as she repeatedly impaled herself on my manhood.

I thrust myself up into Sandra a few times, but she lowered her head again to gasp "Don't, if you can help it - Robyn wants you, too."

Suitably warned, I held myself still under her, and tried to control the amount of pleasure and stimulation I was getting from Sandra's activity. I was starting to wonder if I'd be able to hold out when she suddenly all but slammed herself down onto me a couple of times before pressing herself down as hard as she could to get me deep inside her as she climaxed with a soft cry. I could feel her vaginal walls tighten around me before her

internal muscles began a cyclic clenching that started near the base of my penis and ran toward its head, as though she was trying to milk me for my semen. If she hadn't cautioned me that Robyn wanted to make love with me, too, I'd have gladly given myself up to the incredible pleasure her spasming womanhood was creating around me.

When it was almost over for her, I took my hands away from her firm breasts so that she could simply lower herself to lie on top of me. She managed to smile at me in thanks before doing that very thing; I wrapped my arms around her and held her as she panted in my ear to get her breath back. Once her breathing and heartbeat had returned to normal, I began softly caressing her body again as I softly told her how much I loved her. She had just lifted herself up a bit when we heard Lucy's deep, guttural moan as she slipped into an orgasm. Both of us looked over to where Robyn was doing her best to intensify and prolong her mother's pleasure while Lucy's body almost convulsed from the waves of release coursing through it.

Robyn lifted her head from between Lucy's thighs and looked over at us with a lecherous grin; Sandra and I both smiled back, knowing how much Robyn enjoyed pleasuring her mother that way.

Robyn saw my Sandra-slickened penis waving in the air and asked her "You're done already?"

Sandra nodded, and Robyn told her "Why don't you comfort Mom so I can have Dad?"

Sandra turned to me and gave me a quick kiss before moving to get off of me as Robyn sat up and began to do the same for Lucy. When both of them were between Lucy and me, they paused to give each other a kiss - and fondle each other a bit in the process - before finishing the exchange of partners. When I had Robyn's attention, she gave me a lecherous smile before lowering her body enough to take me into her mouth and begin an enthusiastic cleaning of my penis to remove Sandra's oils. Once that was accomplished, she went on to leave a fine sheen of her saliva on me before straddling my hips.

When she was aroused, Robyn got *very* wet inside, so it didn't surprise me in the slightest when she was able to settle herself onto my erection without effort. The delight that it brought ME, however, was something else entirely: her ample lubrication made it possible for her to settle onto me so easily, but it didn't do a **damn** thing about how tight and hot she was inside while she did it. Even as she rapidly closed in on her twenty-first birthday, she was still almost as tight inside as she'd been when I'd deflowered her at thirteen - *despite* the repeated and enthusiastic test fittings we'd made in the intervening years.

She paused a few moments, giving BOTH of us the chance to savor the feeling of my penis in her before she started slowly raising herself off of me. While Sandra had been content to move along only a quarter of my length, Robyn wanted to feel *more* of me cycling in and out of her; she didn't stop her ascent until the tight ring of her entrance was

wrapped around my penis just behind the glans before letting herself slide back down onto me.

For the first couple of minutes, Robyn was content to move *relatively* slowly as she moved herself up and down my manhood. But as she became more and more excited, she gradually reduced the range of her motions until she was moving herself on little more than half of me. From the way her more than ample lubrication was slowly soaking into my pubic hair, I knew that she was enjoying our coupling. Even her youthful energy had its limits, though, and she eventually began to slow down a bit. Putting my hands on her hips, I finally got her to stop so I could suggest "How about if I do the work, now?"

Lecherously, she answered "This isn't work, this is *fun* - but okay."

She lowered her body so I could wrap my arms around her, and with a little adjustment of our legs along the way, we had quickly reversed positions so that she was on her back with me over her. Looking up at me affectionately, she said "Make *love* to me, Dad..."

I simply smiled my reply before beginning to withdraw from her until almost all of my penis was outside her hot, wet vagina - then *slowly* pressing myself back into her as she softly moaned her pleasure.

She'd gotten me going pretty well, so it wasn't long until I was pistoning in and out of her as quickly as she'd been moving on me. The liquid sounds of our joining went on for some time before I had to lower my body so I could rest on my elbows; the two of us took the opportunity to exchange a number of passionate kisses before I began softly biting her neck and shoulders - something that I knew aroused her tremendously. I could feel her nipples drawing curlicues on my chest as her breasts wobbled in synchronization with my thrusts in her; the feeling was wonderfully erotic, and helped arouse me even more.

As I felt myself getting closer and closer to my release, I raised myself over her again. The two of us looked into each others eyes as each of us focused on the sensations the other was creating for us. I could tell from the twinges in Robyn's vagina that she was almost ready to climax; the feeling of that around my penis soon had me feeling the tightening in my balls that signaled my own imminent release. With a few rapid, short thrusts into her, I buried myself as deeply as I could into her just as I felt myself slip over into my climax. The sensation of me emptying myself into her must have been enough to trigger Robyn's orgasm, as well - I'd barely shot the first wad of my jism into her when she released a deep groan and tightened around me even more. I quickly lowered myself to my elbows again and tried to press myself even deeper into her, knowing that I was applying pressure to her clitoris when I did - and making her orgasm more intense. In response, her vaginal muscles began a kind of fluttering that only made MY climax better, too.

By the time it was over for both of us, each of us knew that we'd brought considerable pleasure and happiness to each other; the look we shared with each other was a joyful,

loving one.

I continued to hold myself over her, my penis a prisoner in her womanly jail until it finally shrank enough to pull free of her intimate embrace. When she gently nudged me to let me know she was ready for me to get off of her, I delayed just long enough for the two of us to share a quick kiss before moving to lie next to her. When I did, I saw that Lucy and Sandra had apparently taken the time to go to the bathroom and get some things to clean us up and keep us from making a mess on the bed. Both had big smiles on their faces as they moved in to take care of their self-appointed tasks: Lucy to me, and Sandra to Robyn.

As Lucy was wiping the mixture of Robyn's oils and my semen from my penis, I pulled her down for a kiss before telling her "Thank you." Her smile got wider, and she told me "It is *always* so hot to watch you and her together. Or you and Sandra. Or you and **anybody**, for that matter!", with a soft laugh. I laughed along with her, and replied "I feel the same way about you and either - or both - of them, or anyone else. But *you're* the one that **really** gets my motor going."

Hearing that, Lucy gave me a loving look and leaned down for another kiss before telling me "And THAT is why I love you so much!"

Once all of us were reasonably cleaned up - no longer at risk of getting sticky, though still a trifle whiff - we settle in to get some sleep: Sandra tucked against my back as I spooned with Lucy, who was holding Robyn.



The next morning, there was time for a group shower - extended because of all the groping, fondling, and literal grab-ass going on - before we all sat down for breakfast.

The girls were enthusiastic about the idea of going camping that summer, and we could see that it had a fair amount of appeal for Lucy, too - even if she did think that the company where she worked would turn down her request for the summer "off".

It didn't take much for us to get her involved in working out a general plan for things. We all realized that it had been long enough since we'd gone camping like that, that we needed to get some new stuff - hiking boots, for example. The girls tried to object when I said that I'd pay for their stuff, but after a little friendly arguing, I managed to convince them that a special occasion like what we were planning wasn't something that they should have to pay out of their "allowance" As we talked, I started making mental notes about what we'd need and where to get it, along with the necessity of checking a few things that concerned me.

Once we had a tentative plan, Robyn and Sandra took care of the breakfast dishes so Lucy and I could go into the family room and snuggle a little - and for me to gently work on encouraging her to make the trip, regardless of what her company said.

"You know, they're going to be graduating before too long. When that happens, you *know* they're going to want to start their own lives." I told her.

"I know, Dan. It's just that things are kind of busy at work, and I don't know that the rest of the board will be willing to let me go - particularly so soon after I took a whole *year* off!"

"Both of us know damn well just how much you've done for them, and how valuable you are. I'm PROUD of you, and how far you've gone with them; but if they really aren't willing to give you time off for this, then I have to wonder if THEY know how much they need you."

"When we were gone that year, I got back and found out that some of the board members had been telling my staff to do things that I told them that they were NOT supposed to do. And a couple of them even tried to get some kind of reorganization going, and break my group up so they could try to get their own houses in order. I'm just afraid that if I take a whole summer off, this time they'll succeed", she told me.

I answered "If that's the kind of people you're working with, then maybe you should LET them make their dumbass mistakes. Then maybe they'll understand just how good you are, and start **listening** to you. Do you have any idea how many times you've come home and fussed about how they wouldn't?"

She looked at me, and I quickly raised a hand to let her know I wasn't done talking. She settled down and listened as I told her "I'm not bitching about listening to you. I love you, and like I said, I'm *proud* of you and the work you do there; and if helping you unwind when you get home help you, then I'm glad to do it. What I AM saying is that most of that unwinding is you telling me about the office politics, and how they won't listen to what you say to them, and start working together. So if they aren't willing to give you this time off, then I'm suggesting that it might be time for you to let them step on their own dicks and see if *that* doesn't get their attention."

That last bit made her smile briefly before she said "I'm just not sure it would do any good..."

"Then maybe its time to find out. You've told me that half of them know things don't work right, but don't want to change anything as long as the company is going along halfway decent. I'm suggesting that its time to show them that its time to either shit, or get off the pot: they can either decide to start listening to someone that has **shown** that they know what they're talking about - that would be you, dear" - she stuck her tongue out at me - "or they can choose to do nothing and watch the place slowly fall apart. As proud of

you as I am, I still love you, too - and I'm not all that enthusiastic about watching you beating your pretty head against the wall trying to get the jackasses to pay attention to what you have to say. The whole reason they brought you onto the Board of Directors was because you got results faster and more efficiently than anyone else. I just don't think you should have to *fight* them to do the job they brought you in to do, is all."

She looked at me uncertainly, and I told her "Look, you don't have to quit, if you don't want to. I'd bet they'll go for giving you a couple months off for a sabbatical, or unpaid leave of absence, or something. Do that, and let **them** realize just how much you're doing for them while you spend what *might* be the last chance we get to spend this much time together as a family."

Having made my case, I just shut up and held Lucy against my chest as she thought about what I'd just said.

A bit later, the girls were done with the dishes - that is, having put them away from the dishwasher - and came into the family room. Lucy and I didn't let on the conversation we'd had; she simply got up and went to the other end of the couch so the girls could snuggle with us. Sandra got some classical music going while Robyn took station on my lap, then she went over and cuddled with Lucy. As the rest of the morning passed, the girls would occasionally trade off - Sandra coming to me and Robyn going to Lucy. After we'd had a light lunch, Sandra and Robyn took care of getting the dishes started before letting us know they needed to get home and study. Lucy and I kissed each of them goodbye before they left.



The following Monday, I started getting things organized for a summer of camping. Until I heard from Lucy, I wasn't going to make any definite reservations for anyplace or anything, but I could still start taking care of a lot of other stuff.

As the days went by, I continued my bit of welcoming Lucy home and listening to her as she unloaded the stresses of her job. I noticed, but didn't say anything about, the glaring omission that she didn't mention anything about taking time off from work. Nor did I say anything about the lack of office politics that she normally made mention of. I loved her, and was willing to leave her to work things out for herself in her own mind until and unless she asked for my help.

It was Tuesday of the week after that when she let me know what had been going on.

As normal, I was holding her in my arms after she'd changed out of her business clothes. She'd been silent for a few minutes, and I was content to wait for her to say something when she was ready.

Tilting her head, she gave me a kiss on the cheek before saying "Thanks, Dan."

"You're welcome. What for?"

"For not pushing. I *know* you noticed I wasn't saying anything about the other Board members, and I didn't tell you anything about whether or not they'd give me the time off. But you didn't say anything, you didn't ask, you didn't bug me about it - you just left me alone, and I appreciate it."

She kissed me on the cheek again, and when I looked at her she smiled and told me "I know you love me more than anything, and I love you, too - and that's just one of the things about you that means so much to me" before resting her head against my shoulder and saying "I didn't say anything to them the first few days about wanting to take time off again. What I wanted to do first was just *watch* them, and listen to what they said and see what they DO. I finally realized that you were right when you told me that I **shouldn't** have to fight them to do the job they hired me for - and that was just what I spend most of my time doing: trying to keep them from screwing up the things that I've *already* done to help, and wasting time and energy and money to convince them to do the stuff that they've ADMITTED needs to happen, but they won't do because they just don't *like* it."

She took a deep breath and went on "I talked to some of the other Board members, and once I got the bullshit filtered out, what they told me was that as long as they were making the money they were from their stock, they really didn't see any point in changing anything. They were all more worried about keeping their short-term perks than getting the long-term benefits. So in yesterday's meeting, I told them that I wanted to take the summer to be with my family, and why. There were only a couple of them that didn't fuss about it; I finally had enough and just... *unloaded* on them. I told them that I was tired of the office politics, I was through arguing with them about things that it shouldn't have even been necessary to talk about; I wasn't going to try and stop them from screwing up the most effective and money-making department in the company any longer, and that I was fed up with wasting time and energy trying to drum up support for things that any **thinking** person could see would benefit the whole company. I didn't cry, I didn't scream, I didn't even cuss at them; I was calm and polite the whole time. You'd have been proud of me."

I hugged her and said "Dearest, I'm **always** proud of you", and got a hug back before she said "Well, they were surprised at what I told them, as you can imagine. Then I told them that all things considered, I was *taking* two months off - that they could do whatever they wanted, and I wasn't going to fuss or fight about it. I told them that, in fact, I wasn't going to be available to them for *any* reason. That scared them, I think, but they didn't say

anything. Then I told them that when I got back, I was going to see what changes had been made while I was gone before I made exactly **one** appearance in the Board room - and that if I didn't like what happened while I was gone AND didn't have the freedom to do what all of them knew damn well *needed* to be done, then I would be quitting and they could find someone else to jerk around. Tom Smithers, the Chairman, told me that if I took that much time off, it would be without pay; I just laughed at him and said that they already weren't paying me enough to put up with all the nonsense, so not getting paid so I could be with my family was fine. I thought he was going to have a stroke!" she laughed.

"Anyway, today several of the other Board members tried to get me to change my mind. I just told them that they knew full well that everything I'd said was true, and that **THEY** needed to make a decision on what they wanted to happen, and then make it known and stick with it. A few of them were terrified by the idea of actually doing that, but the rest understood what I was saying. The bottom line is that I've got the summer off; damned if I know if I'll have a job when I get back, though. And you know what? I'm really not worried about it. I've had headhunters contact me before with offers to go to work somewhere else; I stayed where I was because I was loyal to them. But if they aren't going to be loyal to me, then I don't see any reason not to find someplace where I'll be happier."

I put my hand under her chin and she let me tilt her head up so I could give her a kiss before telling her "It sounds to me like you only did what you had to. Now it's up to them to figure out what they want to do - and whether they're willing to live with the consequences of a bad decision. However it turns out, I love you - and that's all that matters to me."

She gave me a beatific smile and kissed me back before saying "Yes, that **IS** all that matters - that you love me, and I love you and we love our kids. If they can't get their heads out of their asses, then screw 'em!"

With that, both of us laughed before she eased herself off my lap so the two of us could go downstairs.



In the few weeks that followed, Lucy made arrangements at work for things to be taken care of while she was gone. For my part, I made the necessary reservations and got the rest of our vacation lined up. Along with that, the four of us took care of getting the various bits and pieces of equipment and such we'd need; we also had a few overnight camping trips to get familiar with the stuff we'd gotten, and to make sure it worked the way it was supposed to.

By the time final exams were over for Robyn and Sandra, we'd all gotten our clothing and

other wearables broken in so there wouldn't be any blisters or chafing or anything to get in the way of our fun. The last day Lucy came home from work, I could *see* that a huge weight had been taken off of her - and was quietly delighted and thankful.

The plan was pretty simple and straightforward: I'd arranged the rental of one of those campers that was built right onto the frame of a truck - none of us saw any need for the massive motor home of the kind that Lucy and I had used during our grand tour of the country. Granted the one we got was the largest available, but it was still small enough that we could take it almost anywhere. Using it as a base, we were going to drive to a few different locations so we could backpack our way into more remote areas for several days before moving on to the next location. The camper was a little cramped with four of us in it, but I think all of us knew that it was probably going to be our last chance to spend that much time having fun with each other, so all of us were more than willing to overlook the few minor inconveniences.

Our first destination was the Texas Big Bend area. The few days it took us to get there let us settle into a routine that served us well. The week we spent camping out deep in the wilderness was great. With nothing to get in the way, we had a great time. All four of us shared a tent - and sleeping bags - and paired off when we wanted to go "exploring": each of us carried a small GPS receiver with our base camp clearly identified, and we all had a hand held radio in the Family Radio Service band in case there were any problems. All of us got wrapped up in various activities - Lucy and I, for example, got to watch a herd of deer in one of the mountain meadows. The girls spotted a mother black bear and her cub - and carefully kept their distance as they watched. All of us were amazed when we almost literally stumbled across a cave just as its population of bats were exiting to start their nightly foraging for insects.

Next was northern New Mexico, where we hiked back - and up and up and up and up - to a remote lake for a few days. The trail we were on started at about 7000 feet; the lake was at 12000 - and there was a 13000 foot peak between. But we didn't push too hard, and enjoyed the sights as we went along; the fish I caught for breakfast one morning couldn't have tasted any better to us.

From there, it was over to Utah via northern Arizona - where we delayed a few days to become acquainted with the Navajo and Hopi cultures, and buy some beautiful handmade wool rugs.

Utah was nice, but as non-Mormons we couldn't help but feel a little out of place; it wasn't that anybody wasn't friendly, just that the LDS church is such a big part of life in so much of Utah that we couldn't help feeling a bit excluded. Still, a few hours in the Great Salt Lake made it well worthwhile, as did a visit to the Mormon Tabernacle.

Grand Teton park in Wyoming impressed the hell out of all of us. We were there in July, and there were STILL some pretty good-sized patches of snow on the ground in places!

On top of that, the sheer *remoteness* of where we camped meant that many of the assorted creatures we saw weren't bothered by us much - I doubted that they had seen people any time recently, if ever.

We were in an isolated area of a State park in Colorado when the whole deal turned to crap.

I was doing a bit of trout fishing one morning while Lucy and the girls were off somewhere else when I heard the radio clipped to my shirt click, and Lucy's voice say my name before it went silent again.

I unclipped the radio and tried ask Lucy what she wanted, but didn't get a response. Thinking that perhaps she'd gotten behind something that was blocking the signal, I gave it a couple of minutes before trying again - with no luck. Starting to get a little concerned, I tried calling Robyn next; when I didn't hear anything from her, I called for Sandra.

Lucy's voice hadn't sounded worried or excited or frightened, so I didn't worry about it too much. Still, I *was* concerned, and kept trying them every few minutes, and not getting any results. As the number of times I tried to call them without getting an answer went by, I got more and more worried. It crossed my mind to go looking for them, but they'd only given me a vague description of where they were heading - and the Colorado mountains have a LOT of wilderness. All I could do was keep trying to reach them on the radio - and not accomplishing a damn thing. It was getting close to nightfall and I was well past frantic when I heard someone approaching our camp.

It turned out to be three someones - Lucy and both of the girls. In the twilight, I didn't see anything wrong with them, and was about to raise hell with them when I realized that all three were considerably more disheveled than I had any reason to expect. I started toward them, and it didn't take long to realize that all three had been through *something*: torn clothes, dirt-smeared, and on the ragged edge of hysterical.

That was all I needed to settle me down - big-time. I carefully and gently guided all three into the tent and turned on the battery operated fluorescent light hanging from the peak - and in the improved light I saw that my first impression of their appearance had been far, far short of reality.

All three were covered in scratches, their clothing caked with dirt where there was cloth to hold it: there were spots where their shirts had obviously been torn away. Lucy's face was bruised, and she had a split lip while Sandra and Robyn were both bruised and obviously sore. I quickly broke out the first aid kit and began treating the most obvious problems - cleaning and bandaging the worst of their scratches, and so on. As I did, the story slowly came out of them.

They'd gotten nearly as far as the small lake they wanted to visit when a half-dozen men suddenly appeared. Lucy had seen that all of them were carrying sidearms, and tried to

call me on the radio; one of them had knocked it out of her hand and viciously slapped her before stomping on it. A couple more had taken the radios from Robyn and Sandra before herding the three of them to what had appeared to Lucy to be some kind of base camp. There, the men had decided to have a little fun with their captives after a couple of hours by molesting all three of them. Lucy had put up a fight, and been beaten for her efforts; Sandra and Robyn had been knocked around and were about to be raped when someone new appeared. All three of them agreed that he must have been the leader - the ones that had been abusing the three of them quickly stopped what they were doing when he yelled at them. At that point, one of the men that had captured them told the leader what had happened, and where Lucy and the girls had been.

The leader listened, then told them that they were all a bunch of fuckups - that if anyone came looking for the women, they were ALL in deep shit. After that, he went over to Robyn and Sandra and looked them over before telling one of the men to give them their clothes back. Next he went over to Lucy and started asking her questions about why she and the girls had been in the area, and wanting to know who else was with them. Lucy told him about our camping vacation, and had the wit to make all of us as mild and harmless as possible: she'd figured that unless she did, there was a pretty good chance that she and the girls would be raped and killed before the rest of them came after me to keep their existence in the area a secret.

The leader had been difficult to convince, but Lucy managed to do it; that she kept mentioning I was a computer programmer seemed to make him *want* to believe. Though not very close to her, Robyn and Sandra heard enough of what she said that when asked, they were able to verify what Lucy had told him.

When he finally made up his mind, the leader got all three of them together and told them that he and his group were just camping out in the area, and that he was sorry his buddies had hurt and frightened them. He went on to tell them that there really couldn't be any good come out of any of them - or me - telling anybody about what had happened. As he talked to them, he heavily intimated that if he and his friends had any trouble, they could and **would** make the girls and me sorry. When he was done, and was convinced that Lucy and the girls would see to it that *I* didn't make any trouble either, he had a couple of other men lead them back to where they'd been captured. They'd been left just one of the GPS receivers so they could find their way back to camp.

By the time they were done telling me what had happened, there were three things that kept me from hunting the bastards down and killing them slowly. First, Lucy and the girls needed me then. Second, it was dark, and I knew that I'd need daylight to start tracking them down. Finally, I had to face the possibility that I wouldn't be able to manage it by myself - if I failed, they'd almost certainly find our little camp and finish what they'd started with Lucy and the girls.

I was carefully tending Lucy's split lip when she must have seen the look in my eyes and

known what was on my mind. Softly, so the girls couldn't hear, she told me "No, Dan. If you do it, *you'll* be the one in trouble, not them. Let the law handle it."

When I had Lucy treated, she calmly suggested that I step outside for a moment so they could change clothes. When I heard that, I knew that it wasn't modesty that prompted the suggestion - it was Lucy knowing that if I saw what else had happened to them, I **would** go after the animals that had attacked them. So I did as she suggested - but took the GPS receiver they'd been allowed to keep with me. As I listened to them change clothes inside the tent, I checked it out. I wasn't surprised to find that whichever one of them it had belonged to, she had done just what she was supposed to: periodically tell it to record a waypoint - at least, up until the time they'd been captured. I carefully recorded the last point in it, knowing that even though it wasn't where the gang of assholes was, it was a good starting point in finding them. I also had to think about what to do about our camp: with them having one of our GPS units with our camp location noted on it, I had to think of something to keep the Lucy and the girls safe - it was full dark, and there simply wasn't any way they were going to be able to move camp, and the three of them still needed some time to at least physically recover from what they'd been through.

When they let me know it was okay to come back inside the tent, I was relieved to see that all of them had at least *started* to come back to something approximating normal. But the tightness around their eyes and their nervousness told me that they were far from having come to grips with it. Not knowing what else to do, I carefully and gently kissed Sandra, only to be surprised when she threw her arms around me and began crying into my chest in great, heaving sobs. That was the trigger for the rest of them to do the same, leaving me standing there while my three greatest treasures broke my heart with their tears. I did my best to console and comfort them, and offer them whatever words of reassurance I could. Eventually, all three cried themselves out and let go of me to take seats on their respective sleeping bags while they dried their tears and got themselves composed again. Telling them to just sit and take it easy, I went back outside and got something for them to eat.

When I took it back inside the tent, none of them had much of an appetite. Understandable, of course, but it still hurt me as I discretely watched them picking at their food.

By the time I got things cleaned up from supper, it was time for bed. Back inside the tent, I saw that they'd zippered all the sleeping bags together, making it obvious that we would all be staying together that night. With the light out, I was guided to a position between Robyn and Sandra - apparently so I could hold them, since both latched on to me as soon as I was horizontal. Lucy was next to Robyn, and put one a hand on my arm so that she was touching me, too. As I lay there and pretended that I was going to be able to sleep any time soon, I thought about what Lucy had said to me about going after the animals that had hurt her and the girls. Even though I knew she was right, it was still a couple of

hours before I was able to accept it. After a while, the three of them managed to fall asleep; I carefully eased myself from among them and found a spot at the edge of our camp where I could keep an eye on things in case the characters that had bothered them had a change of mind. As I waited for daybreak, I thought about what I *could* do within the law.

The next morning, Lucy pointedly told me to make breakfast while she and our kids went to the nearby creek to wash. I knew that any bruises that they had would have gotten worse during the night - and knew, too, that I didn't want to see them. When they got back from washing up, breakfast was ready. All three had a little more appetite than the night before - but not by a whole lot. Robyn and Sandra insisted on cleaning up, which left Lucy and me to start breaking camp. By the time the girls were done, there wasn't much left for us to do; we were well on the way back to the camper by lunch time.



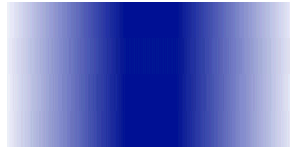
Once we were back in the camper, my first destination was the nearest hospital I could find on the road map.

All three of them got in to see a doctor in the walk-in emergency room at the hospital. I was firmly told to wait outside. As I sat there, I saw what I thought was a cop come in and talk to the receptionist. She pointed at me, and he came over my direction. When he got closer, I could see that he was a county sheriff. He sat down across from me and introduced himself as Sheriff Aikins before asking me what had happened. I told him where we'd been and what had happened, and I could see that he wasn't happy about it. When I was done, he hesitated for a few moments, then told me "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, Mister Andrews, but that chunk of forest isn't in my jurisdiction. Hearing what happened to your missus and young'uns, I surely do wish it was. But it ain't, and there's not a dang thing I can do to help you. What you're gonna have to do is take it up with the local State parks people; they've got an office right here in town, and I'll be more'n happy to give you the address."

I couldn't be upset with him. Well, I could - and was - but there wasn't any point in giving him grief about something he had no control over. Jurisdiction is jurisdiction, and what had happened to Lucy and the others simply hadn't happened in an area that he had any authority over.

I got the information from him, and after he'd expressed his regrets again, he left. I was still sitting there when first Lucy, then a couple minutes later, the girls, came out, accompanied by a doctor. He told me that all of them were fine, other than the obvious, and that the bruises would fade in a few days. He also had a prescription for some mild

painkillers for all of them to help with any residual soreness. He also told me that they'd told him what had happened, and that he was sorry to hear about it. I thanked him for his time and thoughts, and he left us. Lucy and the kids were all ready to leave, so I paid off the bill and we made our way out to the camper. It was after office hours by that time, so we found a spot to park near a chain restaurant and went to get some supper. Afterwards, we spent the evening in the camper, watching TV on the little color set we'd brought along.



The next morning, all four of us were ready and waiting for the State parks department office to open up. The receptionist was initially reluctant to let us in to see the manager, but after I pointed out that the appearance of Lucy and the girls was a result of something that happened on State property, she relented.

In the managers office, the three of them carefully told him what had happened to them, supplemented by my addition of where we'd been and why we'd been there.

When they were done, he looked at all of us for a couple of minutes before saying "Mrs. Andrews, ladies, I'm truly sorry for what happened to you. What you went through is something that nobody should have to experience. The problem is that I only have so many people available to patrol the parks, and most of THEIR time is spent handling the high-traffic areas. Where you were, well, as you say, that's a pretty remote section of the park, and I simply don't have the resources to try and track down what is probably a bunch of drunk hunters that wandered onto State property by accident while they were trying to figure out where the deer would be this fall. Please understand, you have my complete sympathy and deepest regrets for what happened - but I simply don't see that there's anything I can do."

I couldn't believe that I was hearing him saying that, and asked "Mister Tomlinson, are you sure there's nothing that can be done? The Sheriff saw me yesterday while we were at the hospital and said he'd like to help, but that the area is out of his jurisdiction. Is there any way to give *him* permission to investigate?"

He shook his head and told me "No, I'm afraid that's quite impossible, Mister Andrews. Our state people don't work outside the park boundaries, and we can't have outside law enforcement coming in."

Stunned, Lucy and I tried to see if there was anything that was going to happen, or anything anybody could do - and after a full two hours, he finally told us "Look, folks. I really am sorry, but there simply isn't anything I can do - I don't have the resources, and I'm not about to let anyone else onto State property to try and deal with this. Why don't

you just chalk it up as a bad experience and go home?"

As mad as it made me, I could see that what he'd just said hit Lucy even worse. I had to take her hand and give it a painful squeeze to keep her from blowing up on him. Even then, it was *damn* close call - and I think he knew it. Keeping control of myself, I thanked him for his time and the four of us left.

Outside, Lucy launched into a full minute of profanity as she let all of us know what she thought of him, his office, the State, and life in general. When she'd gotten it out of her system, she turned and looked at me and said "Dan? What I said in the tent? I was wrong. The law can't - or won't - deal with those sons of bitches, and they have to pay for what they did to us. It's up to you."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing from her, but wasn't about to argue the point - I wanted them probably almost as much as she did.

It was close enough to lunch time that the four of us had something to eat before piling into the camper and heading back to where we'd parked it before. By the time we got there and got set up, it was getting a bit late. I'd make my start the next morning.



When I started out the next morning, I had only what I really *needed* with me - I wasn't looking for comfort or fine dining. Behind me, in the camper, were Lucy and the girls; Lucy and Sandra both had their pistols handy in case there was any trouble while I was gone. All of them knew not to expect me back for a couple of days. I had one of the GPS units and a radio so I could let them know when I was on the way back.

It had been a while since I'd done any kind of tracking like that, so it took me until late the next day to locate the general area. The day after that and I found where they'd been. Looking carefully, I figured they must have been there a week or so before we arrived, and took off again as we were making our way out of the park. I tried to figure out where they'd gotten off to, but simply didn't have the skills. Well, I knew someone that **COULD** track them.

Locking in the position of the base camp on the GPS unit, I headed back. As I got close, I started trying to reach the others on the radio, and finally got through. I could hear the relief in Lucy's voice to know that I was just a couple hours away.

They were watching for me, and came out to welcome me back when I was in sight. Robyn and Sandra had decided that I needed something decent to eat when I got back, and had the portable grill we carried fired up in no time - and shortly after that, had it loaded with a steak and some rough-cubed potatoes. In between one or the other of them

going out to check on how the food was cooking, I had to tell the three of them how it had gone. That they were disappointed was an understatement - but all of them readily accepted my assurances that it wasn't over yet, not by a LONG shot.

By the time I was done, so was the food; I had myself wrapped around it in short order, thanking the girls and complimenting them on it along the way. Both were pleased that they'd done something special to make me happy.

It was close to dark by the time we got back into town, but it was still early enough for me to make the call to "Gomer" Pyles. He wasn't in, but the person that answered the phone said they'd get the message to him: Boomer needs to hear from him ASAP, and my cell phone number.

We were on our way out of the restaurant where we'd gone to eat when my phone rang. Lucy kept the others company while I fell behind to take the call. As I'd hoped, it was Gomer.

"What's up, Boomer?" I heard him ask.

"You got some free time, Gomer? I got something I need some help with."

"I'll *make* the time, Boomer. What's the deal?"

I gave him a quick rundown of what had happened, and heard silence for a few moments before he asked "Your old lady? And your kids? JEE-zus. So what do you need ME for? I **know** you can handle that kind of asshole."

I told him what I'd done as far as trying to track them, and admitted that I hadn't been able to figure out where they'd gone. I heard him laugh and say "You're good, Boomer - but you ain't ME. I'll be on my way tomorrow; be there late afternoon, I 'spect. Where do we meet?"

I gave him a rough description of the town, and said I'd see him at one of the local landmarks. I told him what I'd be driving, and he told me. With the immediate needs taken care of, the call ended.

Back with the others, I told them that I'd heard from Gomer, and that he'd be there the next day. Lucy remembered, before the girls did, that Gomer was one of the people that had "encouraged" the man that had killed Sandra's parents to give himself up to the cops. To say the least, she was looking forward to meeting him.



Sandra was getting more than a little "antsy" when I finally spotted the pickup truck Gomer had told me he'd be driving. He spotted me, too, and slowly drove up before

parking next to us. I think the person that got out of the truck was a surprise to the others: a small, lanky, redheaded guy that looked as though he couldn't carry a bucket of fried chicken across the street without taking a breather. But he'd proven that he was capable of humping the same hundred-pound-plus loads that the rest of us in the outfit carried.

First thing we did was look each other over before a big grin split his face and he said "Damn, Boomer! Looks like you're doin' right good for yourself!" before the two of us embraced and thumped each other on the back. That out of the way, I introduced him to Lucy and the girls - and watched in amusement as he bypassed the hand each offered in favor of giving them a hug, much to their surprise. When he was done, Sandra told him "Mister Pyles, I just wanted to thank you for coming and making sure the man that killed my Mom and Dad got caught."

He got a sad look on his face and told her "Just call me Gomer; its 'bout the only thing I know to answer to, any more. Honey, no thanks are necessary. Me and Boomer, well, we're pals, and that's the kind of things pals do for each other. Besides, assholes like that NEED to be in jail. I'm just glad I was able to help. You doin' okay?"

She assured him that she was, and he told her "Well, that's all that matters, ain't it?" before turning to tell me "Damn, Boomer! You got you a right nice looking bunch of women folk!" - obviously discounting the bruises they all sported.

Speedy had been born and raised in South Dallas; he wasn't what you could call genteel or discrete. But he was good troop when you needed him, and that was what mattered.

The five of us went inside the camper, and it didn't take me long to get him briefed on where I'd been and what I'd found. Satisfied that he had the information he needed, he told us "It's too late to get started doing much of anything now, but I'll be on it first light. Likely be a while, but I reckon you know that. When I've got something for you, Boomer, I'll meet you here - say, between noon and two o'clock, starting a week from today, so you don't have to be waiting around for me. How's that sound?"

I assured him it was fine, and Lucy asked him "Gomer, can we pay you for your time and trouble?"

Gomer looked positively indignant when he told her "No, you ain't payin' me for this. Its summer, and I wouldn't be working much now, anyways. And it ain't no trouble at all to help Boomer out. Like I said, me 'n him, we're pals. He's done me a few turns, and now I get do him one."

Seeing the curiosity on everyone's face but mine, he told them "When I first went in th' Army, I didn't have much schoolin', and because of it, I was having a right hard time of makin' sense of all the books and ever'thing they give us. Boomer here, he saw the fix I was in, and helped me out by teachin' me what was in them books. Then, later, he got me fixed up with these folks that helped me learn to read and write better, and learn numbers

and such. I dropped out of school in 8th grade, but after Boomer got me started again, I finally got my High School diploma. I know I don't sound like it, but I even got me some college credits, too. Boomer, he's one smart sumbitch, but he don't look down on nobody just 'cause they ain't as smart as him. All he cares 'bout is whether or not they can do a job; I could, and so he helped me get the learnin' I needed. If he hadn't, I know I would of been put out of the Army because I couldn't figure out the readin' part of what they was teachin us. He done me a turn then, and since we become pals, I'm gettin' to do him a turn now. So there's no need for y'all to be payin' me. Besides" he told them with a grin "ain't no kinda *man* goes to whoopin on women; I'd be right happy to help learn 'em some manners!"

That made all of us smile, and Lucy asked him "Is there anything we can do for you tonight, then? How about supper? It's a little crowded, but you're welcome to stay in the camper with us. We haven't been able to find a motel with a vacancy *anywhere*."

He just laughed and answered "Now, Lucy, I don't need no fancy bed or nothin'. Matter of fact, me bein' a guide and such, well, if I can't see the stars, I get to feelin' kinda cooped up. As for supper, I'm fine; I had somethin' to eat right before I got to town. I'll just be drivin' out there so's I can get an early start and sleep in my truck - won't be the first time, and likely won't be the last. Short as I am, I can stretch out on the seat just fine!" - the last part getting a laugh from her.

With that out of the way, the five of us went back outside. Gomer let the girls give him a kiss on the cheek before jumping (almost literally, the cab was a ways off the ground for him) into his truck and leaving. Back inside the camper, Lucy looked at me with amusement and asked "How in the hell did you wind up with him in your outfit?"

I shrugged and said "We were in the same classes for some of the basic equipment schools. Like he said, I helped him with the book parts of it. After I got to my final unit, he volunteered to join it, too - figured I was his buddy, and wanted us to be together. Turned out he made a pretty damn good point man, so I helped him get finished with his education. Now he figures he owes me for it."

"And the other guys? Anyone else you helped?"

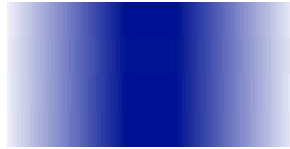
"No, not really" - that earned me a Look - "Mostly, we were set up as six-man teams and they didn't encourage us to talk a lot between teams about the different missions we went on, so I didn't have a lot to do with many other guys."

Lucy seemed to realize that I was hedging a bit, but let it go. Sandra and Robyn just looked at me with admiration and love.

The four of us went out and got something to eat and do a little souvenirs shopping before settling in for the night.

It was the next evening, and the girls had opted to see a movie at the one-and-only movie

theatre in town. Lucy and I had taken a small walk to get a little exercise and were approaching the camper when I thought I heard something behind us. I started to turn when I felt something hard and heavy hit the back of my head, dropping me to the ground. I heard a voice say "Nothing here for you to do, asshole. Best if you get on home before somebody gets hurt." before the darkness closed in on me.



When I woke up, I was looking at white acoustic tiles and florescent lights. My head hurt, and it felt like there was something on it. I blinked, and managed to survive the slow roll my stomach did without throwing up. Moving just my eyes, I looked around a bit and finally figured out that I was in a hospital. I started to move my head for a better look, and the pain and effort of it made me groan. Before I could try again my vision was filled with the faces of Robyn and Sandra - both looking relieved and frightened. I tried to ask them where Lucy was, but all that came out was a weak croak; Sandra reached over and got a glass with a flexible tube sticking out of it. Putting the end of the tube between my lips, she held the glass as I drank deeply. No beer ever tasted as good as that cool water.

With my mouth and throat moistened, I weakly asked "Where's Lucy?"

Both girls immediately looked saddened and worried before Robyn told me "She's in the bed next to you. Somebody hit both of you on the back of the head. You've been out for a couple of days, and she's still in a coma."

Hearing that, I felt like my heart had been ripped out of me, and I closed my eyes in a silent prayer to whoever was in charge of the Universe to take care of her.

Pulling myself together, I opened my eyes and turned my head in the direction Robyn's eyes had flickered - and saw Lucy in the bed next to mine. There didn't seem to be any other physical damage to her, but the sight of her blonde hair peeking out of a swathe of bandages and all the various medical stuff hooked up to her was a sight that still haunts me. I had a look around and saw that we were in a room by ourselves; between the beds was a chair with a purse I recognized as Sandra's - it was the one she had with the holster inside so she could carry the pistol we'd gotten her. There was another chair over by the door, situated so that whenever the door opened, whoever was sitting in it would be out of sight of the person coming in.

When I looked back at them, Sandra told me "After everything that's happened, one of us is *always* with you - usually both of us. We're not going to let anything else happen." The tone of that last sentence made it clear to me that Sandra was fully prepared to kill anyone that tried anything.

Robyn spoke up next to say "Dad, I'm carrying your pistol. When the ambulance brought you in, the doctors gave it to me so they could treat you, and I still have it. I know I'm not supposed to have it with me because *you're* the one with the permit from the FBI, but I'm not going to let you and Mom get hurt again!"

I gave both of them a smile - much as it hurt me that they would have to be thinking like that at their young ages - and assured both of them that they were doing fine. I had steeled myself for what I knew would be coming, and was just starting to get up when the door opened and a nurse came in. She hustled over and shooed the girls away while she proceeded to make sure that I wasn't just faking being alive; the way I felt, I wasn't sure, either.

Once she'd satisfied herself that I was firmly among the living, the nurse looked at me and told me "You've had us a little worried, Mister Andrews. When you came in, you had a concussion and you've been out of it for a couple of days. Both of these young ladies have been with you and your wife the whole time." She gave them a look and confided to me "The staff thinks they have guns, because whenever one of us has come in here, each of them has kept a hand in her purse and watched us like a hawk. But they haven't threatened anyone and they've stayed out of our way, so we haven't said anything."

I tried to get up, and she quickly put her hands on my shoulders, telling me "No, don't bother. You're in no shape to be going anywhere - certainly not before tomorrow, and maybe not even then."

The ease with which she was holding me down told me that she was right. Relaxing, I asked her "Lucy - my wife..."

The nurse, Rita Castillo RN by her name tag, gave me a slight smile and said "I know who you meant." She sobered then, and told me "She doesn't have any broken bones or anything like that; whoever hit her did a little too good of a job of knocking her out. We're not entirely sure when she's going to come out of it." Something in her eyes told me that I wasn't getting the whole story, but with the girls in the room, I let it go.

Realizing that I wasn't going to be trying any gymnastics in the hospital, she let go of my shoulders and told me "We saw on the monitors when you woke up. The Sheriff told us he wanted to talk to you, so I called him before I came in here - that's what took me so long. He'll be here shortly, if you think you're up to it."

I assured her that I thought I'd manage to live through it, and she gave me a sympathetic smile before leaving us. When she was gone, Sandra and Robyn let me know that they'd signed all the paperwork necessary for Lucy and me to get treatment, the insurance for the room, and all the rest. They also told me that the Sheriff had talked to them, too, but since they'd been at a movie when it happened, they simply didn't have anything to tell him other than how they'd come back to the camper to find an ambulance and Sheriff's deputy there - along with what had appeared to be half the population of the town rubbernecking.

I managed to give each of them a hug with one arm - the other had assorted plumbing plugged into it - and a kiss before the nurse came back in to tell me the Sheriff was there.

I told her to send him in, and the girls went to sit down in the chairs I'd seen - Sandra between the beds and Robyn behind the door - obviously covering, and backing up, Sandra.

When the Sheriff came in, he paused to look at Sandra, then Robyn, for a few seconds before coming over to where I was. I noticed that although the girls didn't have their hands on the pistols I knew they had, their purses were still open - and both of them were still keeping an eye on him. It left me with mixed feelings - sad that they would think it necessary, and proud that they'd thought of it.

"If you're feeling up to it, Mister Andrews, I'd like to know what happened that night." he told me.

It took me only a couple of minutes to tell him in words what was patently obvious: I'd been caught with my knickers down around my ankles.

He considered what I'd told him for a couple of minutes before saying "What with all that happened to your womenfolk, and now you and your missus, I can't say that I'm any too happy about having you around here. But I don't reckon you came here looking for trouble, either. I know you're gonna want to stay while your wife's in the hospital, and I don't have any objections to that. But I'd sure appreciate it if you and your family was to leave soon as you could, too."

He looked over at Sandra, then Robyn, before telling me "Now, I don't know that those young ladies are carrying, and what with you and your wife laying here in hospital beds, I'm not going to look too close. This is Colorado, and we don't worry too much about folks having guns. When you came in here, I got the information about you from your dog tags" - I wore them when traveling, figuring they'd do what they were meant to if I was hurt - "and got in touch with the Army. What I got back wasn't as much as I'd expected, and when I asked, they just told me that was all I needed to know. I didn't reckon it was, and asked a couple of folks I know if they couldn't help me out. They did, and I learned you were some kind of Special Forces type. I figure if those girls are carrying, its only after you learned 'em to shoot - and I 'spect I can trust a Special Forces fella to teach 'em right. Looks to me like all they're doing is watching out for kin, and I got no problem with that - as long as that's *all* they're doing. We understand each other, Mister Andrews?"

I told him we did, and he finished up by saying "We got no idea who did this to you, or where they got off to - there wasn't witness one. Now, I'm not the trusting fella I was when I was younger, and I'm thinking it likely has something to do with what happened out there on State property. But I got no proof, one way or the other. This is a pretty quiet town, most of the time, and that's why I told you I'd appreciate you folks moving along when you can. I got nothing against any of you, understand; I just don't want no more

trouble."

He accepted it with good grace when I assured him that none of us wanted any trouble, either - and that we WOULD be leaving as soon as we could.

The Sheriff stood up and smiled at Sandra and Robyn before wishing me a speedy recovery and leaving us.

He wasn't gone five seconds before the nurse was back in to check and make sure he hadn't caused some kind of relapse. Once she'd satisfied herself of that, she left us again.

With some privacy again, I called the girls over and got a couple of things organized before telling the two of them it was okay for them to go out and get something to eat besides the hospital's cafeteria food.

They'd been gone perhaps twenty minutes when the doctor came in to check me over. As he did, he pulled the sheet back from me a little and saw my .45 that Robyn had left behind. He looked at me in surprise, and I told him "Doc, my family has been beaten up out in the toolies, and now somebody has clubbed me and my wife over the head and put us in the hospital. You can see I'm wearing dog tags. Now you think about all that, and take a look at me, and decide for yourself if you've got any problem with me making sure nothing else happens."

He looked at the scars that I had from my time in the Army, and answered "Mister Andrews, I already know about your time in the military; the Sheriff told me. And I heard about what happened to your wife and kids. Hell, the whole damn staff has heard about it. You keep that thing out of sight, like it is now, and nobody will say anything to you about it, I promise. Most of us won't like it - this **is** a hospital, after all - but all of us will understand."

That said, he finished his examination of me, not paying the slightest attention when I moved the pistol to keep it out of his way. When he was done, he told me that other than having someone thumping me on the head, I was in fine shape. Then came the hard part.

"What about my wife, Doc?"

He considered it for a moment, then told me "I don't know if she got hit harder than you did, or it just affected her more, but she's hurt worse than you are. From your signs and an EEG, we knew you'd come out of it fairly soon. Her, we're not as sure." He saw the expression on my face and quickly explained "It's not that we're not sure she WILL come out of it, its more a question of **when**. Brain trauma like she received still isn't as much of a science as we'd like - but we're getting there. This is a small hospital, so we don't have all the fancy equipment, but what we DO have tells us that she'd going to come out of it - eventually. It may be a couple of days - unlikely, I'd say - or as long as a couple of weeks; I don't *think* it will take that long, though. After she wakes up, we'll keep her here for a couple days to make sure she's stable before we release her. Even then, it would make me

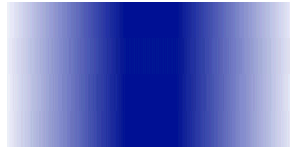
happy if you'd stick around for a week or so, in case she has any problems. After that, you're free to go home. But I'd still suggest that you let her take it easy for a while; about the time she gets tired of being taken care of, she should be ready to pick up where she left off." - the last part with a smile, which took a tremendous burden off of me. If he was comfortable enough that he was willing to make even a small joke like that, I knew things would probably turn out okay.

I knew he could hear the gratitude in my voice when I told him "Thanks, Doc."

He patted me on the shoulder and said "Just get better and get out of here - you're making me work too hard!" with a smile, before standing up and leaving. He didn't know it yet, but the hospital was going to be getting some of that fancy equipment he'd said they lacked.

Sandra and Robyn got back later than I'd expected, but then they told me what had taken them so long: they'd moved the camper from where it was (the property owner had been understanding, thankfully) to an out-of-the-way spot on the hospital's parking lot. There had been a little objection at first, but Robyn had told them what the situation was, and that had helped. What sealed the deal, apparently, was Sandra's polite comment that if they *really* had any objections, she'd be happy to get some lawyers involved.

By the time they told me all of that, I was ready to give them a simplified version of what the doctor had told me. By the time I finished, they weren't *as* worried as they'd been before. Both knew that I'd never lied to them in any fashion, so hearing me tell them that Lucy **would** be recovering helped tremendously. Still, they let me know in no uncertain terms that one or the other of them **WOULD** be in the room with us whenever we were asleep. The way I felt, I knew that I wasn't in any shape to deal with anyone by myself if I had to come out of a sound sleep, and didn't argue the point with them.



It was a couple of long, *long* days before I was able to check out of the hospital. Even then, I had Sandra keeping an eye on me as I made my way to the camper while Robyn stayed with Lucy. Inside, I found that one or both of them had laid in a supply of nutritious, easily prepared foods to help my recovery. That night, Robyn stayed with me in the camper while Sandra kept watch over Lucy.

The next day I spent with Lucy, holding her hand and quietly talking to her and telling her how much I loved her. I didn't know if she could hear me, or not - and frankly didn't care. The only time I let go of her hand was when it was necessary for the hospital staff to do something; and seeing me there, they seemed to take extra care to try and not have to disturb me.

I was sitting there with Lucy a couple of days after the early deadline Gomer had given us when the door to the room opened up and he came in. I looked at him, surprised, and he just told me "I heard what happened when I went to meet you. I got over here as soon as I could. She gonna be okay?"

I told him she was, and what the doctor had told me. He looked satisfied hearing that, and looked at the two of us for a few moments before telling me "I purely am sorry to have to do this, Boomer, but there's somethin' I gotta tell ya."

We went over to a corner away from Lucy and he told me "You don't need to be worryin' yourself about not bein' able to follow them fellas. They damn near lost ME a time or two - but I was able to track 'em back to where they come from. Boomer, there's a good fifty of 'em, or so. I got close as I could without bein' caught" - which was probably *inside* their camp, I figured, knowing how good he was - "and they're some kinda White Power survivalist bunch. They got some property right next to the park, with buildings and such - and what I reckon are a coupla bunkers, too. They was over in the park doin' some kinda 'exercise' when your missus and young'uns showed up. The ones that caught 'em, well, they thought they was gonna get to have some fun, seein' as how they ain't got but a few women in their group, but their boss, he put the kibosh on that. He was some pissed when they got back to their base, too. Day after I found 'em, they had a big meeting and he told everybody that unless they *wanted* all the niggers and Jews comin' after 'em, they'd best be leavin' folks alone when they went out." His tone of voice told me what he thought of that last part; South Dallas is a predominantly Black area, and he'd grown up with more Black friends than otherwise. That, and serving with Muddy had made him pretty intolerant of racists of *any* stripe.

He went on to tell me "They got guns out the wazoo, too. Not just civilian stuff, but a few military pieces, too. I watched 'em on their firing range, and it looked to me like they've done modified some of their civilian stuff to full auto. For a buncha dumbass rednecks, they got their shit pretty tight. If it was just you and me, I wouldn't want to be takin' 'em on - I'd want a couple of the other fellas, too. I reckon Speedy'd help if you asked, and ain't no doubt Muddy would."

That last part was delivered with a grin - he had been part of the mission where Muddy had gotten hurt, and knew full well the problems I'd had with Muddy trying to pay me back.

He tried to hand me the GPS receiver I'd given him, saying "This here's a right handy little toy, Boomer. Kinda wish we'd of had 'em when we was working for Uncle Sugar."

I told him to hang on to it and he smiled, figuring that I wanted him to have it for a mission, before putting it away again.

I thought about it for a few moments before asking him "You need to get back any time soon?"

He just laughed softly and answered "Not so's you'd notice. We got us a mission?"

"I expect so", I told him. "But not until Lucy's awake, anyway. And I want to think about it some, first, too. You need anything? Some chow, a place to sack out?"

"A decent meal'd be nice; them rations I got fill ya up okay, but ain't much on flavor." Hearing that, I figured he'd taken along some kind of survival bars - given a choice between them and eating packing foam, I'd have had a hard time picking one. He finished up by saying "I kinda like to clean up a bit. Like I said, sleepin' in my truck is fine by me."

"There's a bathroom right over there if you want. When you're ready, go on out to the camper and the girls with either fix you something, or if you'll let them, take you somewhere and eat with you." Digging out my wallet, I pulled out a couple of fifty dollar bills and tried to give them to him; he wouldn't take them and said "Ain't no need for that, Boomer. I got money."

"I don't doubt it", I answered. "But if I'm going to be calling a mission, then its up to me to pay the bills, right?" One of the things that our team had joked about constantly was that since the government was paying the bills, we went on the missions they called for us. Now I was telling him that the reverse held true, too. There wasn't much he could say to that, and he reluctantly accepted the money. Now if only the others would be as easy, I thought to myself.

Telling me he'd be back in a while, he left then; some time later, Robyn stopped in to see how things were going. I quickly told her about Gomer being back, and what I'd said to him about getting fed. She just looked at me as if I'd lost my mind, and said matter-of-factly "Of course we will." before leaving again.

A couple of minutes later Gomer came in, telling me that he'd seen Robyn outside the hospital and she'd told him to come to the camper whenever he was ready to eat. Taking a change of clothes with him, he went into the bathroom. When he came out a good fifteen minutes later, he looked refreshed and happy. Telling me he'd be back when he had something in his belly, he left again.

It was a good two hours before he came back into the room. I moved my chair from Lucy's bedside over to where the other was, and the two of us sat down. After a few minutes, he quietly said "Those'r some right nice young ladies you raised up there, Boomer."

I looked over at him, and he went on "When I was talkin' to Robyn outside - before I got cleaned up, that is - I know I musta been some stinky. But she didn't make no faces or do anything that made me reckon I smelled any different than some fancy perfume. Then when when I went out see about some chow, the other'n, Sandra, she asked me if she could fix something for me. I told her I didn't want to be botherin' her, and that I'd just find me a hamburger place or somesuch. Her and Robyn just said that sounded like a

good idea to them, too, and asked if I'd mind if they joined me. You know me, Boomer, and you know I ain't turned down the comp'ny of a pretty girl since I was knee high; but I was still some nervous 'bout havin' them around, them bein' your young'uns and all. I mean, you always was the smart 'un of us, and I can see that you all are doin' right good for yourselves. But the whole time we was together, they just kept talkin' to me like I was a friend they hadn't seen for a while. I felt kinda like a cow at a dinner party at first, but after I was with them young'uns a while, I done forgot all about it. They was just so friendly and all that, I quit worryin' 'bout it. I know I sound like some ignorant redneck mosta the time, but I could see that it didn't matter to either of 'em - you 'n me, we're pals, so that made me THEIR pal, too, sorta. When we found a place to eat, they wouldn't let me pay for it - said I was doin' them a turn for findin' those fellas, so they was doin' one for me. I tried to argue it with 'em, but they wasn't givin' in. They was polite enough 'bout it, but they was set on havin' their way, too. I finally give in, and we had us a nice time."

He laughed and said "I was some hungry, and boy was I s'prised when they kept right up with me. Lookin' at 'em, you wouldn't figure they'd eat enough to feed a kitten, but I was some impressed, let me tell you!"

I laughed too, and told him "Damned if I know how they do it, either, Gomer. Sure as hell wish I did, though!"

He looked at me and said "Anyways, I just wanted you to know, they's some good kids. Even lookin kinda beat up like they do, they're still pretty as could be; and they're as friendly and polite and ever'thing as a body could ask. You got ever' right to be proud of 'em, and I'm glad I was able to be with 'em like that."

Later, I'd tell them what he'd said, knowing that it would embarrass them - but also make them proud that one of my friends thought well enough of them to tell me what he did. I just told Gomer "I am proud of them, Gomer - real proud."

We sat there quietly for a while longer before Gomer asked me "With me not havin' much to do, it be okay with you if I was to keep comp'ny with Lucy and whichever of the girls was here nights?"

"I sure would appreciate it, Gomer. And I know whichever one of them is here would appreciate the company."

Satisfied, he nodded, and lapsed into silence again. A few hours later, Sandra showed up, letting me know that she'd be staying with Lucy that night. I told her that Gomer would be keeping her company, and her pleasure at hearing that was clear on her face. Leaving the two of them, I went out to the camper, where Robyn was waiting with some stew she'd made for us. After we'd eaten, the two of us sat next to each other just holding hands as we watched the TV until bedtime.



Three days after Gomer got back, I was sitting in Lucy's room holding her hand. I'd just finished telling her how much I loved her when I heard her say "I love you, too, Dan - but why does my head hurt so bad, and where the hell am I?"

I was still in a little shock when two nurses rushed in and started checking her out - pupils, reflexes, and all the rest. As they worked, I told Lucy about what had happened to us - she couldn't remember a bit of it. I could see that she was bothered by having effectively lost a couple weeks of her life in a coma in a hospital bed, but having wakened had put an end to it. When the nurses were done, they solemnly told us that as far as they could tell,, she was fine - but that the doctor would be in the next day to make sure.

Talking to her after the nurses left, it didn't take us long to figure out that the last thing she remembered was watching Gomer leave in his truck. Using the phone by Lucy's bed, I called my cell phone which the girls were keeping in the camper. When Robyn answered, I told her that Lucy was awake - and promptly had to pull the phone away from my ear when she screamed her happiness. When she could talk again, Robyn told me that she and Sandra would be right there.

"Right there" apparently translated into the transit time for two young women traveling in excess of Mach 3; I'd barely had time to sit next to Lucy again when both of them burst through the door - and then made a crying beeline for Lucy. I got out of the way so each of them could latch on to a different side of her as the three of them cried. And cried some more. And continued crying until all three had the hiccups, which embarrassed them enough to bring an end to it - and a nurse, wondering what the strange signals were on the equipment still monitoring Lucy.

After a while, a nurse came in and told us that Lucy needed to get some rest. From the expressions on everyone else's face, I knew they thought it sounded as goofy as I did: Lucy had just come out of a two week coma, and she needed *rest*? But the nurse was a nurse, and none of the rest of us was, so we did as she told us. Robyn promised to sit quietly in the chair, and was allowed to stay; Sandra and I went back to the camper.

Late that afternoon, I smuggled in a fast food cheeseburger fixed the way I knew Lucy liked them; the smile on her face at seeing it made the grief I got from the nurses when *they* saw her eating it all worthwhile.

The kids and I were still with her a few hours later when Gomer showed up; his surprise and pleasure at seeing Lucy awake were obvious. The girls told Lucy how he'd been keeping them company at nights, so there was nothing to do but for Lucy to get him to lean over and accept a kiss on the cheek from her - embarrassing him mightily. When the

time came, Sandra left with me, leaving Robyn and Gomer to keep Lucy safe.



The next day, the doctor confirmed that Lucy was doing as well as could be expected. He also told us that because of how long she'd been in the coma, it was going to take a while before she would be able to get up and move around: being laid up like that, her body had simply gotten used to doing less work to keep her blood moving and all that, and it was going to take a while for her to get her strength back.

Out in the hallway, Nurse Castillo, the one that had taken care of me when I first woke up, told me "You've no doubt discovered that every motel within a couple hundred miles is booked solid. Its tourist season, and there won't be anything available until mid-September, at the earliest."

I expressed my agreement, and she told me "I know you're going to want to stay here for your wife. My sister-in-law has a place a little ways outside of town. She *sometimes* takes in boarders. Her husband died in the Gulf War, and the benefits she gets don't always cover her expenses. If you want, I can call her and see if she's willing to take you in - if she is, that's ALL it will be: *you*. It real quiet out at her place, and she doesn't want many people hanging around her home. Do you want me to call and see if she'll put you up?"

If we were going to go after the assholes that had hurt Lucy and the girls, then me and Lucy, I wanted Sandra and Robyn well out of striking range. This sounded like a perfectly reasonable way to help make that happen. I told her that I was interested, and would appreciate any help she could give me. She gave me a strange smile and said "I think you'll be helping her as much as she helps you", leaving me wondering what she meant.

A little while later, she found me and told me that her sister-in-law had agreed to take me in, but that I shouldn't show up before late the next afternoon so she'd have time to get a room ready for me. She also told me what the cost would be; fifty dollars a night - far below what a motel room would have cost, if I'd been able to find one. I quickly agreed to the time and price; Nurse Castillo told me "I think you'll be glad you accepted." and left.

My next challenge was to get Robyn and Sandra to agree to leaving while Lucy was still in the hospital - no small task. I went and talked it over with Lucy, and she didn't have *any* problem with it. So I called out to the camper and got the girls to come in. When I presented them with my plan, both immediately objected, of course - but eventually settled down and accepted it when faced with my and Lucy's united front. The next challenge was to figure a way of getting the girls home safely. I finally settled on calling the man that had installed the alarm system on our house and asking him if he knew anyone that could drive the camper back with the girls. He immediately said he'd do it,

and there was a little back-and-forth before he'd let me pay him even a modest amount for his time and trouble, as well as covering his expenses. Once we'd settled that, though, the arrangements went quickly - he would pick up a rental car that I'd pay for, and drive it to us so that I'd still have transportation after he left with the camper. When that call ended, I immediately made arrangements for a rental car - actually a small SUV. Not knowing where I'd have to be driving, it seemed like a good idea to have something that could handle going off-road if necessary.

That night, Gomer kept watch over Lucy alone; both of the girls wanted to spend the night with me before they left for home the next day.

Early the next afternoon saw me waving goodbye to the girls as the camper headed down the highway. There was a lump in my throat as I watched them fade into the distance, but after I lost sight of them, I started working on seeing to it that some folks got a little payback.

When I pulled up in front of the house where I was to be a boarder, I was more than a little surprised by it. A sprawling split-level home, it was colored and decorated in the earth tones favored in the southwest. As I got out of my vehicle, I saw a woman come out the front door. When I got closer, I could see that she was perhaps thirty years old, Hispanic, and possessed a simply beauty that I knew would stay with her well into old age. Her hair was past her shoulders, unbound, and a rich, luxurious black. Medium framed, she was neither under- nor over-weight; she appeared to be fairly average in all her appearance. Her voice was a pleasant contralto when she told me "Your timing is perfect. You've arrived just in time for supper."

I introduced myself, and she did, too: "I am Rose Villanueva. Rita is my sister-in-law, I... was married to her brother. This was his ranch, and now it is mine."

Looking her in the eyes, I told her "Rita told me that your husband was killed in the Gulf War. I'm an Army veteran, myself, so I want to offer you my sympathies for your loss; and my thanks for helping me."

She hesitated a moment, then said "From a veteran, yes, I will accept your sympathies. As for helping you, Rita told me of what happened to your wife and children, and even yourself. She told me that she thinks you are a good person, and deserve the help. She has a good sense about people, that one, so I said I would do it. Now, come inside and wash up for supper."

Smiling, I managed to draw a small laugh from her by answering "Yes, Mother."

When she turned around, I saw that her hair went down to the middle of her back; farther up, I saw that she had a nicely curved ass. As she walked ahead of me, I couldn't help noticing that her buttocks clenched, but didn't jiggle as she walked; obviously, she managed to keep herself in good shape.

After she'd shown me a bathroom where I could wash my hands, the two of us sat down on opposite sides of a small table. On it were a number of dishes, most of which I recognized as Mexican food. She saw me looking at all of it and said "As you see, I am Latina, and I tend to cook the foods that I grew up with. Because you are my guest, I have not included as much spice as I usually do - but please don't be afraid to tell me if it is still too much. I have learned that what is good to me is sometimes too much for others. Also, if there is something you find you do not care for, don't feel obliged to eat it - some of these dishes are acquired tastes for most Caucasians."

I smiled at her and answered "I think you'll find that I'm not too particular about what I eat, as long as the flavor is there. As for how spicy it is, I'll let you know when supper is finished."

With that, the two of us started putting food on our plates. As I'd expected, the foods that I hadn't recognized were something different - but flavorful, and I enjoyed them. While we ate, we chatted a bit as we got to know a little bit about each other. By the time the meal was over, I'd realized that what I was seeing of her was a shell; that the real Rose was inside where no one could see her. I surprised her by helping clean up afterwards. While she made coffee, I brought a bag with my clothes inside. When I was back at the table, she brought coffee for us.

As we sat there sipping it, she gave me a wry grin and said "I have to admit that I was surprised when you took a second helping of the menudo - it is one of the things that most gringos don't care for very much."

"It tasted good, so I had more of it. And I have to admit that I was surprised at how mild the food was. After you warned me, I thought that it was going to be spicier than that."

She laughed, and said "Okay, so you aren't the usual gringo that comes to Colorado, and I have learned something. Tell me, Mister Andrews, what was it you did in the Army?"

I told her what unit I had been in, and saw her face freeze. I quickly asked "Have I said something wrong?"

She gave a little shake and answered "No, Mister Andrews. It's just that that is the outfit that my husband was trying to get into when he was sent off to fight. While he was over there, he was told that he had been accepted for the additional training, and he was very happy. Three days later, he was dead."

I told her how sorry I was, and she replied "No, do not be sorry, Mister Andrews. What you did - it was my husband's goal. He told me what kind of people became soldiers such as that, and he was very proud that he was being given the chance. That you were such a soldier - and one of the first, when it was even more special - it tells me that Rita was right. My husband told me a little - very little, in fact - about what kinds of things such men were sent to do. Did you do such things, too?"

"Please, Mrs. Villanueva - call me Dan if you will. Yes, I think that I did the kinds of things your husband told you. I can't talk about what I did exactly, but I'm sure you can understand why."

"And you should call me Rose... Dan. Yes, I can understand why you can't tell anyone what you did. Even what my husband did, I wasn't supposed to talk to others about it. Not that it was so secret as what I think you did, but simply for the sake of safety for him and the others."

"How long were you married?"

She smiled sadly and answered "A little over two years only. We grew up in the same town, a little north of here, and knew each other our whole lives. He asked me to marry him when we graduated high school, but we waited until he was finished with his training before we actually had the wedding. It was not so easy for us, being so young, but we were *very* happy. And you? How long have you been married? And what about your children?"

I told her how Lucy and I had met, and little of what had happened in the intervening years. I could see that she knew I was leaving things out, but wasn't worried about them. When I was done, she asked "I remember about the company you mentioned, TechnoDynamics. I thought that your name was familiar, but I couldn't remember why. So you are the one that did that? I remember my husband telling me about it, and saying that you had been one of the soldiers he wanted to become. I know that you have not told me about everything that has happened to you and your family - but that is okay, I think. I am sure that you have good reasons not to talk about it."

She got up and refilled our coffee cups before telling me "It is going to be a nice evening. I like to sit outside when it is like this. Would you like to join me?"

I said that I would, and she led the way out onto a small deck at the back of the house that left us with a spectacular view of the mountains. She didn't say anything else to me, and I was perfectly willing to just sit there and enjoy night, so the rest of the evening passed quietly. When it was late, she stood up and told me "Your room is the first door on the right at the top of the stairs. The second door is a bathroom, where you will find towels and the other things you will need. I usually wake up about five o'clock, and have breakfast about seven. If you wish to join me, I would welcome your company; if you prefer to eat somewhere else, I will not be offended. If there is nothing else, I will see you in the morning, Dan."

"I'll be fine, Rose. Thank you for the excellent supper, and pleasant evening. Good night."

She gave me a brief smile and went inside. I stayed out another half an hour then went to bed myself.

The next morning, I followed my nose down to breakfast - eggs, bacon, chorizos, toast,

the works. And what tasted like fresh ground coffee to wash it all down. Halfway through, she laughed and said "It amuses me to watch you eat. Your manners are impeccable, but it is clear that you enjoy what you're eating - and it has been a long time since I've cooked for anyone besides myself."

I answered "Its good, and I'm hungry - that's always a good combination. And I know that when I have to cook, it always seems to taste better when there is someone to share it with", with a smile.

Surprised, she asked "You cook?"

I laughed and told her "Well, that's what *I* call it. Other people might say different. But I haven't poisoned anyone, so I guess I do okay. I can't do anything like we had for supper last night, but I do fairly well with the things I know."

She laughed at my description of my cooking skills, and said "You impress me, Dan. Not many men are willing to admit that they can cook with anything than a charcoal grill or an open fire. I think you are probably a better cook than you are willing to confess."

I just helped myself to another egg and a chorizo, and smiled.

I helped clear the table before she told me "Go on, Dan. Your wife is in the hospital and you belong with her. I can take of the rest of this, easily."

I was in my vehicle and about to leave when she came out to tell me "Supper will be at six o'clock tonight; and I promise you that it will be better than last night!"

I thanked her, and waved before heading in to town.

Lucy knew that I was staying someplace, so when I got in to see her, I didn't hesitate to let her know where it was, and who was hosting me - much to her amusement. Then I told her what had happened, and she told me that it sounded like Rose was keeping something locked away inside to her, too.

I stayed with Lucy most of the day, going out only when she was going through her physical therapy - which consisted primarily of getting her onto a table that could be tilted, allowing them to gradually get her system used to not being horizontal all the time again. It proved to be somewhat tiring for her, so they didn't do it very many times that day.

When I got back to Rose's house that evening, she was waiting for me, even though it was still a good half hour before supper. She offered me a bottle of local beer and told me to relax for a few minutes before supper. The beer was damn good, and the smells of the food had me ready to eat by the time she told me it was ready.

Some of the foods were the same as the night before, but there were a few new dishes, too. Things were definitely more spicy, and she watched in amusement as I started

sweating and sniffing as I ate. Only once did she ask me "Too hot?", and accepted my answer of "Only a *little* - but it's too good to stop eating, and I'll get used to it."

After supper, she tolerated my help with the dishes, then made coffee for us. It promised to be another nice night, and the two of us went out onto the deck again. It was another quiet evening for both of us, with me going to bed just a few minutes after she did.

The next day was a close copy of the first, with the exception that Lucy got a little closer to vertical before tiring. Supper at Rose's was spaghetti, instead of Mexican food.

The third day wasn't much different, and supper was pork steak.

The fourth day saw Lucy get to thirty degrees from horizontal, earning her a big kiss from me. Supper at Rose's was tamales. The night was a little windy, so we stayed inside and talked. At one point, she told me "I'm grateful that you don't find it necessary to talk all the time, Dan - particularly when we are outside. One of the things I love about this place is the quiet - you are thoughtful enough not to ruin that for me, and I appreciate it."

"But I enjoy the quiet and peace, too, Rose. This IS a special place, and I like having the time and peace to think about things when we're out on the deck."

She gave me a half-smile and said "I think that your wife is a very lucky woman to have a man like you. You are much like my Miguel."

I figured that Miguel had been her husband's name, and simply told her "Thank you."

She waved it off, and we went on to a different topic.

It was something after four o'clock in the morning when I woke up, and wondered why. A few moments later, I heard something, and figured that that must have been what it was. I couldn't tell what the noise was, though, even when it happened a third time. I got out of bed and put my pants on, then drew my pistol. Opening the door to my bedroom, I eased my way out into the hall. I heard the noise again, but wasn't sure where it was coming from. Wondering if it might be someone coming after me again, I was getting ready to ease my way down the stairs when I heard one of the doors behind me open. I managed to quash the reflex to whip around and aim my pistol at it in favor of simply looking over my shoulder - and seeing Rose standing in the doorway to what was obviously her bedroom. Wearing a gown that covered her completely, she quietly asked me "What is it?"

"I was hearing some noises, but I couldn't tell what they were, so I was going to find out." I answered.

A moment later, she looked embarrassed and told me "I'm sorry. That was probably me. Sometimes I have dreams and make noises."

I considered it for a second and realized that I hadn't heard anything since she'd appeared

in the hall. I relaxed, and told her "Its okay. Don't worry about it."

It was then that she saw the pistol in my hand, and asked "You... you were going to see what the noise was with that?"

It was my turn to be embarrassed as I explained "I didn't know what it was, so I thought I should find out. I thought maybe it was the people that hurt my wife and kids coming for me again. If it was, I didn't want them coming up here and maybe hurting you, so I was going to go downstairs."

"You were going to do that?" she asked, moving closer to me. "You would go down there, knowing it might be them, so they would not come up here and hurt me?"

Embarrassed even more, I answered "Um, well, yeah. I guess it sounds kind of *dramatic*, now, doesn't it?"

She moved to stand in front of me, and saw the scars on my body in the moonlight leaking through the windows. Hesitantly, she reached out and put her fingertips on one and asked "Why would you do that? Risk yourself to protect me?" before pulling her hand back again and looking into my eyes.

I held her gaze as I answered "Because it would be the right thing to do. I am a guest in your home, and if there is trouble because of me, its MY responsibility to do what I can to keep *you* from getting hurt because of it."

She quietly told me "My Miguel, he said things like that, too. That it was the duty of the strong to protect the weak."

"He was right", I replied. She reached toward me again, her fingertips touching another scar before she whispered "You have been hurt putting yourself between the bad and cruel ones, and the weak. I used to help Rita study for her nursing, and I know that these must have caused great pain. But I can see that when you were well again, you went out to fight again - and again, and again. Dios mio!"

With that last exclamation, she moved against me and began crying into my chest. I put an arm around her and held her for a moment before deciding that I likely wasn't going to need the .45 any time soon. After carefully lowering the hammer, setting the safety, and putting it back in the holster, I put my other arm around her and tried to comfort her. Softly stroking her back, I tried to reassure and comfort her as she continued sobbing. Finally, not knowing what else to do with her, I softly kissed the top of her head, which was right under my chin.

Before I had time to do anything else, she tilted her head back and reached up to pull my head down for a kiss - full on the lips, and as passionate as it could be.

With her body pressed against me the way it was, I simply couldn't *help* but begin to respond to her. She felt my manhood rising and began pressing herself against it,

accelerating the process, as she went about showering my face with small kisses.

"Rose..." I started, but she interrupted me to say "You remind me so much of my Miguel - strong and quiet, but also brave and honorable. Please, Dan - make love with me."

Taking her hands in mine, I pulled them away from where she was holding my head and replied "But I'm *not* Miguel, Rose."

Looking into my eyes, she said "I know that. But to me, the difference is in name only. Please, I beg you - make love with me."

"If you're sure..."

"I am!" she declared before turning and leading me into my room.

When both of us were standing next to the bed, she turned to face me again; without saying a word, she unhesitatingly opened her robe and let it drop to the floor, revealing that she wasn't wearing a thing under it. Unashamed, she stood and let me look at her - smooth tawny skin, rounded breasts high and firm on her chest and capped with large dark nipples. Further down, her belly was flat except for the slight swelling that almost all women have. Her thighs were smooth and trim, the area between them covered with a small patch of thick dark hair.

When I looked into her face again, she could see that I was pleased with what I saw; she smiled at me and quickly moved to lie in my bed - watching me as I unclipped my holstered pistol and set it aside before taking my pants off, and revealing that I was as naked underneath as she'd been.

Her eyes fastened on my mostly-erect penis, and I heard her breath catch in her throat. She looked up at me in invitation and said "It has been a very long time since I have been with a man - my Miguel, before he went off to war. I ask you to be patient and gentle with me - but do not be afraid to love me."

I moved to lie next to her, but she guided me on top of her instead, spreading her legs to make room for me - and when she did, I caught the faint, musky aroma of her arousal. I lowered my head to kiss her, and the passion she offered me in return amazed me. She let me move down her body so that I could briefly suck and chew on her hard and erect nipples before gently pulling me back up so she could kiss me again. Reaching between us, she took my penis in her hand and began stroking me as we continued to kiss. With her tongue dancing with mine, her touch on me soon had me fully erect. When she was satisfied that I was as ready as she obviously was, she bent her knees to tilt herself up toward me and spread her thighs. Sliding the head of my erection between her labia a few times, she wetted it with her abundant oils before positioning me at her opening.

Looking into my eyes, she said "I want you, and I need you. Make love with me."

My eyes still locked on hers, I pressed myself against her tight, wet opening. I didn't think

it was going to happen, then I suddenly popped through the incredibly tight ring of her entrance accompanied by a soft moan from her. Because of how small she was inside, I was able to press myself into her slowly. As I did, her eyes closed and she released a sound of pleasure before lifting her hips in welcome.

Several times, I stopped and backed out of her a little to make sure I stayed wetted with her woman's lubrication - but ultimately, I was inside her completely, my pubic hair merged with hers. I heard her mutter "Me olvidé de cómo es bueno se siente!" It had been a while since I'd used my Spanish much, but I knew she was saying it felt good to have me in her.

Lowering my head, I began softly kissing her throat and shoulders as I eased myself out of her a little way, then back in again accompanied by another soft moan from her. Then I did it again, with the same results; and again, and again...

In just a couple of minutes, I was slowly but steadily making love with her as she lifted her hips in welcome to each of my penetrations. A few minutes later, we were kissing deeply and passionately when she suddenly pulled her lips away from mine - quickly followed by her vagina clenching around me as she gasped her way through an orgasm. When it was over for her, I heard her say "Dios mio!" before pulling my head back down for another kiss - one that picked up where the other had left off.

Several minutes later, she had another climax - even stronger. The increase in her wetness from it made it easier for me to move in her, and I sped up my movements in her - something that resulted in her quickly finding a *third* release.

I was getting close to finding my own pleasure when she cried out and tightened around me with her fourth orgasm; the feeling of her spasming vagina clenching around me was enough to push me over the edge and I pressed myself deep inside her as I tried to fill her with my jism. She must have been able to feel it, because her eyes flew open and the sensation of her vagina around my penis intensified. I could vaguely feel her fingernails in my back, but they were only a minor distraction while I was emptying myself into her.

When I had spent myself in her, I let my head drop so I could again start kissing her shoulder. She shivered in response, then wrapped her arms around me and held me close.

After my penis had shrunk a bit, I carefully pulled my hips back to ease it out of her and moved to lie on my side next to her. I put my hand on the hip opposite, and she responded by putting her hands on my forearm before saying "I... I had forgotten what it could feel like, to make love that way. It was *wonderful*."

I softly kissed her ear before telling her "I'm glad you enjoyed it."

"Oh, I enjoyed it very much, thank you!" she declared with a soft laugh.

A moment later, she surprised the hell out of me by starting to cry softly.

Propping myself up on my elbow, I looked down at her and asked "What is it? Why are you crying?"

She looked away from me before answering "You must think that I am a terrible person, now."

Well and truly confused, I inquired "Why would I think a thing like that?"

"Because of what we have just done."

"We made love. Why would I think you're a terrible person because we made love?"

"Because you are a married man, and now I am the whore that slept with you out of loneliness and desperation."

Baffled, I asked "Why would I think you were desperate? You told me yourself that you haven't made love since Miguel left, and that was a long time ago. You told me that you thought the difference between me and Miguel was in name only; I am honored that you would think to compare me to a man that I know you loved so deeply."

She turned her head back toward me, and I went on "You are lonely? Why is that a bad reason to find happiness and pleasure with someone? Particularly when the person you find that happiness with is someone that you think well of? And that person thinks well of you, too, and even loves you?"

She lay silent for a few moments before asking "You... love me?"

"Didn't I just show that to you?" I asked in reply.

"I gave myself to you, like a common whore", she said.

"No. You asked me to *make love* with you - and that is what we did. We made **love**".

"How can you make LOVE to a woman who is not your wife?" she demanded.

"When you had Miguel, you loved him. Did you stop loving your parents, or your brothers and sisters?"

"No, of course not!"

"Then why can I not love a woman who is not my wife?"

"And what would your wife think of this, you making love with another woman?"

She saw me smile before I answered "I have a *very* understanding wife."

"Yes, I have read in the magazines about you gringos, and your 'understandings' with your wives."

I checked the time and saw that it was getting close to the time that Lucy would be waking up. They served breakfast early at the hospital, and she liked to be awake well

beforehand - as she explained it to me - so she could fully appreciate how disgusting it was. I'd sampled the food at her insistence once, and found it generally pretty bland; not surprising, I suppose, considering that it was for the patients, after all.

Getting my cell phone, I asked Rose "I'm going to call my wife. If she tells you that she doesn't mind that we were together, will you accept it, and let me talk to you about it?"

The expression on her face told me what she thought the chances of Lucy approving were, but she gestured for me to go ahead. I called the hospital, and was put through to Lucy's room. Gomer answered the phone, then handed it to her when I asked if she was awake yet. I moved so that Rose could hear both sides of the conversation, and we heard "Hello? Dan? What are you doing calling this early?"

"Lucy, Rose is listening while we talk. Do you mind if I make love with her?"

The look I got from Rose told me what she thought of me just coming out and asking like that, but she still heard Lucy laugh and answer "No, of course not!"

Amazed, Rose asked "How can you say that?"

"Because if you're willing to make love with him, then I know that you must see some of the same things in him that I do. And if he's willing to make love with *you*, I know what kind of person you must be - because he's my husband, and I know what kind of person HE is. I know that whatever else happens between you and him, it is ME that he loves more than anything else. You're welcome to borrow him for a little while, and I don't doubt for a moment that you'll be a happier person because of it - but that's ALL you'll be doing: *borrowing* him."

I heard Rose ask "How do I know that you are really his wife?"

Lucy described a couple of my scars, and Rose looked at me as she did, verifying Lucy's descriptions. Then Lucy described another part of my anatomy, and Rose saw that that was correct, as well.

"Really, Rose" I heard Lucy tell her. "I'm fine with you making love with him, whether you have or will, no matter how often or how many times. I think if you'll talk to him, you'll understand better how I can say that. Okay?"

Rose gestured that she'd heard enough, and I sat up to tell Lucy that I'd see her later. She told me she loved me and wished me well with a small laugh. I told her I loved her, too, and that ended the call.

Rose was looking at me in curiosity when I turned back to her. I asked her "Will you let me talk to you, now?"

She nodded, a bit uncertainly, and I laid down next to her and put my hand on her hip again. She put her hands on my arm as she had before, and I began to talk to her.

"Rose, think about when we were making love. Do you think that I did things to make it easier for you, and to please you and make you happy?"

She considered it for a second, and answered "Yes" with a faint blush.

"You told me that I am an honorable man. Did you really think that?"

"Yes", she answered with certainty.

"You still think I am honorable?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you believe me when I say that I am honored that you would think of me as you do Miguel?"

She nodded, and I went on "In the hallway, before - you said that the difference between me and Miguel was in name only. You remember?"

"I do", she verified.

"Then if you think that I am honorable, and you think that I am so much like Miguel, and you think that I made love with you in a way that was easy and pleasurable for you and made you happy, don't you think that I could also love you? And that what we did together WAS making *love*?"

Her eyes got big at that, and I went on "Rose, from the first time that we met and had supper downstairs, I could see that there was something about you - that there was some kind of emptiness in your life. A little while ago, I learned what that emptiness is - that your heart and arms have been empty since you lost Miguel. If you could see what you loved in HIM in *me*, don't you think that I could also see what Miguel loved in YOU? And love you, in return? Can you accept that I would be willing to make love with you, and try to ease the emptiness of your heart, *because* of that love?"

Her eyes began to tear up again, and I told her "You gave yourself to the part of me that is like Miguel. And it was that same part of me that made me want to comfort you, and please you, and share my love with you."

With that, she began to cry again - not in the sudden release of need she'd shown in the hallway, or the shame or embarrassment of earlier, but in acceptance that she didn't HAVE to need love and she SHOULDN'T be shamed or embarrassed at having accepted love that was offered to her.

I rolled over onto my back, and she let me gently pull her over so that I could an arm around her and hold her as her hot tears fell onto my chest. After a while, she stopped crying; and with a small, embarrassed laugh, she used her hand to clear the puddle of her tears that had collected on my chest before laying her head on it.

"Your wife - Lucy? - is a very lucky woman to have a man like you, I think." she told me.

"Yes, Lucy", I confirmed. " And I'm a very lucky man to have a wife like her, I *know*" I replied.

"I still don't understand how she can share you with other women, though."

"Did Miguel know that you loved him?"

"Of course!"

"Did he know how **much**?"

"I'm sure he did."

"If Miguel had been able to meet me, do you think he would have liked me?"

Without hesitation, she told me "I know he would. The things you say and believe - they are so much like Miguel. I think you and he, you would have become very good friends."

"You have shared yourself with me, and we have loved each other. Do you love Miguel any less?"

"No!"

"Don't you think he would understand and approve what happened between us? That since he is gone, not able to be with you, you accepted the love of another man without loving *him* any less?"

She thought about that for a bit before answering "Yes, he would. More than anything, he loved me and wanted me to be happy."

"Then if he were alive and not able to comfort you himself, do you think that he would be so unhappy if you found happiness with me instead, until he was able to be with you again? Knowing that it was him that you loved more than anything?"

She considered that, and finally answered "If it were done so that it did not offend his pride, no, I don't think so."

"Now think about this: Lucy knows that I love her more than anything else in the world. She knows me, and she knows WHY I love her - because of the things I see inside her, just as you loved Miguel for the things you saw in him. Because she knows those things about me, she knows what kind of person I am, and what kinds of things I look for in people. So trusts my judgement - because I judged her in such a way that I love her, which she knows. When I meet other people, she trusts that I will judge them the same way I judged her - and for the same reasons. Because she knows why I love her, and trusts my judgement, she knows that if I find another person that I can love, it will be because there are the same things in them as there are in her. So when I meet another person that I can love, Lucy knows that she will like them, just as you know that Miguel would like me because of how we are the same."

I felt her nodding, and went on "Lucy knows that I'm not like most men - I won't be with a woman just to have sex; if I am with a woman - like I was with you - then it is because I love that woman. Except that Lucy already knows that any love I feel for another woman is going to be less than what I have for her - so she **knows** that she doesn't have to be afraid of losing me. Now, if she knows that she is not going to lose me for another woman, and she knows that that woman is someone she is going to like - because she knows I love that woman for the same reasons as I love her, but not as much - then why should she be afraid to let me make love with that woman? Whether it is before or after it happens, she knows and trusts that I will talk to her about it - proving to her that I am not being dishonest about it, or trying to deceive her; I am being *completely* honest with her."

"And if she should meet another man? Would you be as loving and trusting as her?"

"I have been", I answered, simply.

It took a few seconds for it to sink in, the Rose sat up and looked down at me demanding "Really? You have shared your wife with another man? How? Why?"

"Yes, I've done that. He is the husband of a woman that Lucy and I met. She was having some problems, a little bit like you were, and it was LUCY that told her if she wanted, she could make love with me. Later, Lucy was with the woman's husband. I didn't mind that she was with him - I met him, and I like him, just as you say Miguel would like me. I know and trust that Lucy loves me more than she does him - and she has shown me that many, many times. Rose, Lucy already KNOWS that she is going to like you when she meets you - because I love you, just as I love her. She KNOWS that you and she are going to be friends - good friends, just as Miguel and I would have been. The love and trust Lucy and I have for each other - it's so strong and so great that she is willing to treat you as her very best friend, before she has even met you. You told me that Miguel would understand and approve what happened with us. The only difference is that Lucy is alive, and is able to TELL you that she approves."

She sat there, stunned, for quite some time before suddenly exclaiming "Jesú Cristo! The *love*, the **trust** you have with each other!"

Looking at me in something like awe, she said "The love and the kindness you showed me, they were so much - and you have even more for her. Yes, she is a **very** lucky woman!"

It took a little gentle nudging to get her to lie down next to me again, and get her to let me put my arm around her. Her head was on my shoulder and she was idly playing with my chest hairs while thinking about what she'd learned about me and Lucy. After a bit, I asked her "So now you don't think you're so terrible?"

She tilted her head back to look up at me and smile before answering "No, I don't think I'm so terrible, now. I know that I am loved by a good man."

I grinned and asked "You are? Is it anyone I know?" - and got a playful slap on the chest for a reply before she snuggled into my side.

We stayed like that for quite a while before Rose raised her head up and asked "Aren't you hungry? Don't you want some breakfast?"

"If I have a choice between breakfast and staying like this with you, I'd rather stay here."

She gave me a smile and said "Next time, maybe a choice. Today, you should have some breakfast; so that when you go and visit your wonderful wife, you will remember to thank her for me."

"And why am I giving her your thanks?"

"For letting me borrow you, you silly man" she answered before kissing me on the cheek. "Now it is time to get out of bed and clean up."

"Can I clean up with you?" I asked.

She seemed surprised at the idea, but gave me mischievous grin and answered "Yes, you may - but you will have to hurry because I am going *now*", she finished as she got out of bed and headed for the bedroom door. I was about three seconds behind her, and enjoyed watching her walking ahead of me. She turned to look at me and realized what part of her anatomy I was watching - and smiled broadly in acceptance.

It took a little longer for her to start breakfast than she expected, due primarily to my unhelpful assistance as the two of us washed. When she wanted to clean my semen out of herself, I was careful to be doing something else and not notice.

By the time I was dressed and downstairs, she had already gotten a good start on fixing me something to eat. The view she provided me while I ate was more than a little distracting - with her dressed only in her robe, I'd delighted in molesting and fondling her as she'd brought my food and coffee; she didn't bother closing her robe before she sat down, and I was treated to the sight of her breasts and nipples peeking out at me as she sipped a cup of coffee across from me.

When I was done eating, she told me "Don't worry about the dishes; I'll take care of them. If you don't hurry, you are going to be late."

I got up and went upstairs to brush my teeth; when I got back downstairs, she was waiting for me and walked with me to the front door. She let me pull her into a kiss; when it was over, she looked into my face and said "Thank you, Dan. I feel more *alive* this morning than I have in a **very** long time. Go now, to your wife who is so kind to me, and I will see you for supper tonight."

I gave her another brief kiss, and then it was out the door.

When I got to the hospital - only a few minutes later than usual - I headed straight for

Lucy. The two of us kissed, and when I pulled back afterwards she was grinning at me. I raised an eyebrow in question, and she told me "That's not your usual shampoo I smell. So either you didn't shower by yourself this morning, or you've switched brands. I'm trusting you made Rose happy?"

I grinned back and answered "She is."

"Still? I guess you must have, then!" Lucy teased.

"Before I forget, she wanted me to make sure and thank you for her. So 'thank you' from Rose."

Lucy smiled and said "Whatever was bothering her, its better now, of course."

"Its better", I confirmed.

"Good. Rita told me a little bit about her - on top of what you did. So long without the husband she loved so much... I can only imagine. Well, I want you to tell her something for ME."

"What's that?"

"I want you to tell her that thanks aren't necessary, and she's welcome to borrow you as much as she wants until I get out of here. When that happens, we'll negotiate!" she told me, with a grin.

I laughed and said "I'll tell her."

With that out of the way, the rest of the day went pretty much as expected. When I got back to Rose's that night, I found her sitting on the front steps of her house, apparently waiting for me.

As I got close to her, I could see how happy she was to see me again; when we got inside, she didn't delay in pulling my head down and kissing me. Feeling a little feisty, I squatted a bit and put my arms around her - then picked her up off the floor and kissed her right back. She laughed, and exclaimed "Oy! Loco gringo!" before kissing me *again*.

When I set her back down, I told her what Lucy had said I should - and her eyes sparkled in delight as she told me "That is for later, I think. For now, it is time for supper."

When we got to the table, I didn't see any food. I looked at her, and she just smiled and told me "Sit. I'll bring it to you." before disappearing into the kitchen.

I did as I was told, and she reappeared a few moments later with a pretty good-sized steak and a baked potato that she set in front of me before going back into the kitchen. When she came back, she had another plate with a smaller steak and potato on it, along with a small basket of obviously fresh-baked homemade rolls. She told me "Lucy said this morning that she is fine with us making love, and she doesn't care how many times - so I want to be sure that you have the strength and energy to make love with me as much as I

want", the last part with a lusty grin.

I grinned back at her and answered "Then it's a good thing YOU are having steak, too!" - making her eyes widen in surprise.

We talked as we ate, and she asked me how Lucy was doing; I knew that she was asking for no other reason than simply because she cared. When supper was over, I helped with the dishes, and she patiently tolerated my patting her on the butt and leaning over to nibble on her neck and shoulders as she washed while I dried. The flashing in her dark eyes let me know that I was going to have my hands full, later.

When everything was put away, she got each of us a bottle of beer from the refrigerator and the two of us went out and sat on the deck - next to each other, holding hands as we sat quietly under the stars.

When it was time for bed, she got up and gave my hand a little tug to let me know to come with her. I stood, and she led us inside and up the stairs - then back to where her bedroom was. Inside, she had me stand so she could slowly undress me, then undressed herself. Moving to stand in front of me, she looked up and told me "What happened with us this morning, it went too quickly. I have been thinking about you all day, and tonight I want us to take our time, and go slowly."

I smiled my reply, and that was enough for her. She led us over to her bed and pulled the covers down before guiding me to lie down, and then lying next to me. We looked at each other, and she said "This morning, you gave me much pleasure in a small time. I... I want to find out how much more there can be. Manuel and me, we were still young when we married, and we did not know very much about how to pleasure each other. While I have you, I want to learn, if you will teach me."

"Rose, you already know the important part."

She looked at me in curiosity, and I told her "The important part of making love with another person is to *love* them first. If you have that, then the rest is easy."

She gave me a happy smile, and I moved to kiss her - softly and gently, something that surprised and pleased her.

I kissed her again, and as I did, I put my hand on her belly. I felt her take it and start to move it up toward her breast. I broke our kiss to remind her "You said you wanted us to go slowly." She nodded and released my hand. I started to kiss her again, and put my hand back on her belly - then began slowly caressing her, enjoying the feel of her velvety skin under my fingertips as our kisses grew more intimate and loving.

I deliberately avoided touching her breasts - but that isn't to say that I didn't get *close* to touching them. I would slide my hand up her body, and **just** before my hand would contact her breast, I would veer off and caress her side - just at the very edge of where her

breast melded into her body. I would caress her throat and shoulders, then trace my fingers down her body - *between* her breasts, but not touching either one. I would softly stroke the insides of her thighs, letting my fingertips move higher and higher - and then follow the crease of her leg, never touching her mons, or even feeling her pubic hair. After a couple minutes of that, she began to whimper and try to move her body to get me to touch whatever it was I was avoiding, but she couldn't make it happen.

After one of our kisses ended, she said "Dios mio! Your hand - it is all over me, but you touch nothing; and still I feel like I am on fire! Please, Dan - have mercy on me!"

With that, I let my hand move to cover her breast, and heard her moan in pleasure and relief at the contact. I found her nipple already erect, a large hard pebble sticking out of the puckered surface of her areola. Her moans intensified as I gently squeezed her breast, the warm, spongy mass of it responding to my touch. Not wanting to play favorites, I traced a path to the other, and found it as warm and pliable as the first, the peak of it as proudly at attention as its mate.

The next time our lips separated, I began kissing more of her - her shoulder, throat, and neck. I slowly eased my torso over her so that I could do the same to the other side, listening as she panted in increasing arousal before I began kissing my way lower on her body. When my lips reached her breasts and took one of her nipples into my mouth, she gasped her pleasure even as she was parting her thighs in response to my soft touch. As my lips and tongue played with their new toys, my hand was gently investigating her mons and the area between her thighs. The small, dark bush she'd revealed to me that morning proved to be composed of short, soft hairs, thick and luxurious. I let my fingers delight in the richness of her pubic growth for a couple of minutes before extending my touch a little farther and lower on her body.

Between her velvety thighs, her labia were somewhat long, and thick; the area between them was hot and damp with her obvious arousal. Laying my middle finger along her cleft, I slowly curled it, drawing my fingertip between her vaginal lips - dipping ever so slightly into her channel. When I did, she gasped and lifted her hips, welcoming my intimate touch. Continuing to draw my fingertip upwards, I found her clitoris - the size of a single peanut, it was erect and sensitive to my touch.

As I moved my mouth from one breast to the other and back again, I kept my hand busy further down. Carefully and gently, I used my fingers to plumb the depths of her and found her hot and wet inside. Eagerly, she accepted first one finger, then a second, into her feminine embrace. While I slowly plundered her treasure, the palm of my hand applied a soft rhythmic pressure to the sensitive knob of flesh at the apex of her channel. With each passing second, the combination of my mouth on her breasts and my hand between her thighs increased her arousal. Her hands were in my hair and she was softly muttering expressions of pleasure and endearments in Spanish when she surprised me by having a small orgasm.

Her already-tight vagina clamped down on my fingers, making it difficult for me to move them in her as her body spasmed; I continued pressing against her clitoris with my palm in time with the contractions I could feel in her body as she groaned in pleasure and release. When she relaxed from around my fingers, I gently pulled them free of her - and while she was still distracted, eagerly cleaned her tangy, tasty juices from them. That done, I eased the rest of my body over her, holding myself on my elbows over her body with my legs between hers.

Her eyes opened, and she saw me looking down at her and the delight on her face was plain as could be when she told me "Never before has that happened to me without making love."

"But Rose - we *are* making love", I answered. "And we've only gotten started; there is still more for us to do."

Hearing that seemed to amaze her, and I could hear the anticipation in her voice as she asked "More?"

I grinned and said "Let me show you" before softly kissing her lips - then proceeding to blaze a trail down her body with my lips. I didn't hurry in the slightest, but once past her breasts, I slowed even more: I don't think there was a square inch of her belly and abdomen where I didn't leave a damp kiss, or nibble with my lips. By the time my lips were brushing against her pubic thatch, she was writhing and moaning in pleasure. As I followed the crease of her thigh, she realized where I was headed and what I planned to do. She looked down at me uncertainly, but didn't object.

I finally had a clear view of her womanhood - her labia dark with her arousal, long and thick as my fingers had said, the area between shiny with her oils. At the top, her clitoris had mostly disappeared back under its hood - but I could still see it peeking out at me. Looking up at her, I could see the concern on her face and softly told her "A beautiful Latina flower, blooming just for me". She looked much less worried when she heard that, but I could tell that she was still nervous about what she knew I was going to do. Rather than prolong it, I simply lowered my head and dipped my tongue between her vaginal lips before drawing it upwards and collecting a full sample of her oils. As they'd been on my fingers, her juices were tangy - deliciously, pleasantly so. I didn't bother saying anything to her; I just did it again - and felt her relax when she realized that I *liked* what I was doing to her.

I don't know how long it took for me to bring her two more orgasms, each stronger than the one before - but I **am** certain that I enjoyed every moment of it.

I'd brought her close to the edge and let her slide back again a couple of times when she told me "Dios! Please, have mercy on me!", her frustrated arousal clear in her voice.

I did - after a fashion. As I slowly twirled her clitoris with the tip of my tongue, I carefully

wetted a finger with her oils, and then eased it inside her. It didn't take me long to find a spot at the top of her vagina and behind her pubic bone that I'd been hoping to find. When I started rubbing it with the end of my finger, I thought she was going to get whiplash from the way her head started tossing. It was only a few moments "work" to find a combination of what I was doing with my mouth and my finger that pleased her the most; with that knowledge, I was able to bring her to an even higher peak and hold her there for several seconds before a furious tongue-lashing of her clitoris and firm pressure against the spot in her vagina brought her the relief she'd asked for.

It also almost got my neck and finger broken when her thighs slammed against my head and her vagina clamped down as she all but screamed her pleasure.

After a bit, I felt her relax around my finger for a moment, and hurried to rescue it from her clutches; a few moments later, her thighs opened and I was able to hear again, too.

Delaying long enough to give her mons a quick kiss, I moved to lie next to her again - putting my arm around her and holding her as her body continued to shudder every so often. I began softly kissing her now and then as she slowly got her senses back; I'd just kissed her lips when her eyes opened and she looked up at me in stunned amazement. She tried to talk to me, but all that came out was a weak croak; I told her "Momento", and left long enough to get her a glass of water from her bathroom. After she'd taken a few swallows, she gently pushed my hand away. I set the glass on the small table next to the bed, and when I was looking at her again she asked "This is what you do to people you love? Madre de Dios! No wonder Lucy is willing to let women borrow you - so she can recover from what you must do to her. Cristo!"

From the expression on her face, I knew Rose wasn't actually upset with me - only surprised by what had happened to her. I grinned and answered "You told me you wanted to know how much there can be. Now you are starting to learn, yes?"

"That was only a start? There can be more?" she asked, shocked.

"If you want", I replied.

She gave a small laugh and said "I don't know if I could live through it!"

She lifted her head to kiss me on the lips before letting her head fall back again; the two of us stayed like that for a couple of minutes before she said "When you went... there, between my legs - I was afraid that you would think it was ugly. But you told me it was a flower, and blossoming just for you; and I knew that I had been a little bit ashamed of myself there - and that I didn't have to. Then when you put your tongue in me, I thought perhaps you were... strange. But it felt good to me, too - and when you kept doing it, I realized that you were doing it to please ME, and that it was something that Manuel and I didn't know we could do. Oh, we were so ignorant!", turning her head away from me at the end.

I reached over and cupped her face in my hand and got her to look at me as I told her "Rose, don't be ashamed of what you did not know. You and Miguel, you loved each other and you were happy together. You are still young, and you should not be wasting your life by living alone. Find another man that you can love, even if it is not as much as you loved Miguel, and **live** again."

She looked at me for a few seconds before replying "No, I don't think that I could find another to love as much as I loved Miguel. There is one I love almost as much - but you are already married. You are right: I *have* been wasting my life, living here alone. Thanks to you, I **do** want to live again; and I will find a man to love, and who will love me. And when we have children, our son will be named Daniel in honor of all you have done for me. This I swear to you."

I softly touched my lips to hers and answered "If I have helped you to live again, then I am grateful to have done so, and I am happy for you."

Another minute went by before she wrinkled her nose and asked "Is... is that... *me* I smell?"

I realized that the hand I had cupping her face was the one I'd had between her legs; and on the heels of that, that she was undoubtedly smelling what was left of her juices on my fingers. I started to move my hand away from her face, but she grabbed it and moved it closer to her nose. It took her only a few moments to figure out what the source of the odor was, then where it had come from. She blushed slightly with the realization, but looked up at me and asked "This is the hand you used? Between my legs?"

Busted, the only thing I could do was concede that it was.

She sniffed my fingers again and absently said "Before, I always thought it was not a good smell. But now..."

A moment later, she tentatively stuck her tongue out and touched it to the finger that I'd used last. When she'd consciously gotten a taste of herself, she contemplated it briefly; then with a mischievous smile at me, she proceeded to clean them off with her tongue. When she was done, she told me "What you did, it told me that you did not think the taste was bad - so I wanted to know what it was like. It is... different, but not so bad, I think."

She blushed when I told her "*I* like it!", then answered "I think maybe I could like it, too."

She released her hold on it, and I moved it down to her breast - simply holding my hand over it, without trying to arouse her again.

Several minutes later, I heard her say "What you did to me... with your mouth... I... I want to do that for you, too. But I don't know... Will you teach me?"

"If you want to do that" - "I do!", she assured me - "then I will help you learn."

She pulled my hand from her breast and sat up, moving so that she was sitting by my waist. Looking first at my penis, then my face, and back again, she hesitantly asked "What... what do I do?" as she took me in her hand.

"The way that I used my mouth on you, you can do to me. I know this is new to you, so just do whatever you like; if you do something that feels good or hurts me, you will know. I'll tell you if I'm going to climax, so that you aren't surprised."

Leaning over, she tentatively stuck her tongue out and let the tip of it touch the head of my penis. I think she was a little reassured by my lack of immediate response, and she repeated her actions - letting more of her tongue come in contact with me, and leaving it there longer.

Over the next few minutes, she gradually got more and more relaxed - and with the decrease in her nervousness, she also became willing to experiment. As she became more active and adventurous, she felt me beginning to respond to her efforts - which did wonders to boost her confidence. She'd gotten me almost completely erect, and let the head of my penis slip out of her mouth to ask "I'm doing it right?"

I couldn't help grinning and asking "Aren't you getting the result you want?"

She blushed slightly and nodded her head before taking me into her mouth again. Reassured that what she was doing was pleasing me, her enthusiasm increased. As she gradually expanded her efforts and tried different things, I let her know what felt good to me, and what didn't. She seemed to know without having to be told that teeth were a Bad Thing, and other than letting them softly drag along my length as she raised her head a couple of times, she was careful not to let them come in contact with me.

When she started softly sucking on me as she used her tongue along the underside of my penis, she knew how good it felt to me when I became fully erect in her hand. Looking at me in delight, she kept at it - and even began moving her mouth up and down. The response she got from that let her know she was on the right track, and her efforts increased even more. Reaching between my legs, she cupped my testicles, gently rolling them in her hand to get familiar with them. I'd initially had trouble believing that she and Miguel hadn't been more adventurous, but the way she was acting, I had no choice but to believe that their intimacy with each other had been amazingly constrained.

Knowing that that she was pleasing me, she kept her mouth busy on my penis; the sensation of the different changes she tried were moving me closer and closer to my release. She stumbled across a combination of actions that felt *really* good, and I warned her that if she kept doing that, I was going to climax. She pulled her mouth away and replied "I have tasted myself, and now I want to taste *you*, querido."

"¿Es usted seguro?" (are you sure) I asked.

"Si" - and she wrapped her lips around me again, and continued what she'd been doing.

A couple minutes later, and I told her "¡Ahora está sucediendo (It's happening)!" and got a brief nod from her before the first spurt of my cum erupted from the end of my penis. I could see that the force of it surprised her, but she didn't falter. She quickly lifted her head so that only about a quarter of me was still in her mouth, and continued to tease the underside of my penis with her tongue as the rest of my semen jetted into her mouth.

When several seconds went by without my adding to what she already had, she swallowed it; when she felt me start to shrink, she carefully sucked the end of my penis clean before letting me slip from between her lips.

She sat up, and I reached out to hold her, but she shook me off long enough to reach for the rest of the glass of water I'd gotten for her. Taking some of it, she swished it around in her mouth and swallowed, then did it again, before simply drinking the rest. When she was done, she saw me watching her and blushed faintly before saying "I think it is okay for me to taste myself, but not you - you aren't a maricón". Satisfied that she'd removed any traces of my semen from her mouth, she let me kiss her after she'd lain back down beside me.

"Are you happy now?" I asked.

She gave me a pleased smile and nodded before answering "Yes, I am happy now. Your taste... it is salty, like a snack. I like it. I was surprised when you did that - how hard it came out, and how much there was, though!"

I hugged her before saying "What you did felt *very* good to me. Thank you."

With an impish smile, she told me "It was my pleasure" - making both of us laugh.

A minute later, she pulled back from me and exclaimed "You spoke Spanish to me!"

I couldn't help laughing, and answered "Sí, hice eso. ¿Es eso un problema?"

Accusingly, she said "No, it isn't a problem. But you didn't say you spoke Spanish!"

"Didn't you notice that this morning, and when I was helping with the dishes tonight, every time you said something to me in Spanish, I answered in it or did what you told me?"

"No. I'm so used to speaking and hearing both, I didn't even pay any attention." she grudgingly admitted before snuggling next to me again. "How do you know Spanish? I don't think it is from school, because you speak the way real people do, not the fancy one from books."

"You know what I did in the Army; that's where I learned it."

Her curiosity satisfied, Rose lay next to me for several minutes before asking "Dan? Can you... will you be able to make love again tonight? When Miguel and were first married, sometimes it was more than just once - you understand? I... I don't mean to embarrass

you, but you are not so young now as we were then, and..."

I hugged her and answered "Yes, I'll be able to make love again tonight. I'm not so young now, so it takes me a little longer before I'm ready again, but we'll still be able to make love if you want."

I felt her blush before she replied "I would like that."

Being with her like that was one of the damndest things I'd ever experienced. One minute, she'd be a passionate, no-holds-barred vamp; the next, she'd be as shy and reticent as a virgin. It made for an "interesting" relationship.

As we lay there, I began softly caressing her - not in an effort to get her aroused again, but simply to enjoy the feel of her body, and particularly her skin. After I'd been at it a bit, she made a couple of small, happy noises and wriggled against me before using the hand that was resting on my chest to start doing much the same thing to me. She seemed particularly fascinated by my chest hair, and spent several minutes just teasing and playing with it. When she tired of that, though, she went on to begin exploring the rest of my body - and it wasn't any surprise to me when she finally settled on my penis. Teasing her, I casually stretched my arm down a little and *ever* so softly traced a finger up along the crack of her ass - only to be surprised when she shivered slightly, and the nipple on the breast I could see erected a bit in response. Not believing what I'd just seen, I repeated it a few moments later, and got the same response. Curious to see just how far she'd let me go with it, I did it again - except that time, she looked up at me and said "Si, amante, I like it when you play with my butt like that. But don't you think we should save that for later? Right now, I want to get *this*" - she gently squeezed my penis - "working again!" with a lusty grin.

Feeling pretty well recovered, I grinned back and said "You know that I liked what you did before, and I liked what *I* did before. Perhaps we can help each other start working again..."

It took her a moment to understand what I was suggesting - but when she got it, her grin got even bigger and she told me "¡Si - deseo hacer eso (I want to do that)!" and promptly sat up to reverse the direction she was lying. I guided her on top of me, making sure she didn't knee me in the side of the head; she had me in her mouth again before I was able to hold her firm ass cheeks in my hands and lift my head to begin doing *my* part.

Considering how she'd reacted to my playing with her ass, I wasn't surprised to see that her labia were visibly extended, if not as far as they'd been when I'd used my mouth on her before.

That shortcoming, so to speak, was easily dealt with: extending my tongue, I ran it between them and wriggled the end of it against her opening. The moan she released around her mouthful of my penis let me know that I was doing something she liked.

When I pulled my head back a couple of minutes later, her vaginal lips were long and dark again, and the area between them glistening with a mixture of my saliva and her lubricants. Below, I could see that her clitoris was starting to make an appearance - and promptly fastened my mouth over it and began encouraging it to come out and play.

She retaliated by taking my entire semi-erect penis (she'd been busy, too) into her mouth and using her lips and tongue to massage it to life - very successfully, I might add.

Having climaxed already that evening, I wasn't feeling any particular need to do so again - as she continued her tender ministrations to my manhood, it gave me considerable pleasure to slowly bring her to an orgasm.

When it was over for her, I took no small delight in continuing to run my tongue along her cleft from clitoris to perineum - each pass causing her to shudder in response. Finally, she managed to stop panting long enough to tell me "Cabrón! Stop that, before you kill me!"

I couldn't resist doing it just ONE more time, and heard her say "¡Pendejo gringo!" - followed by a soft laugh.

When she was able, I helped her get turned back around so we were head-to-head, and she playfully slapped me on the chest before declaring "Ay! You are such a *terrible* man!" with a smile.

I could feel the end of my penis brushing against her mons, and knew that she could feel it, too. Getting a slightly distracted look on her face, she eased herself back a little and wriggled her hips until she felt it slip between her labia. A little more adjustment on her part and I could feel myself slightly pressing against her opening.

Looking into my eyes, she began rocking herself back, pressing herself onto me a fraction of an inch at a time. Between the feeling of her erect nipples dragging across my body, and the sensation of her tight, wet vagina slowly enveloping my manhood, I didn't have **any** trouble staying hard until both of us finally felt the tight ring of her opening wrapped around the base of my penis.

With a pleased (and satisfied) look on her face, she raised up so that she was more sitting on me than lying, she slowly started rocking her hips, taking the last bit of me inside. As she moved over me, I began by caressing her breasts and gently pulling and pinching her nipples; when both of them were at full attention, I moved on to caress her body, from the firm globes of her ass to the back of her neck, and everything in between. I experimented a bit along the way, and it didn't take me long to find out what kinds of touches on what parts of her body excited her the most - and proceed to do them.

A lot.

It wasn't long before she was in constant motion on me, gasping and moaning as she got

closer and closer to finding her release. And find it she did, finally: with a loud groan, she settled herself as far onto me as she could while her womanhood clenched around me in time with the spasms wracking her body.

When she was spent, I could see that she was barely holding herself up as she panted for oxygen. Reaching up, I moved her long, luxurious hair out of her face and gestured to her that she should let herself lie down on me. She nodded, and let me help so that she ended up letting her entire body rest on me. As she softly panted in my ear, I gently caressed her back from shoulders to hips and back again several times before wrapping my arms around her and simply *holding* her.

When her breathing was back to normal, I managed to get our positions reversed - her resting on her back, and me on top, but holding my weight off of her. With her reasonably close to normal again, I started softly kissing her shoulders and nibbling on her ears with my lips. She moaned her pleasure, so I figured it was safe to continue by using my teeth to softly bite her earlobes and the spot where her shoulders and neck joined. She responded by putting her arms around me, and I lifted my head to look at her as I arched my back and began to slide my penis out of her.

I could see in her eyes that she was initially confused by the sensation, but when the situation fully sank in for her, her eyes got almost as large as saucers before she asked me "More?"

"Unless you've had enough..."

"God, no! As long as you can, I want to make love with you!" she declared.

So we made love, as long as I could.

Me being on top of her like that saw her through one orgasm, and most of the way toward a second. Changing over to dog position finished that orgasm and gained her a third. She got back on top of me for a fourth; her on her back and me squatting on my haunches between her thighs brought her numbers five and six. I was on top of her again, and finally emptied myself into her during her seventh orgasm since she mounted me that first time. The number of times she orgasmed was less a tribute to my ability to hold off on climaxing than to her incredible willingness to experience pleasure.

When it was over, and I was trying to get my breath and strength back, I could only wonder at what kind of orgasmic monster I'd unleashed on an unsuspecting world. Judging by the fine sheen of sweat on her, and the dazed expression on her face, I was left hoping that I'd managed to satiate her - at least for the night.

When my slightly sore penis pulled free of her, I was thankful for the opportunity to lie down and not have to concern myself with anything but breathing.

Several minutes went by before I was able to ask her "¿Usted se siente mejor (was that

better)?"

It took a few seconds before she was able to reply "Sí. Bastantes al último a la semana, pienso (Enough for a week, I think).", followed by a weak smile.

I took her hand in mine and found the strength to bring it to my lips and kiss it; her eyes told me how much that simple gesture meant to her.



When I woke up the next morning, my watch told me that it was nearly eight o'clock. I looked over at Rose, and saw that she was virtually dead to the world. Easing myself out of bed, I headed for the bathroom; once I'd showered, I felt appreciably better. Still not particularly energetic, mind you, but better.

Back in the bedroom, I gently nudged Rose and got her attention long enough to ask if she wanted anything. The answer I got was somewhat less than friendly before she told me she just wanted to sleep.

I went downstairs and got her coffee maker ready so that all she would have to do was turn it on; I expected that she'd need all the help and rejuvenation she could get when she finally got out of bed.

When I entered Lucy's room at the hospital with a bag of fast-food breakfast and TWO large cups of coffee, she started laughing. I gave her a baleful eye, and she told me "If you could see yourself, you'd laugh, too. But why are you only eating breakfast now?"

I gave her a kiss, then got myself parked in a chair. Taking a long pull from the coffee container I'd been trying to cool since I'd gotten it, I answered "Because Rose is *probably* still asleep."

Shocked, but still amused, Lucy asked "What did you do to her last night? Or should I ask how many times you did her?", with a laugh.

I considered it for a moment, then asked "Remember that night in the hotel when I helped you? When you and the girls tried to gang up on me?"

It took her a few moments to remember the night that she and Robyn and Sandra had all tried to get me to climax, mostly without success, while having multiple orgasms each in the process. It had been after she and I had first gotten to know each other, and she'd asked for my help in figuring out what was going on at one of her company's clients offices.

Her eyes got big, and she asked "Like that?"

"Almost", I answered before taking another big hit of coffee. "The difference was that I was just holding off because she said she wanted to make love as much as I could."

"Oh, dear God!" Lucy exclaimed, starting to smile.

"Well, we did, until I climaxed the second time. The problem was that she had a few orgasms BEFORE we really started making love, and had" - I mentally counted - "seven more by the time I finished."

Lucy's eyes got big again, but she was still smiling when she told me "No wonder she didn't get up! Did you check and make sure she was just sleeping, and not dead?", teasing me.

I got some food into me before I answered "Yeah, she's alive. I asked if she wanted anything before I left, and she called me some names in Spanish before she said she just wanted to sleep."

Hearing that, Lucy *did* start laughing. I got another couple bites of food down before I told her "Before I left, I got her coffee maker ready, though, so all she has to do is turn it on; and after I stopped by this place" - holding up the bag - "I left some of it for her, too, so all she'll have to do is nuke it and not cook. She didn't seem to be in real good shape this morning."

That got Lucy laughing even harder, and I was able to finish off the first cup of coffee before she could tell me "That was nice of you, Dan - particularly since it's your fault she's feeling that way!", then laughing again.

Knowing how the previous night had gone, she left me alone to finish my breakfast.

That day, she got as far as 45 degrees, earning her the congratulations of the physical therapist and a kiss from me - not that I needed any particular reason to kiss her.

When I got back to Rose's, I didn't see any sign of her outside, and let myself in. There, I found her half laying on the couch, apparently having fallen asleep while waiting for me to get back. I knelt down and kissed her on the forehead; when her eyes opened and she saw me, she lit up like a Christmas tree. She started to sit up, and I gently held her down and told her "No, go ahead and lay there. I think you need the rest."

That got me a baleful look before she told me "Yes, I need the rest. I don't know if I should thank you or kill you for what you did to me last night!"

I leaned forward and kissed her before answering "You *said* you wanted to make love with me as long as I could", smiling.

That didn't help placate her much - if any. She told me "Do you know what time I got out of bed this morning? It was after ten o'clock! I'm lucky I didn't drown myself taking a shower, I was so weak."

I was pretty sure that was an exaggeration, and listened as she told me "If you had not made the coffee ready and left me the food, I am sure I would have died of starvation by now", her tone letting me know that she was appreciative, despite her words, before she continued "The next time I tell you I want to make love with you as long as you can, I want you to remind me of this day - so that I know I should be more careful about what I ask for."

"Querido, was it really so bad, last night?" I asked.

Hearing the term of endearment from me, her expression softened, and I could see the love in her eyes as she answered "No, it was not so bad last night; it was more pleasure than I knew I could feel. It was *today* that I thought would kill me!"

I smiled and said "If you want to, and supper isn't already cooked, then I will apologize by taking you out to eat. Okay?"

At the mention of supper, she got a horrified look on her face. I hadn't smelled anything food like when I came in, and seeing her sleeping on the couch, I figured she'd nodded off and not cooked.

Shamefaced, she told me "I sat down to rest for a little bit before I started getting things ready to cook. I must have fallen asleep, and you woke me up."

I kissed her on the forehead again to let her know she was forgiven and said "Then I get to take you out for something to eat. Do you want to change, or is what you're wearing okay?" She was wearing a long black dress with an embroidered vest over it - attractive, and quite colorful, but I had no illusions that I knew anything about what a woman would want to wear to go for supper.

She considered the question for a moment before answering "If I had the energy, I would change; but this will have to do. What would you like for supper?"

"Since I'm responsible for you falling asleep, I'll leave it up to you - what do YOU want to eat?"

Hesitantly, she suggested "There is a seafood restaurant in town that is very good. But it is not very cheap..."

"Don't worry about the cost of it. If that's where you want to go, then that's all I need to hear. Are you hungry now, or do you want to wait a little while?"

Smiling, she told me "If I don't go soon, I will be too tired to go at all. Better now, I think."

I helped her get up, and the two of us went out to my vehicle. We held hands on the way to the restaurant, with her providing the directions on how to get there. She was familiar to the staff, and they quickly showed us to a nice table - but one that was still quiet.

From what she'd said, I thought the place was going to be expensive; but looking at the menu, I saw that the prices were pretty reasonable - particularly if the seafood was as fresh as they claimed. To let Rose know that she didn't have to worry about the prices, I commented that they were less than what I was used to paying at home.

Dinner with Rose was a pleasant affair, and the meal passed quickly - too quickly, for my taste, since I enjoyed being with her like that. Still, the food was good and the company was better, so I didn't really have any cause to fuss when we were done. I signaled our waitress that I was ready to pay, and she accepted my credit card on her way to the register. When she came back, I signed the bill and took possession of my card and my copy of the receipt. Rose saw that I hadn't added a tip, and was looking at me strangely. I simply said "A tip on a credit card receipt is a hard number. Cash on the table could be *anything*". She understood then that I was giving the wait staff the chance to pick up at least a little money off the IRS books.

She led the way out of the restaurant, and I pretended I wasn't watching her ass moving under her skirt. Once we were in my vehicle again, she turned to me and asked "Would it be okay for us to visit Lucy in the hospital? I would like to meet the woman that is so generous, she is willing to share her husband."

I got on my cell phone and called the hospital, then was put through to Lucy's room. Gomer answered the phone, and turned it over to Lucy when he recognized my voice. I told her that I wanted to stop by and visit, and that Rose was with me - then asked if she was tired and going to sleep, or if she was going to be awake for a while. She knew that I was giving her an "out" if she wasn't up to having Rose visit, but said that she'd love the chance to meet her new friend. I said that we'd be right over, and that ended the call.

On the drive over, Rose looked a bit nervous, so I took her hand and squeezed it before telling her "Relax. Lucy *wants* to meet you."

When we got to the room, I carefully edged my way ahead of Rose so that Gomer would see me first. With me in the room, Gomer just nodded to me and said he'd be back in half an hour, if that was okay. I assured him it was, and he headed out the door.

I escorted Rose over to Lucy's bed and made the introductions; Lucy could see that Rose was a little tense, and quietly went about trying to relax her. After a couple of minutes, they were talking as if they'd known each other far longer than they really had. A bit later, Lucy looked up at me, and silently let me know that she wanted the two of them to talk alone. I made my excuses, and went to stand out in the hall. Some time later, the door opened behind me, and a smiling Rose came out. The two of us talked a little bit before I saw Gomer coming down the hall toward us. I checked with him to see if he needed anything, and he assured me that everything was fine. I emphasized that he should let me know if there was *anything* he needed, and he understood that he wasn't to be bashful about asking. He told me again he was fine, and I let it go.

We'd just started on the way back to Rose's place when she told me "Lucy is such a **nice** person! I was afraid that she would be upset with me for making you late to see her this morning, and she just laughed and said that if you made me as happy last night as you make her the rest of the time, it was worth it to her. We started talking, and we had such a *good* time. Already, I feel like she is such a good friend to me."

I took her hand again, and she looked over at me before saying "After talking to her, I understand why you love her so much. And after knowing you, I understand why she loves YOU so much, in return. I think that I am a very lucky person to know both of you."

I gave her hand a squeeze, and she looked at me lovingly before looking out the window as I drove us back to her place.

When we were inside, she turned and put her arms around me and hugged me, saying "Thank you, Dan. It has been such a lovely evening."

I hugged her back, of course, and replied "I'm glad you enjoyed it, Rose. It was my pleasure."

She pulled back a little and looked up at me for a moment before telling me "It is not yet time for bed, and there is something that I have to tell you. Sit down, and I will bring us something to drink first."

I agreed, and went into the living room to take a seat on the couch, wondering what she would have to say. She reappeared a bit later with two bottles of beer. She handed one to me, and started to take a seat next to me on the couch - but let me pull her onto my lap and put my arms around her. Looking at me, she said "What I have to say, it might surprise you; but it is something that you must know. Please, listen to what I have to say carefully."

So I sat there, and listened to what she wanted to tell me.

What I learned was that Lucy and the girls weren't the first tourists to be assaulted in that particular section of the park - that in the previous ten years, there had been three others that had come out bruised and beaten, and had immediately headed for somewhere else. Rose told me that a couple of local people had gone out, only to disappear; it was thought that they'd been headed for that same area, but it wasn't certain. That there had been a couple of occasions where some large, mean men had gotten into - or more correctly, started - fights in one of the local bars, only to disappear before law enforcement could show up. I found out that the Hispanics in the area knew to stay well clear of that area because several of them had been beaten severely while gathering winter firewood - something the Sheriff was unaware of. I found out that a *very* few people had gotten close enough to learn that the group Gomer had found not only had a few military-grade weapons, but **several** - including fully automatic ones. I was informed that although the Sheriff was a good man and worked very hard to keep the peace, there were areas that

went unpatrolled because he and his deputies were AFRAID to go there.

When she was done, Rose wouldn't look at me as she said "I... I'm sorry, Dan. Before yesterday, I would have let you stay here *forever* without telling you these things. But now that I know you, and what kind of person you are - I MUST tell you. Lucy told me that you are going to do something about those men, and she thinks that you are going to ask the help of your friends. Querido, I love you too much, and I don't want you to get hurt. Miguel, he told me once that the most important thing to a soldier is information - that having the right information at the right time could make the difference between people living and dying. I have kept information I think you need from you, but you are too important to me now, so I have told you what I know. I hope that it is enough, and that it helps keep you safe."

I put my hand under her chin and gently tilted her head back up so that I could look into her eyes as I told her "Rose, I love you, too. And what you have told me here tonight, it **is** important; and I thank you for telling me. It isn't important whether you would have told me these things before. What matters is that you **HAVE** said them, now, before it is too late. With what you have said, I know better what must be done, and how to do it. So don't be sad or ashamed that you did not tell me before - be happy and proud that you have told them to me *now*."

"But I am so afraid for you! From your scars, I know that you have gone out to fight many times, and been hurt. It frightens me to think that you go out to fight again, and that this time you will not return! And it is the same for Lucy; she told me that after you and she were attacked, she is afraid that the men you hunt are too much, and that you will be hurt or killed. But she loves you, and she will not say anything to you because she does not want to trouble you with her fears. Querido, if you are killed, it will be the end for both of us - me **AND** Lucy! I have already lost a husband who I loved so very much; if I were to lose you now that I have found love again... I could not stand it. And as much as you love Lucy, she loves you - if you die, it will be for her like it was for me!"

I hadn't known that Lucy was afraid about what I wanted to do - but hearing it, I immediately knew that what Rose said was true. And **that** left me with a pretty problem, indeed. I wanted and *needed* to see those animals stopped from hurting anyone else. But even more, I wanted and needed to ensure Lucy didn't suffer because of it. Now I knew what it was that Lucy and Rose had talked about - at least, in part.

Taking Rose into my arms, I kissed the top of her head and told her "Okay, Rose. I know that you love me, and so does Lucy; and what it would do to both of you if something happens. Will you give me some time to see if I can find a better way, now that I know more? Will you trust me to make the risk as small as possible?"

Holding me tightly, she nodded against my chest. We stayed like that for a few minutes before I said "Now that you have food and a beer in your belly, do you think you will be

able to sleep well enough to make breakfast for me in the morning?", teasing her.

She pulled away and looked up at me, her eyes flashing fire as she said "I did not make breakfast for you this morning because last night you tried to kill me with love! If you can behave yourself tonight, then I will be able to get up early enough to feed you - so the decision is yours: love tonight or food in the morning!"

She saw me grinning at her then, and realized that I'd been jerking her chain; the name she called me under her breath wasn't very nice. But she let me pull her close and kiss her before putting my arms around her again.

I told her "If you will let me share your bed tonight, I will promise to behave myself - and love you only with my heart."

With that, she put her arms around me, too, and answered "Crazy gringo. Yes, I would like to have you in my bed tonight - but no funny business, okay?"

"No funny business", I agreed.

Upstairs and in her bed, she didn't hesitate to lie on her side and let me spoon with her back. I put my arm around her and held her breast in my hand. She turned her head to look at me and said "No funny business!"

I kissed her ear and confirmed "No funny business."

Satisfied, she put her hand over mine and the two of us fell asleep that way.



When she woke me up the next morning, I surprised the hell out of her by wrapping an arm around her and pulling her into bed with me. She laughed as I pulled the edges of her robe open so I could kiss her nipples before asking "So, you slept well last night?"

Smiling at me, she answered "Si - *very* well. Now let me up so I can finish cooking your breakfast, you crazy man!"

I gave each of her nipples another kiss, and a brief lick, before releasing her. Laughing, she pulled her robe closed again and muttered "Ay! Men!" before getting back out of bed. She faked a look of indignance at me when I patted her on the butt, then laughed again before telling me "Okay, Dan. Enough fun for now. Breakfast!"

I got up and started to reach for her again, but she danced away from me with a smile and the warning "Hurry, or it will be burned!"

I got downstairs in time to avoid that calamity, and the two of us talked and joked as we ate.

When I was ready to go see Lucy, Rose was waiting for me - and didn't object when I slid my hands inside her robe to play with her butt a little bit as we kissed. When our lips separated, she looked up at me with love in her eyes and told me "Thank you, Dan. This morning, I feel more alive than in a very long time. Now, go on, and go see your *very* lucky wife. I will be here when you get back."

I kissed her again and headed out the door. When I got to my vehicle, I saw that she was watching me from the front door; I smiled and waved to her, and saw her delighted smile when she waved back.

I had a lot on my mind during the drive in to the hospital, but I set everything aside when I went in to see Lucy.

I was there when the doctor came in and examined Lucy, making sure the progress she was making in her physical therapy wasn't hurting her. When he was done, he told her "It looks like the more therapy you get, the faster you're recovering. **IF** it continues the way it has, and you'll promise to take it easy, I'd be willing to let you out of here in a couple of days. You'll still want some support if you have to go very far, but you're recovering pretty quickly, so I wouldn't expect you to need help for very long."

Lucy's face showed the delight she felt at hearing that, and he cautioned her "I'm warning you, though: if you do something foolish and have to come back here, I will *not* be so lenient letting you out again!" The smile on his face only took the sharp edge off his warning without lessening its effectiveness. Lucy solemnly nodded and told him "Don't take this personally, Doctor - you're a nice man, and I appreciate all you and the staff have done for me - but I want to get **OUT** of here!"

He laughed, and said "If you didn't, then I **would** be worried about you."

When he'd gone, I gave Lucy a celebratory kiss - then a happy kiss, then an I-love-you kiss, and finally an I-miss-you kiss. When I was done, her eyes were laughing as she asked "You still want me around, even with Rose to keep you company?"

"She's a dear - but she's not **you**", I replied, my eyes and voice letting her know how much I loved her. Her response was to reach out and pull ME into a kiss that told me she loved me, too.

With the promise of getting out of the hospital sooner, Lucy was willing to push herself a little harder in her physical therapy - but not **TOO** much, so that she *would* be able to leave.

It was late afternoon and the two of us were alone when she asked me "Did Rose talk to you last night?"

"Yes - and she had a lot to say." I saw a brief flicker in Lucy's eyes, and knew she was afraid of how much and what Rose had said, but I went on "With what she told me, I'm

re-thinking what to do about those assholes"; the expression that crossed her face verified that what Rose had said about Lucy's fears was true.

I went on to tell her "But the important thing is what to do about *you*. There won't be any problem with you coming to Rose's; I think she loves you as much as she does me."

Lucy raised an eyebrow, and I answered the implied question by telling her "No, I don't think it would be physically - yet. From the things she's said and the way she's acted, I don't think she has *any* experience with girls. But I don't doubt for a moment that if the circumstances were right, she'd be willing to try it - at least, with you."

I knew that Lucy would be quite willing to have Rose as a friend, with or without any kind of physical relationship between them; but I also knew that Lucy would welcome the chance to show Rose her affection that way - as a physical expression of what was already in her heart and mind.

Lucy smiled and said "I'd like that - being at Rose's, regardless of whether she has or wants any interest in girls, or not."

About that time, the door to Lucy's room opened and Gomer came in. Lucy saw him and said "Ah, my cribbage opponent! Tonight, I get some of my money back, you stinker!"

I looked over at Gomer, surprised, and was amazed to see him looking embarrassed. It took me a moment to make the connection, then I asked him "She's why you're doing okay with money?"

He nodded, and looked at me as if he thought I'd be angry. I just laughed and said "If you're ahead of the game playing cribbage for money with her, you have my admiration, sir! Have at it, and enjoy your winnings!"

He laughed, and smiled when Lucy indignantly exclaimed "Gee, thanks, Dan!"

With Gomer there, I kissed Lucy again and told her I'd see her in the morning before leaving.

Over supper with Rose, I told her that the doctor had said she could leave soon - and asked if it was okay for Lucy to come there. The look I got made it *quite* clear the question had been unnecessary.

After supper and the dishes were done, Rose and I went out to sit on the deck. She offered to sit in my lap, and I gladly accepted her offer. The two of us sat there for quite a while, both of us content with me holding her.

When we went to bed, she was responsive to my advances and the two of us gently made love together. When it was over, I was lying on my side next to her with my arm across her body and she told me "I will miss this when Lucy is out of the hospital", a trace of sadness in her voice.

"Why are you going to miss it? I'll still be here." I asked, confused.

She turned her head to look at me, a strange expression on her face as she said "When Lucy comes here, you will not need me any more. And why would Lucy let you share my bed when you could be in hers?"

Ah.

Propping myself up on my elbow, I looked down at her and answered "Mi querido, have you forgotten the things that Lucy has told you? Have you forgotten what *I* have said? Do you really think that the love that Lucy and I have for you will end just because she leaves a hospital bed?"

She looked uncertain after that, and I went on "Rose, do you doubt that I love you, or that Lucy does?"

She shook her head after considering it for a moment, and I told her "You don't have to be afraid that what we have, you and I, is going to end just because Lucy is getting out of the hospital. Lucy shares me with you now, but she shares me with other women, too. Even now, after we have been married as long as we have, there are others like you that she loves - and that I love, too. And as I told you, I share her with other men. You know our love for each other, Lucy and me; do you really think that the love we have for you would change so easily?"

It didn't take her as long to shake her head in answer to that question. I lowered my head and touched my lips to hers before saying "Querido, there is no need for you to be sad or afraid that what we have, you and I, is going to be lost. You will *always* have a place in my heart, and in my thoughts - whether I share your bed, or not."

Her eyes started to get moist, and I quickly told her "No, don't start crying. If you do, then I'll start crying, too!", trying to head the tears off before they started. She laughed, and pulled my head down to give me a thorough kissing before releasing me again.

"I'm sorry, Dan. I started thinking about Lucy getting out of the hospital, and forgot that you love me - both of you."

I gently caressed her cheek as I replied "It's okay, Rose. I promise you, as long as we are here, you will be welcome to make love with me - or Lucy, if you want."

I wasn't surprised when it took a couple of seconds for what I'd said to sink in. First Rose just looked confused, but after she understood what I'd said, I could see the doubt and concern on her face.

I caressed her cheek again and told her "No, I am not saying that you **must** or *should* do anything with Lucy. And she would not ask it of you, either. But you have told me that you wanted to learn about love from me; so I am telling you that if you want to learn more, she would be happy to share HER love with you, too."

Her curiosity got the better of her, and Rose asked "Lucy has... made love with another woman? And you know?"

I smiled and said "Yes, she has - several different women. And of course I know - just as I know about the men that she has been with. Sometimes, she has wanted me to be with her and the other woman; other times, it was just them. She shares me with other women, so why should I not share her with them, too? If both of them want to, and they do it from love, why not?"

"Have... have you ever been with... another man?"

I laughed and answered "No. I like girls too much - as you know from the other night!"

Reminded of it, she nodded in acceptance that she had *plenty* of reason to believe that I liked girls. She told me "I have heard about women that like only women, but I don't think I could do that."

"Lucy and the other women that she has been with - they don't like **ONLY** women. I have made love with all of them, and what I'm telling you is that they love women **too**, not *only*."

Rose looked at me doubtfully and said "But I don't know anything about that. I have never..."

I grinned and said "You told me that you had never done some of the things that WE did, either - but you seemed to like them." She blushed slightly, and I added "Besides, as I said, it isn't something that you have to do or that you should do. I'm only telling you that IF you want to learn more about love, then Lucy will share HER love with you, too. If you decide that you don't want to, that is fine, too. It is your choice."

Lying back down again, I gave her a hug and said "Enough talk. You need to sleep now; you have already made me hungry for tomorrow morning."

Realizing that I was pulling her chain, she gave me a dirty look - and then smiled and rolled onto her side so she could spoon with me. With a contented sigh, she moved my hand to her breast and held it there as the two of us fell asleep.



The next couple of days seemed like I was watching a movie where the projector was broken: if things weren't seeming to be moving in slow motion, they appeared to be moving too quickly. But the time finally came where the doctor gave his approval for Lucy to check out of the hospital.

By that time, I'd come up with a plan that I was fairly certain would work in dealing with

the racist survivalist types that had hurt not only Lucy and the girls, but were inflicting themselves on a lot of other people, too.

Knowing there was a mission on, Gomer was happy to be headed back into the woods to get an update on them, and diagram their base area. When I asked, Rose told me that she would be happy to have a couple more people in the house, if they were friends of mine. When I said something about wishing the motels weren't so full, she asked how many more friends I wanted. I told her two more, and she promptly called around and found places to stay for them. She was fairly well known, and her explanation that the guests would be dealing with the survivalists did the trick.

Next was for me to make some phone calls. As Gomer had said, Speedy was quite willing to help, even before he heard what had happened to Lucy and the girls. Next was Muddy, who only asked where I was before saying he was on his way. The last two calls were the hardest - and that only because the first two were so damn easy.

The first was to "Mickey" Mouser, the guy that had handled nearly all the supply and requisitions for our team. I asked him if he could help, and his first question was "What equipment do you need?" I gave him a short list of necessities, knowing that he'd know from what they were what alternatives would be acceptable. The next thing he asked was when, and then where. With that, he said he'd be there as soon as he got the gear.

The last call was to "Sparky" Beckham, our comm and electronics guy. He had his own business providing secure communications and other electronic goodies to the government, and had earned a name for himself for the quality and reliability of his designs. Like Mickey, his first interest was in what I needed, and how soon. Once he told me I'd have it, he wanted to know where to bring it. I asked if he wanted to know the mission; he just laughed, saying "Boomer, I know you'd never do a *wrong* thing. The stuff you asked for, I know you've got a mission - and if you've got a mission, I'm in, because I know you, and I know whatever it is, it's something that needs to be done. The details can wait 'til I get there; day after tomorrow, likely."

I gave him the same directions to Rose's I'd given the others, using the same landmark where I'd met Gomer.



I got Lucy from the hospital to Rose's, where Rose had prepared a special lunch for her. Lucy had finished her first ever genuine homemade Mexican food meal when the doorbell rang. Rose went to answer it, and a few moments later, I heard her fearful call "Dan?"

I went to see what the problem was, .45 in my hand - and found that the problem was Muddy, standing on her steps. I'd tried to warn her about just how big he was, but nobody ever seemed to appreciate his size until they saw him. With my assurance that it really was him, she opened the door and let him in. I introduced them, and Muddy took her hand and kissed it before telling her it was a pleasure to meet her. She thanked him, and then told him "Please forgive me, Señor Waters. Dan told me that you are a big man, but I did not understand HOW big."

Muddy just smiled, and in his deep bass voice told her "That's okay, ma'am. I got used to scarin' folks some time ago. And just call me Muddy, same as everyone else."

"Please, call me Rose." she answered.

That out of the way, Muddy looked at me and said "Okay, you got us a mission, Boomer. 'Bout damn time. Where's Lucy?"

Rose and I led the way back to the kitchen, where Rose was surprised to see that Muddy had followed us - she'd learn soon enough just how quiet he was, despite his size.

Lucy managed to stand up, and Muddy went over and gave her a hug - far gentler than the ones he'd ever given ME, damn him. Lucy kissed him on the cheek and told him it was nice to see him, making him smile. He asked how the girls were, and she assured him they were fine, and would regret not being able to see him again. She sat down again, and Muddy moved to have a seat as well; the chair complained, but held.

Rose asked if Muddy was hungry, and he allowed that he wouldn't mind having a bite or two. She prepared a plate for him, and got him a bottle of beer from the fridge. He'd taken a couple of bites of everything when he told her "This is some real good food, Rose. Would you mind showing me how you made it?"

Seeing the looks on Lucy's and my faces, Rose didn't seem sure how to answer. Lucy told her "Muddy is the owner and chef of a restaurant, Café Triomphe.. If HE says its good, you know it is; if you give him the recipe, he'll probably be serving it before you know it."

Rose looked at all of us and said "I have read about that restaurant in the travel magazines. He is THAT Muddy Waters?", stunned to find a celebrity of sorts in her home.

Muddy confirmed it, indirectly, by saying "I hope what they said in that magazine was nice."

Rose looked at him and said "Oh, it was *very* nice!"

Muddy grinned at her and said "That's good to hear. So you'll show me how you made this?"

"I would be honored, Señor Muddy!" she answered.

He thanked her, and went back to eating while Rose looked like she'd just gotten a personal blessing from the Pope.

Knowing that Muddy and I would want to talk "business", Lucy said that she was feeling a little tired and would like to go upstairs. Rose immediately went over to help support her, and the two of them left. A minute later, Muddy said "Okay, Boomer, what's the story? Lucy looks like she just got out of the hospital, and I can see she's damn near weak as kitten."

I told him what had happened while we'd been camping, and his only comment was "Sonzabitches" before I finished up by telling him how we'd been hit over the head.

When I was done, he looked at me for a second before saying "So we're goin' after them, right?"

"That's right, Muddy. You, me, Speedy, Gomer, Mickey, and Sparky."

"The whole team, huh? How many are there, and where they at?"

I told him what Gomer had gotten for me the first time, then said that Gomer was out doing a final recon and would be back the next day, or the day after. Muddy just nodded and said "Payback on this one is gonna be a *motherfucker*." - making it clear that the survivalists were going to find out just how much he didn't like people hurting his friends.

A little bit later, Rose came in and said she'd show Muddy which room was his. He got up and went with her while I went about clearing the table. When they got back, Muddy amused Rose by telling her some of the stories from our Army days. He had her laughing by the time he was finished, and she'd relaxed enough to start simply calling him Muddy. She finally got a break by telling us that she needed to get started on supper - and was flattered when Muddy asked if she'd mind if *he* cooked. She looked over at me, and I just told her "It's your kitchen. But if you let him in there, you might have a hard time getting him out again."

She laughed, and told him he was more than welcome to cook, if he wanted; and she wasn't offended when he declined her offer to help. When Muddy got up and went to start supper, Rose and I started to go upstairs - but got delayed for a few moments so she could wrap her arms around me and kiss me before saying "I knew that you were a special man before, but hearing those stories about you! Are any of them true?"

"Well, they didn't happen *exactly* the way he said, as I remember..."

She laughed and kissed me again before leading the way up the stairs. To my surprise, she led the way down the hall, to the room across from hers. Inside, Lucy was lying on a King sized bed, reading one of Rose's books. Lucy told me "Rose wanted to put us in HER room, but you can see that didn't work, so she said we can stay here. This room still has a

bathroom, but there's another door that leads into her room. I've already *explained* to her" - probably meaning "told her how things were going to be", I thought to myself - "that she's welcome to borrow you any time she wants you for as long as we're here. She *says* she understands that she doesn't have to be afraid to hug you or kiss you or anything else just because I'm out of the hospital, or even in the same room with the two of you."

I decided to test that last part by grabbing Rose and pulling her into my arms and kissing her - long and hard. When I let go of her, she knew she'd been well and truly kissed. Her only response was a glance at Lucy before saying "Ay! Crazy gringo!", followed by Lucy's amused laughter.

Saying "You two talk. I will go see if there is anything Muddy needs", Rose left - patently ignoring the pat on the butt I gave her as she went by. When I turned to look at Lucy, I could see the amusement on her face. I went over and lay down on the bed with her, she set the book aside. She told me "I am **so** glad to be out of that DAMN hospital. They were as nice as they could be, I suppose, but it was still a *hospital*. The food sucked, the hours they keep sucked, not being able to go anywhere sucked, and that **fucking** catheter they had in me *particularly* sucked."

Lucy swore only under extreme provocation, so hearing what she had to say about the hospital told me more than just the words she was using did. I took her hand and kissed it before telling her "Well, you're out of there now, so if you need to pee, you're going to have to do it the old-fashioned way."

That got me a smile from her, and I went on "I talked to Rose, too, and she knows that IF she wants to find out about making love with another woman, you wouldn't mind helping her. I was right, and she said she's never had any kind of experience of *any* kind with another girl, so take that into consideration." I grinned, and added "She seems to understand that she doesn't need to worry about whether you're in the room or not."

Lucy grinned back and said "I was hoping you'd take the hint. When she said it to me, I could kinda see that she still wasn't sure whether I was just being polite, or not. I think she knows I meant it, now!"

Her smile quickly faded when I told her "I've also come up with a different plan to deal with those characters that you and the girls ran into, and all their dipshit buddies." I leaned over and kissed Lucy before I said "You know Muddy's here, of course - but the rest of the guys are on the way, too. I'm not doing this alone, and I'm going to be keeping MY part in it as limited to support as I can. When everybody's here, I'll be telling them that, and why, too - because as much as I love you, I don't want anything to happen that would hurt you or make you unhappy. They all know me, and I don't doubt for a minute that they'll understand and agree."

She tried to hide it, but there wasn't any mistaking the relief on her face. I went on to tell her "I'm sure you already know that I've had a lot on my mind; but that's no excuse for not

making sure YOU knew that I wasn't planning on taking all those assholes on by myself, or doing something stupid. I know you want them to pay for what they did to you, and particularly Sandra and Robyn - but I also know that I love you enough that I'm not going to take a risk I don't have to."

She started to cry, and threw her arms around me. I held her in return as she told me "Oh, Dan! I **do** love you, and I was so afraid that you were going to take some crazy chance just because of what happened - not just to me and the girls, but to you and me, after. I could see it on your face, how much it hurt you to see the girls and me, all bruised up and everything that night. And when that *prick* in the State office wouldn't do anything himself, or let anyone ELSE do anything, it just made so damn MAD; so when I knew you were planning on doing something to those men, I was scared that something would happen to you. I didn't want to say anything because I didn't know if talking to you about it would mess things up for you and MAKE you get hurt because you were distracted by what I said."

I stroked her hair for a bit, then told her "Honey, you never **ever** have to worry about talking to me about *anything*. You're the most important thing in my life, and I ALWAYS want to know what you think about what I'm doing. YOU are my touchstone, and if you believe in what I'm doing, then I *know* that I'm doing the right thing."

After a few minutes, her crying had stopped - but it felt nice just to be holding her like that.

Some time later, Rose knocked on the doorway to get our attention and told us "Muddy says that supper will be soon, if you would like to get ready."

We thanked her, and before she turned to leave, I saw the envy of Lucy on her face at how she'd found us.

We were getting ready to sit down for supper when the doorbell rang again. I kept company with Rose as she went to see who it was - and found Speedy outside. She easily recognized him from my description, and quickly invited him in - and after I'd introduced them, to join us for supper. When he walked into the dining room, Muddy said "Shoulda known *you'd* show up in time for chow!" - making me and Speedy laugh. No matter what else might be going on, Speedy always seemed to show up in time for meals, and we'd taken to kidding him about it long before.

Of course, with us laughing, we had to explain why it was so funny to Lucy and Rose - neither of whom thought it as amusing as WE did. Rose quickly got another place setting, and the five of us sat down for supper.

Muddy had made plenty, which was a good thing - I think the only person that didn't have seconds was Muddy himself. The rest of us stuffed ourselves.

Speedy got up before I did to help Rose clear the table; when they were done, he joined us

again and said that she was making coffee. A few minutes later, Rose came in with the coffeepot and cups for all of us.

All of us had taken a couple of sips when Lucy asked Speedy "How did you meet Dan, Speedy?"

Rose was paying as close attention as Lucy was when he told her "I had just finished the training for the kind of unit we were in, and I was out in town celebrating by having a few beers. I mean, I'd been afraid it was going to be too much, hard as it was, but I'd made it. I was in this one place, just sitting at the bar and taking my time with my beer when these guys at a table behind me started making remarks about me being Hispanic - except they weren't using the word Hispanic. But it was just words, and all I wanted to do was drink my beer and celebrate, so I ignored them. Except they kept it up, and got even worse about it. I mean, my family had been in Arizona for generations when those gringos on the East Coast decided they wanted to be their own country; but these guys are calling ME a wetback. Still, it was only words, and I tried to not pay any attention to them - even when they started calling me a greaser, and a Mexican, and more. I just sat there and drank my beer, figuring I'd leave when I was done with it, and find someplace where the people were a little more friendly. Then one of them got up and came over to me and started calling me names, and telling me what he thought about all the taco benders that snuck across the border. I kept an eye on him, but still didn't say or do anything - until he tried to hit me. I kind of broke his arm defending myself, and a bunch of people got up and one of them said they were going to teach the wetback a lesson."

I could see Rose nodding, and realized that she'd probably experienced that kind of stupidity, too. She was watching Speedy closely as he told Lucy "Anyway, I stood there and got ready to get a whipping; I didn't figure I had much of a chance against the bunch of them, but I'd just graduated some pretty tough training and I wasn't going to back down. Then some guy a couple seats down the bar gets up and comes to stand next to me - its Boomer, only I don't know it, then.. Anyway, he tells them 'if you boys are looking for a fight, let's even it up some and make it a REAL fight'. After he said that, some MORE guys got up from another table and went over to the ones in front of us. There's maybe ten or twelve of them against me and the guy standing next to me, and I'm thinking he hasn't helped much, you know? But before anything starts, the bartender tells us that if we don't get out of there, he's calling the cops. Then he tells us to take it outside, whether we're gonna fight or not - he doesn't want us in there any more. By now, I just KNOW I'm going to get my ass kicked when we get outside, but the guy next to me, he tells me to remember what I just graduated from, and says they call him Boomer. I don't understand how he knows, but I realize he's right - this is the kind of thing I'd been trained to handle. So we go outside, and around to the side of the bar - me and Boomer, we get our backs to the wall of the place so nobody can get behind us. I still figure I'm going to get whipped, but I decide I'm going to take as many of them with me as I can. One of them tells

Boomer he's going to whip his ass. Boomer answers 'don't let the long walk over here stop you from *trying*' - and the whole gang of them come at us."

He faded out for a few moments, remembering it just as I was doing, before coming back and saying "It was a fight, don't think it wasn't. I got my nose broken, and lost a couple of teeth - never mind the rest of it. But damned if we didn't win. Boomer, he's in a little better shape, but not much; the other guys, they're laying all over the parking lot - most of them aren't moving, and the ones that can move are wishing they couldn't; I can see a couple of broken arms and a broken leg, easily. Both of us, our clothes are torn and bloody, and we're a mess - but we're the ones still standing. I get my breath back, and I ask him why he helped. He just looks at me and says 'anybody that ignorant NEEDS an ass whipping every now and then, and I couldn't see why you should have all the fun of giving it to them'. I tell him who I am, and he says 'just graduated advanced training, right?', and I tell him yes. He says 'I'm Boomer, leader for Team Alpha. I got a spot for a recon guy if you decide you don't like any of the other teams'."

He looks at Lucy, then Rose, and tells them "Remember, everybody is broken up into teams of six, right? Well, they ID the teams by how long they've been in the program - and team Alpha is the FIRST team. They're the ones that had the hardest time, because they were the ones that had to prove that the whole idea would even work. Every other team knows that Alpha gets the hardest, shittiest - excuse me - roughest missions of anybody - both to see if they can hack it, and because they've got the most experience. And here's the leader, telling me I'm welcome to join HIS team! Well, before I can say anything, we hear sirens - somebody probably called the cops, so we start heading a different direction. We get a few blocks away and a cop car pulls up. The cop gets out and wants to know how come we both look so fu.. nny. Boomer tells him 'we got into a fight over a girl before both of us decided she wasn't worth it. Now we're gonna have a beer together'. It's obvious we've been in a fight - but because Boomer tells him we fought *each other*, he doesn't figure we're the ones for the other fight, and he lets us go. A few blocks later, we find a drugstore, and we go in and get some stuff to patch each other up, and some beers. Then we head over to a park and get cleaned up - as much as we can, anyway, while we drink the beer. When we're done, we head back to the base. When we get to where we have to go different directions, Boomer tells me to remember the story he gave the cop, that the girls name is Cindy, and not to remember anything else. Then he tells me to look him up again, and we split."

He laughed, and told them "Next day, the Drill Sergeant, he asks me if I was in a fight last night and I gave him the story that Boomer told the cops. He asks a couple more questions, and then he tells me somebody beat up the whole damn starting football team at the local college, and the school is plenty pissed about it. I tell him I wished I could of seen it, and he just shakes his head and tells me to start looking at what team I want to go to. Of course, I went straight to Boomer's; didn't even look at the others."

Muddy smiled and said "I always wondered why you come back lookin' so messed up that night, Boomer. Now I reckon you earned it. Damn, the college was some pissed about the first string team getting hurt like that!", laughing.

Rose asked him "Didn't you ever get mad about being called Speedy? I mean, it's for that mouse in the old cartoons!"

Speedy just looked at her and smiled as he told her "Why should I be angry? If you remember, the mouse *always* won."

Rose thought about it for a second, and saw his point. Then she asked me "But why did they call you Boomer?"

Lucy laughed and answered "Dan was the one who was their explosives expert. Boom!"

Rose got the joke, and laughed, too. Then Speedy told her and Lucy a story about me, which prompted Muddy to tell one. They went back and forth a couple of times before I told one about the two of THEM, and they decided that that was enough stories for the night.

Muddy finished his coffee and said "If you folks will excuse me, it's been a bit of a day, and I think I'll hit the sack."

Speedy said it was getting late for him, too; Rose told Muddy that he had my old room, and then gave Speedy directions to the house where he'd be staying, along with a clear map. She told him she'd be calling them to let them know he was on his way. He thanked her, and she told him in Spanish that anyone that was willing to go after the assholes that were hurting people would be welcome in any Hispanic house in the area. He replied that he'd make sure she and his hosts wouldn't regret their decision, also in Spanish.

Both of them got up and headed for the front door with Rose right behind them. Lucy and I heard the front door close, then Rose talking to someone on the phone, before she came back and sat with us again.

She reached over and took my hand before telling me "When Rita called me and asked if I would let you stay here, I thought that you would be just another gringo that did something stupid and got his wife hurt. But you talked to me like I was another human being, and not some minority person you had to be careful with or kind to. When you ate the same food that I cook for myself that night, I thought *maybe* you were different than most gringos - but still a gringo. Since then, every time I thought that I knew who you are, you did something to show me that you didn't fit any of the ideas I had about you. Now, tonight, I hear Speedy tell us about how you were the only one - in the whole place! - that was ready to stand up and help him against a bunch of pendejos that didn't like him just because he's brown. ¡He sido tal tonto (I have been an idiot)!"

I squeezed her hand and told her "No, you haven't been a fool, Rose. I saw the look on

your face when Speedy was talking about the names they were calling him - and I realized that you probably heard those things, too. What you were doing was treating me the way you had learned from OTHERS that you thought I deserved. But you learned that I'm not the same as them, and you have acted better toward me as you learned."

Lucy told her "Rose, one of the first things I learned about Dan is that he treats people the way they SHOW him they deserve. I have *never* known him to treat anyone as anything other than a human being that deserved his respect - until THEY showed him they didn't deserve it. He doesn't care about what color a person is on the outside; what matters is what they have on the INSIDE. I know Dan, and when Speedy was telling us how they met, I **knew** that Dan helped him simply because the other people were bothering him, and he was outnumbered. I don't know how many times I've seen Dan help someone just because they needed help, and he *could* help them - no matter WHAT color they were."

Rose looked at her and said "Si. When he came here, I needed help from someone, even though I did not know it myself. And he DID help me, and helps me still. I know that he is a good man, and that is why I am ashamed of how I thought about him."

"But Rose, you don't think about him that way any more. You learned what kind of man he is, and you think of him differently because of it. So there's no reason to be ashamed: when you knew better, your thoughts changed, not like the - what did you call them? pendejos? - that made trouble for Speedy."

Rose realized that Lucy didn't know the meaning of the word, and couldn't help smiling. Lucy and I both saw it, and smiled back at her - breaking her out of the feeling she'd had.

With that, the three of us finished the rest of our coffee, too. Rose gathered our cups and took them into the kitchen; when she got back, she found Lucy and me waiting for her. She smiled when I put an arm around her waist, the same as I'd done with Lucy, and we headed upstairs. When we got to the end of the hall, Lucy asked Rose if she would come into our room before she went to bed. Rose looked at her, wondering why, but agreed. With the door closed behind us, Lucy and I were soon nude and in bed. A couple of minutes later, Rose knocked on the door between our room and the bathroom. Lucy told her it was okay, and Rose came in wearing her robe. She came over and stood at Lucy's side of the bed before asking "What was it you wanted to see me for?"

Lucy asked her "I wanted to know if you wanted some company while you sleep tonight."

Surprised, Rose couldn't say anything for a few moments, and Lucy told her "If you do, you are *more* than welcome to stay with us" - and calmly threw the covers back, revealing that she was naked.

An even MORE surprised Rose could only stand there for a few seconds before she said "I... I don't know... I don't think..."

Lucy reached out and took Rose's hand and said "Rose, I told you that you're welcome to

share him., and I expect that he's already been sharing your bed. I **know** how good it feels to have him there with you, even if it's just to sleep; there's no reason you should have to be alone in your bed when you could stay here with us and be happy."

Lucy and I could both see that she was tempted, but still uncertain. I threw the covers back on my side and got out of bed, just as naked as Lucy was, to go around to where Rose was standing. I looked into her eyes and told her "You really are welcome to *sleep* with us tonight", to reassure her that she and I weren't going to be having some kind of orgy while Lucy was in the bed with us. Reaching out, I unfastened the belt of her robe, and then went behind her and eased it off her shoulders. Slowly, and uncertainly, she pulled her arms from the sleeves; When her arms were out, I carefully set the robe aside and took her hand to lead her back around to my side of the bed. There, I gestured to let her know she should get in - putting her between me and Lucy. Hesitantly, she did; when she was next to Lucy, I got in next to her, Lucy and I pulled the covers back up. Lucy gave her a soft kiss on the cheek and said "See? This isn't so bad, is it?" before rolling onto her side so that she was facing away, and then scooting back so that their two bodies were touching. Rose looked at me nervously and I just smiled at her before leaning across so Lucy and I could kiss; then I kissed Rose and duplicated Lucy's position by lying on my side, facing Rose. I put my arm across her, and quietly told her "Rose - really, its okay."

I told Lucy good night, and she reached over to turn out the lamp, leaving us in darkness. I could feel the tension in Rose's body, but after a few minutes went by with neither Lucy nor I doing or saying anything, she eventually relaxed. I don't think she got to sleep before Lucy and I did, though.

I briefly woke up a couple of times during the night - once to find Rose spooning against Lucy's back while I did the same to her; the other time, Rose was on her back with Lucy and I tucked against her sides, each of us with an arm across her.

The next morning, Lucy and I woke to the sound of a knock at the door - and missing Rose, of course. I asked who it was, and heard Rose tell us it was her. I told her to come in, and she did, closing the door behind her. She came over to the bed and looked down at us to say "Okay, you sleepyheads, it's almost time for breakfast. Muddy is letting me cook in my own kitchen this morning, so you'll have to settle for my cooking."

Lucy and I both smiled at her before Lucy said "If what you made for me yesterday is any indication, I think we'll be fine. Did you sleep okay?"

Rose looked a little unhappy and answered "I slept fine. But when I woke up this morning, I was laying on my side behind you and I was... touching your breast."

Lucy just looked at her as if to say "So?"

Rose told her "I don't think I should do that."

"Rose, I don't mind if YOU don't mind. And if you slept well, does it really matter?", Lucy replied.

Rose still looked a bit doubtful, and I told her how I'd woken and found the three of us the night before - with Lucy and I laying on our sides next to her, and each of us with a hand on one of her breasts. Then I asked "If it didn't wake YOU up when we were touching you, so there's no reason to think it bothers Lucy when you do it to her. It was just three people finding comfort with each other in the same bed."

We could see her thinking that one over for a bit before she told us "Well, its still time to get up. If you are not downstairs in *twenty minutes*, I will give everything to Muddy!"

Lucy and I both laughed and threw the bedclothes back. We got out of bed and went over to Rose, each of us giving her a kiss - me to her lips, Lucy on her cheek - and getting one back before we headed for the bathroom. As I got the shower started, we heard the bedroom door close when Rose went back downstairs.

We got downstairs just in time, where I found that Rose had prepared a breakfast much the same as she'd made for me that first morning - only a lot more of it. Lucy and Muddy both complimented her while I just got myself wrapped around it.

When all of us had finished eating, Rose refilled everyone's coffee cup and shooed us out onto the deck, saying she'd join us in a bit. While we waited for her to come out, Lucy started teasing Muddy about having some competition, with Muddy giving back as good as he got. When Rose came out, she had another pot of coffee with her and refilled everyone's cup before sitting down herself. Muddy and Lucy both told her again how good breakfast had been, embarrassing her slightly.

A little while later, the doorbell rang and Muddy kept Rose company when she went to answer it; they came back out onto the deck with Speedy in tow.

Sparky showed up late that morning; he got to sit in with the rest of us to enjoy lunch: a combined effort from Rose and Muddy.

Late afternoon was when Mickey got in, and was told by Rose that he'd be staying for supper. She said she needed to get some groceries, though, and had all of us offering to pay for them. She wasn't having any of that, and all of us could see the fire in her eyes before Mickey gave in. She did let Speedy go with her though - for company from her perspective, and for protection from ours.

Her dining room was strained to its limits with all of us there for supper, but it suffered for a good cause: Muddy assisted Rose in preparing some **damn** good Mexican food, and a lot of it. Anybody that didn't end the meal with a full belly did so by choice. Lucy was feeling pretty good, so she insisted on helping with the dishes over Rose's protests. The two of them chased the rest of us out onto the deck. That was when I got everyone up to speed on what had happened. and the report I'd gotten from Gomer, describing the

survivalist's camp and motivation. It was Sparky that said "Hell, Boomer, I'd have come just to kick their dumb asses up between their shoulder blades; but after what they did to Lucy and your girls...", followed by nods from the others.

When Lucy and Rose came out, they got to hear some Army stories from Mickey and Sparky, with commentary from the rest of us. By the time we were done, both women were laughing hard enough to cry.

When she'd sobered up again, Rose asked Mickey and Sparky which one of them wanted to stay there, and which one would go to stay with a local family. The two of them exchanged a look and Sparky said he'd be honored to stay with one of Rose's friends. Neither of them told her that with what Mickey likely had in the back of his van, it was better that more of us were around to help protect it.

Rose went inside to call the other family that had said they'd host somebody; she'd just gotten back outside when there was a noise that sounded like a gunshot. She and Lucy could were left staring at how quickly the five of us had pistols out, and had moved to cover the back of the house against any possible intruders.

I was the first to stand up, and said "Must've been a backfire, or something.". Slowly, the others got up, too; when we saw Lucy and Rose staring at us, we all looked a little shame-faced, but didn't say anything.

After we'd put our weapons away, Speedy and Sparky said they thought they'd call it a night. Both thanked Rose and Muddy for the excellent supper, and Speedy told Rose they'd lock the door on their way out. When they were gone, Mickey said he though he'd get some shuteye, too; Muddy said he'd show him where his room was. That left me and the women on the deck - thanks, guys, I thought to myself - and I knew I'd have some explaining to do to them.

"I'm sorry if we scared you..." I began, only to be interrupted by Lucy telling me "No, I wasn't scared - just surprised, is all. I heard the noise, and the next thing I know, all you guys were pointing your guns all over the place."

Before I could answer Lucy, Rose said "I was not frightened, either; only grateful that all of you were so ready to defend my home."

I told them "Well, we've all pretty much got our heads in 'mission' mode, so when we heard what sounded like a gunshot, we just *reacted*. None of us meant to frighten you, or make you nervous, or anything like that."

Both of them came over to me and Lucy said "Really, Dan - it's fine; I wasn't scared, just surprised, like I said." before giving me a kiss on the cheek. Rose kissed the other before saying "Honestly, it is fine, Dan. Please, don't worry about it; besides, it's time for bed anyway.", smiling.

"I second the motion!" Lucy said, with a laugh.

I smiled at them and said "Might as well make it unanimous - bedtime it is."

With an arm around each of their waists, the three of us went upstairs. As she had the night before, Rose left us to go to her room - but as soon as she'd undressed, came over to our room. Lucy had waited for her, and Rose quickly slid in next to me so Lucy could lie down on the other side of her. Rose looked at me, then Lucy, before telling us "I thought about what you said this morning, about touching each other. I remembered that I felt warm and very loved between you last night; and I also remembered that I was happy and comfortable before I realized that I had my hand on Lucy's breast. I thought about that very carefully, and I decided that if I felt like that before, then I am not going to let the touching be a problem. If you touch me, or I touch you, it is because we are happy and love each other."

Lucy took Rose's hand and kissed it, saying "Thank you, Rose. I like having you here with us, and I'm glad you decided to stay with us again." before rolling over onto her side and edging back against Rose's body.

Rose duplicated her position, and even went so far as to put her arm around Lucy; I saw Lucy's arm move and knew that she'd put Rose's hand on her breast. I spooned against Rose's back, with my arm draped across both of them, and we fell asleep that way.



After breakfast the next morning, we were on the deck when Mickey brought me something that I'd asked him for. Lucy and Rose said they'd take care of cleaning up after breakfast, so it was just the three of us out there.

Opening up the first of two cases he'd brought, he told me "You said you wanted something to shoot with, so I figured you wanted something like one these. The big one is the Barrett 82: fifty cal, ten round box mag, ten power scope. This one comes with five mags, and the scope has been upgraded to a ten-to-twenty variable. I've got five hundred rounds of hand-loaded match grade ammo out in the van. Semi-auto, it's good out to two thousand yards. Composite stock, and as you can see, it has a recoil pad. Twenty-nine inch barrel, and just shy of five feet long, she weighs in at just shy of thirty-three pounds - not including the ammo", the last part getting a laugh from all of us. A .50 caliber round packed a full ounce of lead just for the projectile; a full magazine of ammo for the monster would weigh close to a pound, all by itself.

Never a believer in the idea of "overkill", I picked it up and opened the covers on the scope, then put it to my shoulder and had a look. I was checking out a squirrel in a tree a

good half-mile away when I heard Rose exclaim "Jesú Cristo! I have never seen a gun that big!"

I set the thing back in its case and turned to look at the expression of disbelief on her face as she kept her eyes on it. Lucy appeared behind her, and spotted it as well. Knowing what I did in the Army - explosives and sniper - Lucy figured out what it was for before Rose did. Lucy got the coffeepot that Rose had brought out to us and set it on the table, then gently got Rose back inside before she started asking questions she probably didn't want the answers to.

The next weapon Mickey showed me wasn't as large when I opened the case. I picked it up and he told me "What you have there is the Navy's M25 sniper rifle. Military 7.62 caliber, it's a sniperized M14, only good to a bit under a thousand yards - but it only weighs just shy of eleven pounds. Fixed ten power scope, and your choice of five or twenty round mags; I've got ten of each and five hundred rounds of match ammo. Twenty-two inch barrel, it's only three and half feet long. Composite stock, so you don't have to worry about it warping on you."

I picked it up and repeated pretty much what I'd done with the first one - except that I had to settle for a magpie half as far away. When I set it back in the case, he told me "If you want to stick with a bolt action, I've got a Marine M40; still 7.62, but it'll be good to a thousand yards. Twenty-four inch barrel, seventeen pounds, and a fixed five round internal magazine."

For what I had in mind, the Barrett would be perfect - if I wasn't the one that was going to have to haul the monster and all the ammo for it back into the toolies. I'd likely have done it, if I was as young as I'd been in my Army days, but I realized I was simply getting too damn old for that kind of crap any more. That left me to choose between the two .308 caliber weapons; the difference in range was negligible, and I decided I wanted the ability to put plenty of rounds out without having to reload as often - it could well make the difference between life and death for my friends.

"I'll go with the fancy M14. That Barrett's just too damn big and heavy to be humping it through the woods, and as many of those assholes as there are, I want more than five rounds to play with at a time."

About that time, Speedy and Sparky came out onto the deck. Both of them saw the Barrett, and Speedy couldn't help picking it up before asking "Okay, who's packing THIS monster around?"

Deadpan, I told him "That one's yours."

The expression on his face at the idea of having to carry - and use - it was something that none of us could resist laughing at. Realizing he'd been had, he was happy to set it back down again.

With my choice made, Mickey close up the case for the Barrett and took it back out to his van while I secured the M25 and took it upstairs. On my way back down, Rose stopped me long enough to say "I'm sorry if I bothered you, Dan - but that is the biggest gun I've ever seen before! What do you shoot with something like that?"

I just smiled and answered "Pretty much anything you want to" before going back out to the deck. The five of us talked over what all we would need that Mickey and Sparky hadn't brought along, and made plans for where and when to get them.

Rose fed all of us lunch, with her and Lucy keeping us company - neither of them said a thing about the weapons they'd seen. Speedy and Mickey helped clean up afterwards, over Rose's protests. When the three of them were done, they brought cold beers out for everyone and we sat around just sitting around and enjoying each other's company until Gomer showed up about mid afternoon. Rose insisted on making something to eat for him, and as he ate, the rest of us sat around the table and listened to what he had to say. The diagrams of their base he'd drawn were as neat and detailed as I could have wanted. I didn't worry about accuracy; Gomer had proven that the diagrams he did were good too many times. With the last bits of information I needed, I went out on the deck for a couple of hours to finalize the plan I'd come up with, while the others stayed inside.



After supper, I let Lucy and Rose know that the others and I would be talking out on the deck; both of them understood that it would be better if they didn't disturb us any more than necessary - if at all.

The first thing I did was let everyone know what the general plan was, and answer the few questions they had. Then, using the diagrams Gomer had drawn, I went over how I thought we could accomplish our mission. Gomer's eye for terrain and features served us well: for each position I marked on the drawing, he was able to tell that person what they could expect in the way of obstacles, fields of fire, and so on. With the overview and general approach settled, we went about working out the details and timing. We'd all spent enough time together on previous missions that each of us knew he could trust the others to be honest about what they could do. As was to be expected, there were a few rough spots, and we came up with ways to deal with them - a little less of this, do that a bit later, and so on.

I was going through the whole plan, start to finish, and had said "I go in with Gomer and Muddy to plant the charges, and..." when Gomer interrupted me to say "No you aint."

I turned and looked at him, wondering what the hell he was talking about. He saw the expression on my face, and told me "You ain't goin' in there, Boomer. We done talked

about it while you was out here. You got you a wife and them kids, and you got to be thinkin' 'bout them, too. Ain't no need for you to be goin' in there when me and Muddy can place them charges as good as you could. You just stay back there where you're supposed to be when this shindig starts, and we'll take care of what needs doin' in their camp. Ain't none of us wants you takin' the chance of gettin' hurt or killed if'n you ain't got to. Now, if you want to fuss, go ahead - but I'm tellin' you right now, it ain't gonna make a lick of difference."

I looked around at the others, and every one of them gave me a small nod, letting me know that he was in full agreement with what Gomer had said.

It was Muddy that told me "Boomer, ain't no need for you to go inside that camp. Every one of us knows you got a set - some of the crazy shit you've done, we already know they're big and brass. You got nothing to prove to any of us; and you know damn well that if any of us had a wife and family, you'd be trying to keep us safe, too. Now it's up to us to make sure YOU don't get all fucked up. All of us done met Lucy, and I told the others about your girls; we aren't gonna let you risk fucking up the life you've got by taking chances you don't have to. You can piss and moan if you want, but that's how it's gonna be."

Speedy told me "Boomer, all the missions we went on, and all the crap we've been through - there isn't a one of us that doesn't figure we made it out because of you. I swear to God, you got more brains than any five people I know put together - and all of us know that it was the way you planned those missions that kept them from being the clusterfucks they could have been. Hell, that mission when we went in so you could pop a cap on old what's-his-name - all those boobytraps and shit you had us set, the only one of us that even fired our weapon was you! And when we went in to get that chopper pilot, and everything turned to shit because some half-assed intel puke forgot to tell us about there being a dinky little army outpost five clicks from where that fucker went down; if you hadn't been thinking five, six moves ahead, we'd have ALL been fucked. So you aren't going into that camp. One of us gets hurt or killed, well, that's just the chances we took before catching up with us. But if you get it, then there's one DAMN nice lady and two kids gonna pay for it - and we aren't gonna let that happen."

It was the first time I'd *ever* heard all five of them having the same opinion on the same subject at the same time.

If it had been just one or two of them, I'd have tried to talk them out of it; but I knew there wasn't a chance in hell that I'd manage it with all five. Fuck it. Drive on.

"Well, if that's the way it is, then I guess I'll just suck it up and watch you guys do all the work, then" I replied.

"Damn right", Sparky said, before I picked up from where Gomer had interrupted.

Once everybody had the mission mapped out, it was late enough for all of us to think about getting some sleep. We got up and went inside, where we found Rose and Lucy talking in the living room.

The others said their good nights and left me to take a seat next to Lucy on the couch. I told both of them what the guys had said about limiting my participation, and neither one of them managed to hide her relief and happiness at hearing it. Lucy gestured to Rose to come over and sit on the other side of me, which she did. I just sat there with an arm around each of them as they cuddled with me until it was time for bed.

When we got upstairs, instead of going into her room, Rose just closed the door to it and went with Lucy and me into our room. As Lucy and I got undressed for bed, Rose did too, without the slightest hesitation. I looked over at Lucy, but she wasn't giving me even the slightest indication of what was going on.

I was the first to finish undressing, and went over to the bed and pulled the covers down before getting in. Rose was next; but when she got to the bed, she gestured for me to slide over. Wondering what was up with them, I did, and she lay on her side next to me on the "outside" before putting her arm across me. Right after that, Lucy came over and occupied the other side of the bed, mirroring Rose's position.

I looked from one to the other, and asked "Okay, what's the deal here?"

"While all of you were out back talking, Rose and I had a nice little chat tonight. Dan, I know you've been waiting for me to let you know when I was ready for us to make love again because you didn't want to do anything that might hurt me. So I'm telling you now: I'm ready. The only thing is, I don't think I'm ready to make love with you the way we usually do." Lucy told me.

Rose spoke up then, saying "And I want to make love with you, Dan. I finally had the courage to tell Lucy that, and that was when she said that she wanted to make love with you, too. The last thing I wanted to do was interfere with you and Lucy, but she told me what she said to you - that she is not ready all the way, yet. That was when we started really *talking* with each other, and we decided on something that will make both of us happy."

"What's that?"

"You'll make love with me, first, then you'll finish by making love with Rose." Lucy calmly informed me.

Rose added "I have never done anything like this before, and I'm nervous to be in the bed with you like this - but Lucy has said that it will be fine, and I believe her."

With that, Lucy lowered her head to kiss me; letting me know through her lips how much she loved me - and desired me. When our kiss ended, I turned to look at Rose - who did

much the same thing while Lucy scooted herself down to take my penis in her hand, gently stroking it a few times before taking it into her mouth.

Under my gentle guidance, Rose moved up so that I could begin kissing, then sucking, on her breasts and nipples. I began caressing her body and when my hand softly stroked her smooth thighs, she readily parted them for me. Taking my time, stroked her body several more times before finally letting my hand slide between her legs; even then, I teased her slightly by tracing my fingertips along the insides of her thighs from knee to pelvis - but never *quite* touching her mons. When I felt her begin to move her hips to bring herself under my fingers, I finally let my hand trace a path along her cleft. I did it again, and let the end of my finger slip between her labia, eliciting a soft moan in response. Moving my hand a little higher, I found the fleshy pebble of her erect clitoris, and slowly circled it, using the wetness she'd deposited on my fingertip to keep things slippery.

Farther down, I could tell that Lucy was enjoying what she was doing to me with her lips and tongue: even after she'd gotten me hard, she was continuing to softly apply her considerable oral talents.

I broke off from teasing Rose's clitoris to slide my finger between her vaginal lips again, getting it thoroughly moistened with her oils before pressing the tip of it against her opening. I could hear her breathing quicken as she parted her legs even more in invitation for me to penetrate her with my rigid digit. I applied a little more pressure, and felt her tight, wet sheath envelope my invading finger. I carefully curled my finger and soon found the spot that I'd located in her before; her groan of pleasure and increased arousal let me know that she was receptive to my efforts.

As nice as Rose's body was under my lips and touch, I wanted more of her. Easing my finger out of her, I moved my hands to her hips, and she readily let me guide her to straddle my head so that I could look up and see her face. I took a few moments to look at her again; delighting in the sight of her thick labia set amidst her soft, dark pubic hair; the nubbin of her clitoris visible at the apex of her cleft. Lifting my head, I ran my tongue between her vaginal lips, savoring the taste of her as I guided my tongue upward.

When the end of my tongue got to her clitoris, I gently twirled it around her nubbin as she put her fingers in my hair to hold my head where it was. It took only a minute or so before my gentle abuse resulted in her having a small orgasm.

As Rose was softly groaning through her release, I felt the bed shift slightly when Lucy released my penis from her mouth and moved to position herself over me. Taking my penis between her fingers, I felt the head brushing against her mons as she positioned me at her opening; then the always pleasant sensation of the tight ring of her entrance sliding down my manhood until her warm ass was resting against my legs. She paused for a few seconds, and I knew that she was taking the time to do what I was - simply enjoying the fact that I was inside her again after so long.

When she'd decided she'd had enough savoring, Lucy leaned forward, supporting her body by propping herself up with her hands on my chest before arching her back so that she slid herself about a quarter of the way off my penis. Even with Rose's thighs so close to my ears, I could hear Lucy's moan of satisfaction and pleasure at having me moving in her again.

With the end of her orgasm, Rose leaned back slightly which brought her vaginal lips and opening within reach of my lips and tongue again. I happily shifted my attention to those delectable targets and applied myself to the pleasurable task of trying to bring her to another climax.

As I licked and softly sucked on her labia and eagerly lapped up her juices, Rose's backwards tilt became more and more pronounced. She was moaning almost continuously when I saw Lucy's head appear over Rose's shoulder, and watched as Lucy began kissing and softly biting Rose's shoulders and neck. Rose was getting close to another orgasm when I saw Lucy move her hands to Rose's hips - and then slide upwards until she was cupping Rose's breasts from behind, pinching and pulling on Rose's erect nipples with her forefinger and thumb.

That was apparently all Rose needed; with a muffled cry, she slid into another orgasm - one that was significantly stronger than the first. As the waves of pleasure ran through her body, I pressed the end of my tongue against her opening, as though trying to fuck her with it; she responded by pressing herself down, making it clear that she was eager to have something more substantial take its place.

When her climax tapered off, Rose carefully moved herself off my head to lie down on the bed - leaving Lucy and I with a clear view of each other. I could see that Lucy was getting a little tired, and reached out to gently pull her into my arms. Knowing what I was going to do, Lucy was able to help as I got us turned over so that I was on top of her, my penis still buried in her. Lifting myself over her, we were able to look into each others eyes as I began to move inside her again.

Apparently, it also gave Rose a view of where we were coupled; after I'd made a few strokes into Lucy, I heard her say "¡Mi Dios! ¡No pensé que podría parecer tan atractivo (I didn't know it could look so good)!"

After a bit, I lowered my body again, and Lucy and I kissed - and I could feel her get even wetter around me when she tasted Rose's essence on my lips and tongue.

I knew from previous experience that Lucy missed it as much as I did when we couldn't make love, and she demonstrated that to me again by having an orgasm soon after I began thrusting into her. When it was over for her, I held myself still to see if she wanted to continue or rest. She made her choice clear by arching herself up against me with an eager smile on her face.

The two of us began kissing almost constantly - if not on the lips, then each other's faces, shoulders, and necks. I could also feel Lucy deliberately lifting herself up so that her nipples dragged across my chest with the swaying of her breasts in response to my thrusts into her. It took only a few more minutes before I felt her tighten around me again as she slipped into another orgasm with a deep groan. When it was over, she looked up at me and smiled before saying "It isn't enough - but I'm afraid another one will send me back to the hospital!", the tone of her voice letting me know that I'd pleased her - at least, enough for *that* night.

I raised myself off of her, and heard her soft moan of disappointment when I slid myself free of her intimate embrace. She turned to where Rose had been watching us in rapt attention and said "Please, Rose - would you help me by making love with my husband?"

Rose didn't delay in voicing her willingness, and as Lucy moved to give us room, she paused long enough to kiss Rose full on the lips along the way. Rose was surprised by it, but since Lucy hadn't made it anything more than a gesture of love and affection, didn't seem offended by it.

What Rose did next surprised the hell out of me though: she moved to take me into her mouth, and lick Lucy's juices off of me. When she had cleaned me of Lucy's oils, she let me slip from between her lips, coated with her own saliva before turning on her hands and knees to present me with her womanhood. Looking over her shoulder, she said "I... I want to make love with you this way."

Ever the gentleman, I did as the lady wanted. With her eyes locked on my swaying erection, I moved up behind her. Angling myself down slightly, I slipped the head of myself between her glistening labia to position myself at the entrance to her vagina. She gasped slightly at the contact before pressing herself back against me, holding my penis in place. Putting my hands on her hips, I pressed forward - and after a brief resistance, felt the head of my manhood pop into her.

With her saliva as a lubricant, I was able to ease myself into her; I buried myself in her in a single slow stroke, accompanied by several of her soft moans of pleasure and excitement.

Next to us, I could see that Lucy was pleased - and excited - at watching me start making love with Rose.

Knowing how much Rose enjoyed the feeling, I slowly withdrew from her until only the head of my penis was inside her before pressing myself back into her. I did it a few more times, each a little quicker than the one before, and heard her begin to pant with her rapidly increasing desire and excitement. But I didn't want to go much faster stroking in and out of her that way, and gradually lessened the extent of my movements - but increasing their speed. It wasn't long before I was steadily thrusting in and out of her with over half my length; something she enjoyed greatly, judging from the Spanish

exclamations she softly muttered in response.

I could feel her vagina begin to tighten around me, and was grateful when Lucy shoved a pillow over so Rose could drop her shoulders, and bury her face in it as she cried out with the start of an orgasm. From the way her vagina spasmed around me, I could only be glad that she'd muffled her cries - otherwise, she'd likely have wakened everyone in the house.

The rhythmic tightening of Rose's womanhood around me as I continued to piston in and out of her felt pretty damn good, and did a lot to move me toward my own release. But I also knew that I wouldn't have any trouble bringing her to another climax before that happened.

When the spasming of her body had slowed and faded, Rose lifted her shoulders again and said "¡La maldición, de que era buena! (Damn, that was good)" before starting to press herself back in response to my thrusts into her.

I saw Lucy's increasing interest and arousal at watching us, and so I wasn't surprised when she finally twisted around a little so she could reach between Rose's thighs with one hand and begin using the other to squeeze one of her breasts, and gently pull and pinch its nipple. I don't know if Rose did it consciously, or not, but she lowered her head so that she could kiss Lucy; it was only a minute or two before I could tell that both of them were checking out each other's tonsils.

Not wanting Rose's breast that Lucy didn't have hold of feeling neglected, I leaned forward and reached around to begin giving it the same treatment that Lucy was giving its mate - and felt it tighten in my hand as Rose's dark areola puckered even more, and the nipple get longer and harder.

With Lucy's finger busy on her clitoris, my penis sliding in and out of her hot and tight channel, and her breasts being enthusiastically fondled, Rose was getting all the stimulation she needed - and then some. It was only a few minutes until I knew she was getting ready to climax again. And that was a Good Thing, because I could feel myself getting closer to doing the same, and knew that when she did, I would.

Another minute, and it happened - almost literally slamming her face into the pillow, Rose screamed her pleasure as her vagina clenched around me, making her even tighter than she'd been the first time she climaxed with me inside her. As I'd expected, the combination of her tightness and the feeling of her vaginal muscles rippling along my length was enough to trigger my own release. When the first jet of my seed exploded from the end of my penis, she made some strangled half-moaning, half-groaning noise before her body began shuddering from the increased intensity of her orgasm. All I could do was hold myself deep inside her womanhood as I continued to empty myself into her.

As would be expected, there came the point where there wasn't anything left in me to give her; but the spasming and tightness of her vagina were stimulating (!!) and pleasurable

(!!!!) enough that I continued to hold myself in her.

Finally, with a deep groan, Rose started to fall over onto her side. Since I was still inside her, I found it worthwhile to catch her before she hurt either one of us. Lucy recognized the problem, and helped me get the two of us down onto our sides - understanding why I was keeping my front so close to Rose's back, and smiling in amusement.

As I held Rose while she recovered from the sheer power of the climax that had hit her, Lucy got out of bed and went into the bathroom - reappearing a minute later with an obviously damp washcloth and a towel, saying "I trust you'll be wanting these?", a big grin on her face.

I grinned back and nodded, and she came back to sit on the bed next to Rose, who was laying there pretty much stunned at what had happened to her. With the end of her climax, the stimulation of my penis ended, too, and I gradually shrank enough to slip free of her. When that happened, Lucy and I quickly moved Rose to her back so that Lucy could gently wipe away the surplus of fluids that had matted Rose's pubic hair, then the area between her thighs before drying her off. That done, I lifted Rose enough for Lucy to get the towel situated to catch the inevitable leakage. By the time we got to that point, Rose was able to make a few weak protests, but Lucy and I simply assured her that it was fine and did what we had to.

Lucy took the washcloth back into the bathroom, and I heard her rinse it out before apparently setting it aside, since she came back without it. She quickly resumed her place on the other side of Rose from me; the two of us held Rose as she slowly got her wits about her again. As we did, Lucy asked "Was I imagining things, or did she use her mouth to clean me off of you?"

I grinned at Lucy, and said "As much fun as it might be to mess with your head, you're not imaging things." Lucy stuck her tongue out at me, and I went on "Matter of fact, she was right careful to make she got every little bit of you off before she was done."

Lucy grinned back at me, and I could tell that she was thinking that Rose might well have decided that she was willing to at least find out if she liked being with another woman. I figured if there was any chance at all of her liking it, Lucy was the one that would help her find it.

A few moments later, Rose softly asked "¿Usted lo piensa es divertido, eso que usted sonríe en mí después de que usted me mate?"

Lucy simply looked baffled as I answered "No, querido, usted no es muerto (no, lover, you're not dead).", with a smile.

"¿Cómo puede yo besan cielo, y no ser muerto?"

"Porque todo lo que usted lo hizo debía besarlo, para no ir allí a vivir.", I answered.

Seeing that Lucy wanted to know what we were saying, I explained "She wanted know why we were smiling at a dead person. I told her she didn't die, and she asked how she could kiss heaven and not be dead. I just told her that all she did was kiss it, not go there to live."

Lucy smiled at me and said "You are such a romantic! I have *got* to learn Spanish; listening to the two of you talk was SO beautiful!"

Rose managed to say "Perhaps it was beautiful to listen to, but it was a *very* serious question for me. I have **never** had a feeling like that!"

Lucy lowered her head to kiss Rose, and Rose eagerly kissed her back before Lucy said "Sometimes, he leaves me feeling like that, too."

Rose blushed faintly and said "It wasn't just what he was doing - it was what you were doing, too."

Lucy smiled at her and answered "I'm glad I was able to help make it better for you, Rose."

Rose gave her a baleful look and said "I don't know if how I feel now is something that you could call 'better'"

"Didn't you enjoy it?" Lucy asked.

"Si - when it was happening. It is how I feel after that I am not so sure about."

Lucy and I both scooted down so that we were laying next to Rose before Lucy told her "I promise - it will be easier for you, next time."

Rose's eyes got big, and she asked "There will be a next time?"

Lucy laughed and answered "If you want."

Rose considered that for a moment, then said "I think I do. But I have to recover from this time, first!"

Rose suddenly got a strange look on her face, and we could feel her wriggling around on the bed slightly before she blushed and asked "You put the towel a towel under me? So that..."

I kissed her and said "Yes, we put a towel under you so that my juices wouldn't leak out of you and make a mess. We - well, Lucy - also cleaned you up a little bit."

Rose tried to touch her mons without us noticing, then blushed when she realized she couldn't. Lucy told her "Don't worry about it, Rose. I know that I don't like feeling cold and sticky after I make love with Dan, and I didn't think you would, either - so I cleaned you a little. Maybe some day you'll be able to return the favor."

After an apologetic look toward me, Rose replied "I don't like that feeling, either, very

much. But I was too embarrassed to do anything about it before."

I kissed her again, and explained "Rose, you don't have to be embarrassed about *anything* about making love with me. Don't you think I already know about things like that? And I certainly don't want you to feel uncomfortable after we make love, so now that I know you don't like it, *I* will clean you, too."

Surprised, she asked "You... you would do that? But you are a man!"

I grinned at her and answered "Yes, I am", making her blush before I said "Yes, I would do that - because I love you."

Rose couldn't help but look at Lucy to see what her reaction would be to hearing me say that; Lucy just nodded and said "I love you, too, Rose."

The expression on her face and the look in her eyes told us that she loved us, too.

We stayed like that for a couple of minutes before Rose looked at Lucy and said "After he used his mouth on me, you kissed him, and I knew that you could taste me. You... you acted like it didn't bother you" - Lucy interrupted to say "It didn't - I liked it!" - "so after you told him you wanted to stop... I... I used my mouth on him, and tasted you."

Lucy smiled and told her "Yes, I saw that", making Rose blush before she said "I... I like that."

I asked her "Are you trying to say that you would like to make love with her?"

I could see the nervousness in her eyes when she asked "You would not mind?"

I kissed her and said "No, of course not. Remember, I have been with her when she had been with other women, too. If you do it because you want to, then that's all that matters to me."

Relieved, Rose looked over at Lucy and said "Not now, but some other time... I would like to learn what it is like to make love with a woman."

Lucy kissed her, too - and got kissed right back - before answering "I would like that, too, Rose", with a smile.

Rose looked from me to Lucy and back again, and saw that we loved her, and that all we wanted to do was try and make her happy. The look on her face let us know that we'd succeeded.

We stayed like that until Lucy and I noticed that Rose had fallen asleep. With a smile at each other before I reached over and turned out the light, we followed her example.



The next morning, I was outside on the deck working while the other guys were off taking care of various errands. Lucy came out to see what I was doing, and saw what looked vaguely like sticks of margarine on the table next to me. I watched as she picked one up, and feeling it's texture, asked me "What is this? Modeling clay?"

I grinned and answered "No, C-4."

Seeing that she didn't understand, my grin got wider before I explained "Plastic explosive" - and watched her turn white. "Relax, dear. If it was dangerous, do you think I'd be doing this here, or would have let you pick it up?"

That didn't seem to comfort her a whole lot, and I could see the relief on her face when she set it back on the table - very gently.

I picked it back up, and explained "This stuff is about as safe as modeling clay, though. It takes an actual detonator to set it off; just getting it hot won't do it. In fact, if you need to, you can even cut off a chunk of this stuff and set it on fire to heat food out in the field - it actually burns hotter than the little pellets they issue for the field stoves. It's *loads* safer than actual dynamite, and because you can mould it, it's easier to work with. More powerful than TNT, too."

As I'd been talking, I'd been bending and folding it, and generally showing her that it was as flexible as I said. Realizing that I *wouldn't* have let her touch it if it had been dangerous, her curiosity got the better of her and she asked "What are you doing with it? I mean, what are you going to be using it for?", making it clear she wasn't concerned with how or where I got it.

"I'm making the charges we're going to be using." I answered. Gesturing toward where some blocks of various sizes and shapes were sitting, I went on to say "I'm making some of them to use to tear down their buildings. Others are just for making noise and scaring the hell out of them. A few are what we call 'shaped' charges - they have a special, well, shape to them so that the damage they do goes in a particular direction and do more damage. Those we'll be using to take care of some of the things that Gomer told us they have."

She went over and carefully picked up one of the finished charges, asking "What do these letters and numbers mean?", referring to the codes I'd put on each one with a large tipped marking pen.

"Those are for the guys, so they know where each charge goes. Sparky brought some radio-controlled detonators; so once all the charges are in place, I can set them off

whenever I want."

She set it down again and asked "Why do these look a little different than those?"

I told her "Not everything blows up the same way. Wood is different than rock, which is different than concrete, which is different than steel. It also matters whether you want to just make a hole in something like a wall, or get rid of it completely. Most people, they thing explosives just break things; but when you learn how to use them, you find out you can do some pretty amazing stuff."

Seeing the surprise on her face, I explained "If I used the right amount of this stuff, and used it the right way, I could blow some of the supports out from under a bridge, for example, but without making it fall down. By doing that, it would make the bridge too unstable for someone to use without fixing what I'd done first. Well, if there was a war going on, our side would make sure they didn't get the chance to do that; then when WE got the bridge, we could fix it a lot easier and faster than trying to build a new one. Understand?"

She nodded, and set the charge she had in her hand back where she'd gotten it.

When she looked at me again, I could see how serious she was when she asked "Are you going to kill them?"

I was just as serious as she was when I answered "Actually, I'm not going to be blowing up any buildings that have people until everyone is out of them. Some of those small charges are actually going to be placed so that if those characters don't want to come out, I can blow it to kind of encourage them to do it anyway, before I set off the main charge."

I saw the relief in her face when she heard that, and thought of something that might cheer her up again.

"You know, if you were a mean person, you'd take one of these blocks inside and tell Rose what it is - before you tossed it to her."

That got her laughing before she told me "It *would* be funny to see - but I'm not that mean."

I let my shoulders slump and snapped my fingers in a show of disappointment before saying "Damn!" - making her laugh even harder before she told me "You are *so* rotten for even THINKING about doing something like that!"

Rose came out to see if I needed anything, and couldn't understand that idiot smiles that Lucy and I both had on our faces on seeing her. Once I told her I was fine, she went back inside, muttering "Crazy gringos!" - making Lucy and I both start laughing.

Everybody was back in time for lunch, which Lucy and Rose had prepared. I'd told them that we would be leaving right before supper, so they put on quite a spread for us. After

we'd all eaten, we headed to our respective beds (Lucy and Rose opted to stay downstairs) for some sleep in anticipation of a long night.



Late afternoon, we got all of our gear loaded into my SUV and Mickey's van. Speedy, Sparky, and Gomer rode with me while Muddy went with Mickey. Gomer had checked a map and found a public area not as far from where we were headed as where the park access was, but still remote. We got there an hour before sunset, which gave us plenty of time to change clothes and get our gear and everything ready. It was almost full dark when Gomer took point, with the rest of us following at fifty yard intervals. It was almost one in the morning when we got to the target area. Gomer, Speedy, and Muddy left their gear with the rest of us while they went out to deal with the roving perimeter guards the survivalists sent out each night. As Gomer had told us, the outside patrol was pretty slack - two of them were smoking, and the other had a hip flask of whiskey in his pocket. There wasn't any trouble knocking them out quietly and leaving them bound and gagged so they wouldn't cause any trouble.

When the guys got back, Gomer and Muddy loaded up with the explosive charges I'd put together and headed for the main encampment. We kept in touch with each other with the radios Sparky had brought along - encrypted burst transmission, anyone monitoring radio frequencies would only hear an occasional bit of static.

I found a spot that gave me the best coverage of the camp and set up, a full 700 yards away. Using night vision binoculars, I was able to watch as Gomer and Muddy made their way into, then around in, the camp - warning them whenever I saw someone heading their direction. Speedy, Mickey, and Sparky each reported in when they'd reached their positions; once Gomer and Muddy were done and got out, we'd be ready.

Just as they were supposed to, Gomer and Muddy took their time - relatively speaking - to place the charges; I had used the same coding system on them as we'd used in our Army days, so they didn't have any questions about where each one went. When they had the last one in place, they radioed to let me know they were on their way out - then again when they were in position. By that time, it was pushing three o'clock in the morning; almost as perfect as we could ask for.

I pulled out the radio transmitter for the detonators and turned it on; then proceeded to give the assholes below us an early wakeup call by setting off the disorientation charges.

The detonator system that Sparky had provided was so simple it was elegant: each detonator was set to respond to a specific coded radio signal; the transmitter would send those codes one at a time with each press of a button on its face. The first charge woke

them up, the second charge a few seconds later let them know something serious was happening. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth all went off progressively quicker - the idea being that big explosions like that coming faster and faster would shake them up and confuse the hell out of them before they could even *think* about getting their shit together.

Ten seconds later, I triggered charge number seven, and their ammo dump made a fairly impressive boom, followed by popping noises as the ammo started cooking off.

Right on the heels of that, charge eight took out their armory building.

Two more presses of my thumb, and they discovered that they didn't have anything resembling transportation any longer - the vehicles that blew up spread flaming gasoline around, sitting the rest on fire. Another push of the button, and the buildings all darkened with the loss of their generator.

Packages twelve and thirteen were shaped charges, and disabled their civilian style armored car and their bulldozer, respectively.

By that time, they were trying to fight back, but they were taking fire from everyone but me - which encouraged them to keep their heads down and under cover.

Not all of them were trying not to die. A couple of the more hard-core of them tried to set up what looked like a homebrew mortar where none of the rest of the team could see them. I put a round into each of them, and put an end to that plan.

Charge fourteen eliminated their water supply by punching nice hole in their water tank; while fifteen turned their mess hall into a pile of rubble and kindling - which burned rather enthusiastically.

I had to give them credit for planning ahead when I saw one character looking out a darkened upstairs window - with what looked like an Armbrust anti-tank weapon. I shot him, and he fell back inside; nobody seemed inclined to try and pick up where he'd failed.

I heard an M-60 full-auto machine gun crank up, and looked around to see where it was; I put a bullet through the gunner, and his assistant bugged out.

Explosives package number sixteen made their radio hut go away and the antenna fall down. With that, the last charges I had left were all set up on the two surviving buildings: their administrative and residence facilities. What with all the stuff on fire in the camp there was more than enough light to see by.

As planned we left them in relative peace for a minute before Speedy used the miniature public address system we'd packed in to tell them "Now you boys got an idea of what we can do to you if we want. If you figure you'd rather go to jail than go to hell, just stick a white flag out the front door. Otherwise, best get ready to meet Jesus, and hope he has more mercy on you than we will!"

Justice Served
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A minute later, Speedy radioed that he could see someone holding a white flag out the door of the admin building before getting on the PA system to tell them to come on out. A couple of people came into sight, and I radioed to him "Tell that prick on the south side that if he doesn't lose that pistol he's got tucked into the back of his pants, he's dead meat."

Speedy tried to talk the guy into giving up the weapon, but he was just too stupid. He had casually reached behind himself and got his hand on the grip when I put a bullet through his head.

His buddy immediately hit the dirt and started yelling that he surrendered. Speedy told us that there was another white flag in the doorway, and a couple more yahoos came out - both of them unarmed from what I could see. Speedy got them and the first guy close enough to talk to them, and radioed to us that the whole bunch inside wanted to give up; the first one had been a hardass that wanted to try and break out. Speedy sent one of them back in to tell the rest to come out; after a bit, nearly a dozen people appeared and followed Speedy's directions to come out to where he was. With Sparky covering him, Speedy got them on the ground and went about getting them secured with the heavy-duty cable ties they'd gotten at the hardware store.

By that time, the second bunch still hadn't done anything to indicate they were ready to give up yet. I warned the rest of the guys, then blew the administration building the first batch had come out of with a quick double-tap on the detonator controller.

When the dust had settled, Speedy told them that their building was rigged to, and they'd better give up if they didn't want to die.

They still didn't seem convinced, so I had Speedy tell them they were getting one last warning. After he had, I triggered the small charge on their building - blowing a nice-sized hole through the fieldstone foundation.

It wasn't thirty seconds before Mickey reported he could see a white flag. Speedy did the honors of getting a couple of them out so he could tell them how he wanted it to happen. After seeing what had happened to the guy that had tried to get cute before, neither one tried anything fancy.

After a bit, Speedy let us know it was going to happen, and one of them went back inside. It took a little longer for them to get going, but the crew that came out was easily five times the count of the ones in the admin building. Mickey moved to cover so that Speedy and Sparky could go in and get them bound like the first bunch was.

When Sparky let me know they were done, I gave everybody another heads up and brought down the last building before the rest of us moved into what was left of their camp.

When I got there, I saw that the guys had come up with an innovative way of making sure

nobody bailed out on us: all of the prisoners had both arms and a leg secured to at least two other people, and usually three - dipshit A having an arm fastened to dipshits B and C, and a leg secured to dipshit D; dipshits B and C being connected to E and F, and G and H, respectively, and so on. Made me proud, it did. Unless the whole lot of them learned to levitate in the next couple of hours, they weren't going *anywhere*.

I heard several of the idiots gasp when Muddy turned up, along with no small number of muttered "Oh, **shit**"s. Muddy just smiled as he looked around at all of them before wandering over to where their living quarters used to stand. Looking around, he found the M-60, and pulled it out of the rubble. The barrel was bent, and there was still a belt of ammo hanging out of it when he started back toward us.

When he got close enough, he yelled "I found it!" - and held the thing out, straight-armed, by the end of the barrel. With an M-60 machine gun weighing nearly twenty pounds unloaded, it was an impressive move - one that prompted a couple of our prisoner's pants to develop wet spots before he casually tossed it aside.

I was on the other side of the group from him when he called out "What're we gonna do with all of these detached assholes?"

"Hell, if you find one you like, you can take him out behind the barn and fuck him in the ass, for all I care!" I yelled back.

With that, Muddy let them see a BIG grin on his face before he started walking among them, eyeballing them *very* closely. That didn't do anything to settle their nerves - particularly when he'd stop and back up to give someone a second look. I knew he wasn't going to do anything to any of them - we were just giving them something to think about while Speedy and Mickey got them all counted.

When he was done, he yelled over to me "Shit! They're all too GOT-dam ugly! Ain't a one of 'em I'd give the pleasure of fuckin'!"

I could hear the laughter in Mickey's voice when he told me over the radio "Fifty-seven of 'em here, Boomer. Plus three in the hills, that's sixty total. Sparky has the note ready to tell the law where to find those three." Plus the ones I shot, I added to myself.

The six of us were scattered around the prisoners when I announced "All right, you peckerheads! Here's the deal: all of you assholes are done here. This little operation of yours is *finished*. Me and my buddies here, we don't much care for a bunch of dickheads like you fucking with people. Maybe **you** think it makes your dick bigger to carry a gun and push folks around and fuck with them, but it just shows the rest of the world what a bunch of candy-assed, chicken-shit, redneck peckerheads you are. You all ganged up out here telling each other that you were being fucked over by niggers, Jews, and anybody else you didn't like. Well here's a news flash for you: the reason you dumbasses couldn't get a job, or keep it, is because you're all lazy, ignorant, racist fuckups. Me and five of my

friends done whooped all of your asses; there isn't but one Black man among us, and no Jews - so that should pretty much settle whether your lives being all fucked up is YOUR fault or someone else's. Ten to one odds in your favor, and we *still* kicked your dumb asses in less than fifteen minutes. All you fuckups are is a bunch of K-mart commandos, and there isn't a one of you worth the bullet it would take to kill you - so we're gonna be letting the cops and such have you. Before we started this little party tonight, we got all the information we needed about you - every last one of you. We have your names and everything there is to know about you."

That last part wasn't true, of course, but we had to make *believers* out of them. I went on "So when the law gets here, your best bet is to cop to all this shit and take your licks - and when you get out of jail, play it straight and clean. Because if you don't, we'll come visiting you again - and you **won't** like what happens then. Got it?"

There was a scattering of affirmations; Muddy yelled "The man asked if you got it, you assholes!", which made the second response from them appreciably louder.

In my best fatherly voice, I told them "We're going to be leaving now. *Don't* make us have to come looking for you again!"

The six of us moved to head back to where we'd left the vehicles when Gomer got a grin on his face and turned around to tell them "Just so y'all know - if a bear shows up, stay quiet and play dead; if it's a cougar, you got to make lots of noise to scare him off. Y'all have a nice night, now, y'hear?"

We were a couple hundred yards away when Muddy laughed quietly and said "That was mean, Gomer, real mean. But funny as hell!"

Sparky said "That it was, Muddy. They'll spend the rest of the night with half of 'em yelling cause they think they hear a cougar, and the other half telling them to shut up 'cause it's a bear!", chuckling.

With that out of the way, Gomer took point again with the rest of us trailing behind as we had when we came in. We got back to the vehicles shortly after daybreak; it wasn't but a few minutes work to shed ourselves of our gear and change back into civilian clothes. On the way back to Rose's, I set my cell phone to block outgoing Caller ID, and called the Sheriff's office to let them know they needed to get out to the survivalists place, and what they'd find when they got there, before hanging up. With the Caller ID back on, the next call was to Rose to let her and Lucy know we were on the way back. I could hear the relief and happiness in Lucy's voice when Rose handed her the phone so she could talk to me. After I talked to Lucy for a bit, Rose got on the phone again and said I should tell Sparky and Speedy that she'd be calling their host families and letting them know that the two of them would be needing some rest that day. I relayed the message to the guys, and both told me to thank her, which I did before we ended the call.

When we got to Rose's place, Speedy, Gomer, and Sparky all headed straight for their vehicles - after politely declining Rose's offer of some breakfast. Playing Paper - Rock - Scissors for who got to shower first, Muddy and Mickey headed upstairs. Lucy sat next to me on the couch, and I asked Rose if she had something to drink; she looked confused, wondering what I meant, until Lucy recognized the look on my face and told her "Liquor". Rose was back in just a few moments with a nearly full bottle of rum and a glass. I filled it about three quarters of the way before giving her the bottle back and saying "This'll be fine. Thanks, Rose." She just set the bottle to the side and sat in a chair nearby.

Lifting the glass, I drained nearly half of it before coming up for air.

Next to me, Lucy asked "Do you want to talk about it?"

I thought about it for a few moments, then answered "Yeah, I guess I should" before telling the two of them a sanitized version of what had happened.

Knowing me, Lucy asked "Not all of them gave up, did they?"

"No, they didn't", I answered - which made Rose realize that I'd killed someone that night. But her concern wasn't for the dead, but for me - she asked "Are you going to be okay?"

I gave both of them a half smile before answering "Yeah. It's just going to take a little time, is all."

Lucy quietly told Rose "There was a time when some people came into our house and tried to hurt or kill us. Dan got two of them, but I still shot at a third one - and I was *trying* to kill him. I had nightmares about it for weeks."

Rose took my hand and said "Dan, please, do not feel bad for the dead. Those are evil men that hurt others for the pleasure of it; because you are an honorable man, you saw the need to make them stop. And because you are a warrior on the side of good, you took the fight to them so that no more innocent people would be hurt. If they were bad and foolish enough to fight, then they have gotten what they deserve. Honestly, Dan, I know that it cannot be a good thing to take the life of another - but from what you say, I know that you did that only because they left you no choice. I know that you did not kill them for fun or pleasure, but because you HAD to. I see you now, and my love for you is even stronger because I can see the pain it causes you. You are a good man, and they were evil - and it was their evil that killed them, not your good."

I finished off the rest of the rum, and Lucy took the glass and set it aside before taking my other hand. Reaching out to turn my face toward hers, she told me "What Rose says is true. You told me that all of you were going there with the plan to just stop them, and catch them so the police could deal with them. YOU told ME that all the things you were doing were to try and make them give up without fighting. So if some of them died, then it was because of THEIR doing, not yours."

I told her "All the way back, I kept trying to figure out what we could have done differently, but I couldn't think of *anything*."

"Dan, don't. Don't beat yourself up about something you can't change. Those *animals* didn't love or care or do anything with their lives except **hate**. They HATED people like Rose, and Muddy, and Speedy, and anyone else that wasn't like them. All they did was hate, and *that* is what caused them to die."

I think all three of us jumped when we heard Muddy's voice say "Boomer, when I went over to get that -60, I saw the mortar those boys had."

I looked up to where Muddy was standing just inside the doorway; behind him and to the side, I saw Mickey.

Muddy went on "If you hadn't took those two boys out, we coulda been in some serious trouble. *I* was trying to get that asshole with the -60, but couldn't quite get him. What they did, that was THEIR play; they bet their lives that their hate was stronger than us, and they lost. You got no reason to be feeling bad for collecting on it."

Mickey added "The prick with the RPG, he was starting to aim that damn thing my direction when I spotted him. I was trying to get my piece around take him out when you got him. Ain't a doubt in my mind that I'd have come out second in that race. You didn't do anything that any of the rest of us wouldn't have done, if we could. So you need to get it into your head that you did the RIGHT thing because you *had* to. Don't be feeling bad because a few of those cocksuckers died, be glad that so many of 'em are still alive."

I looked at the two of them, and both nodded in confirmation of what they'd said. And having **them** saying to me *did* help. But it was still going to be a while before I stopped feeling remorse at taking another human life.

Lucy looked at them and asked "What are you guys doing down here, anyway? I thought both of you wanted to clean up and get some sleep."

"We figured he was down here feeling bad about having to shoot those fellas, so we came down to let him know he shouldn't", Mickey answered, followed by Muddy's nod.

I looked each of them in the eyes and said "Okay, fine, you told me. Now, you'd better get some sack time so you can get out of town, before the Sheriff decides it might be fun to come out here and see what Rose's visitors have been up to."

Responding to the second part of what I'd said, Muddy answered "Why, we've just been out here reliving old times, right, Mickey?", with a grin.

Mickey laughed and answered "Sure, that's all. Just reliving old times. Family reunion, kinda like."

"Will you two clowns clear out of here if I come upstairs and catch some Z's, too?" I

asked.

Muddy and Mickey looked at each other before Muddy answered "Well, it sure would make *me* feel better, knowing you were around to protect us!", with a big grin.

I couldn't help laughing before I got up, with Lucy moving to stand next to me. I took her hand, and as the two of us started toward the doorway, Mickey and Muddy turned and led the way upstairs.

I just stripped down to my underwear and lay down on the bed; Lucy stayed in the blouse and slacks she was wearing and got in bed next to me, keeping me company until the rum I'd drunk on an empty stomach finally kicked in.



When I woke up, I was surprised to find Rose lying next to me, her arm across my chest.

Realizing that I was awake, she raised up to tell me "Muddy and Mickey woke up a little while ago, and said to tell you it was nice working with you again, before they left. Lucy has a note for you from the one called Gomer, and the other two said they wanted to stop by before they went home. I said that I would call them when you woke up. If you are hungry, supper will be in about one hour; Lucy is downstairs so she can be the one to cook."

I lifted my head and gave Rose a kiss on the lips, delighting her, before moving to get out of bed. She didn't make any pretense of not watching as I got my shirt and pants back on. When I was dressed again, she got out of bed and came over to take my hand as the two of us went downstairs. She led me to the dining room and had me sit down before she went into the kitchen. She and Lucy both came out, and Lucy set a cup of coffee in front of me before taking a seat next to me. Rose kept going, apparently into the living room to make the phone calls she'd promised Speedy and Sparky. She was back in just a couple of minutes, and sat down on the other side of me.

Both of them were watching me closely when Lucy asked "Are you going to be okay now?"

I wasn't quite "okay", yet, but knew I'd get there, so I told them "Yeah, I'll be fine", which seemed to satisfy them.

I was almost finished with my coffee when Speedy, then Sparky showed up. Both declined Rose and Lucy's offer of supper in favor of telling me that it had been nice seeing me again - and that I shouldn't wait so long to call them next time. I gave each of them one of my business cards and said that the phones worked both directions, making

them laugh. I stood up to shake hands with both of them, but Speedy pulled me into an abrazo before saying "¡Usted toma el cuidado de se, mi amigo (Take care, my friend)! No hay bastante buena gente como usted en el mundo (there aren't enough good people like you in the world)." Sparky was content to just shake hands and tell me "It's been a pleasure, Boomer - seeing you again, and getting to do something that really *matters*."

Both of them accepted kisses on the cheek and thanks from Lucy and Rose before leaving to go back to their homes.

Lucy handed me the note from Gomer, and I read it aloud to them. It always amazed me that he spoke like he'd never gotten any kind of education, but his writing after he'd gotten his high school equivalency was flawless. In it, he said he was glad he'd been able to help out, and hoped that Lucy and the girls would remember him with kindness - making Lucy start to sniffle. He went on to say that he'd enjoyed all of us getting together again and dealing with the malefactors - his word, not mine - that had been bothering people, just like old times. He finished up by apologizing to Lucy for taking so much of her money playing cribbage, which made her laugh.

Only then did Lucy and Rose let me see the town's afternoon paper - where the lead story was the "discovery" of a racist survivalist encampment at the edge of the State park. It had taken two trips with a bus borrowed from the State Prison to transport all the member of the group - White is Right, for crying out loud - to various lockups in the area. The Sheriff reported the damage to their base as "total, and devastating", and admitted that none of the members had given law enforcement any indication of how many people had been involved in the attack, though all were admitting to possession of the many illegal weapons that had been found.

In a sidebar to the story, a number of local people were claiming that they'd run into small groups of the organization, and been afraid of reporting the incidents of threats, beatings, and other abuses.

When I was done reading the story, Rose told me that the Hispanic community knew that it had been us that had done it, but that not a one of them would say anything to the Sheriff or anyone else - since local law enforcement pretty much left them to deal with problems themselves, they didn't see any reason to do anything but reciprocate. I was assured, however, that if any of us *ever* needed a place to stay or a meal, we'd be welcome in any number of homes - no questions asked. I asked, and she blushed when she said that she'd also earned a certain amount of status for having her home as the center of activity, after word of her participation had gotten around.

By that time, supper was ready - a beef and potato casserole that Lucy had made, along with corn and hot rolls, all washed down with iced tea. It wasn't until I got a couple bites into me that I realized just how hungry I was; I accounted for a pretty fair portion of the casserole, much to the amusement of Lucy and Rose.

After supper, Lucy was banished to the deck with me, so that Rose could take care of the dishes and leftovers. Lucy gladly took a spot on my lap so I could hold her as we "watched the world go by".

Some time later, Rose came out to join us, bringing each of us a bottle of beer. After she'd handed Lucy and I ours, she looked at us and said "Lucy, I envy you. You sit there, and I can see how much you and Dan love each other, and it makes me wish that *I* had someone that cared for me as much as Dan does for you. I am not jealous of you, but I envy you."

Both of us looked up at her and Lucy answered "Rose, you *will* find someone that loves you, and that you can love in return. Perhaps it won't be as much as Dan and I love each other, but it will still be **love**. Watch for that person, and don't be afraid to love other people as you do. There are many people that we love, even if it isn't as much as we love each other - and by loving those people, our lives are that much happier."

When Lucy was done talking to her, I said "Querido, you know that I love you, and treasure you. Find one who does the same, and that you can do it for him, too. But don't fall in love with only your heart - use your mind to see what kind of person he is. You have told me that you love me for the things that you saw in Miguel that you see in me; use your eyes and mind to watch for those things in other men, as well. Perhaps they will not be soldiers, as we were; but the one you want will still have honor, and courage, and respect."

She nodded, and Lucy and I could see the tears forming in her eyes; Lucy quickly got up and guided Rose to my lap so that I could hold and comfort her, despite Rose's protests.

After a while, Rose's tears ended and she quietly told me "Thank you, Dan. To know that you love me, it means much to me. I will watch for another who is like Miguel, and you; and when I find him, I will love him as I loved Miguel, and love you."

With that, she eased herself off my lap and collected our empty beer bottles, letting us know she would be back with more, before going inside. Lucy came over and sat on my lap again, telling me "She told me what happened to her husband, and I can't imagine what she'd been through. If being with you, and sitting on your lap, or anything else helps make it easier for her, I don't mind it in the least."

I hugged and kissed Lucy; Rose reappeared with more beer a few moments later. The three of us sat outside like that, simply enjoying the peace and quiet and simply having each other's company.

It was late when Lucy got off my lap to stand in front of me and say "While you guys were gone last night, Rose and I kept each other company. Neither one of us could get to sleep, so we stayed up and talked. We want to make love with each other, Dan - but we want you to be there, too, to make love with us. Both of us love you so much, and we want to show you how important you are to us."

I looked over at Rose, and I could see in her eyes that she was certain about what Lucy had just told me - and that she loved me.

I stood up, and Rose did the same. I moved between them and took each's hand and kissed it before answering "I'm honored, and grateful, that I have two such loving women that would want to share their lives with me the way you two do."

With my acceptance of what they wanted to do, the three of us went inside, and then upstairs. In the bedroom, they teamed up to undress me, then helped each other - kissing and caressing each other's bodies along the way. When all three of us were naked, I let them lead me to the bed and get me seated against the headboard. Each kissed me, tenderly and lovingly, before they moved to face each other, kneeling at the foot of the bed.

Several seconds went by, and I knew that Lucy was simply waiting, patiently, for Rose to let her know when she was ready. Rose realized that was what Lucy was waiting for, too - and leaned forward to kiss Lucy on the lips. Even from where I was sitting, I could see that Rose was making it as loving and inviting as she could; and I watched as Lucy responded in kind. After a few moments, Rose's hand came up to cover Lucy's breast - and I knew that she could feel, as easily as I saw, when Lucy's nipples began to erect in response. As their kiss lengthened, Lucy's hand moved to Rose's breast with Rose's nipples hardening in reaction to Lucy's touch.

It didn't take long before I could see that their passion and arousal was increasing; they were obviously tasting each other's tongues as each caressed the breast and nipple under her hand. Soon after that, both of them had *both* hands involved as the two of them continued to kiss while each investigated the other's body. Backs, shoulders, breasts, hips, thighs, and buttocks - everything within reach was subject to tender caresses. By the time their kiss ended, both were clearly flush with arousal as they looked deep into each other's eyes.

Lucy made the next move by gently guiding Rose to lie on her side before Lucy mirrored her position, placing her head even with Rose's thighs. Rose responded to Lucy's gentle touch by parting her legs, making it possible for Lucy to move her head forward and position it between Rose's thighs. I saw Rose's eyes widen slightly at the first contact,, followed by her closing her eyes in response to the pleasurable sensations I knew Lucy was creating. Rose didn't even look at me before reaching out and touching Lucy, getting Lucy to make herself available in return. With Lucy's intimate area open to her exam, Rose paused a few seconds as though looking at a particularly attractive flower - which, I suppose, she was. Then she moved her head forward and extended her tongue, letting it slip between Lucy's extended labia - and the delight on her face at the taste was plain. It was a matter of just a couple of seconds before Rose had her tongue and mouth and lips busily investigating all of Lucy's womanhood.

It wasn't long before the air was thick with the heady aroma of their arousal, and their mouths and chins shiny with each others juices. The sight and scent of it, coupled with the occasional soft moan, soon had me almost completely erect. I was held in place, balanced between two competing problems - the first was that neither had asked me to join them yet, and I was loathe to interrupt them; the second, that I simply couldn't decide which one to start with. So I was left to sit there, penis waving in the air, as I watched the incredibly erotic sight of the two of them totally focused on pleasuring each other.

Rose was the first to succumb to the growing pleasure between her thighs - done in by Lucy's greater experience and satisfying another woman. With a groan, Rose's head pulled back from the core of Lucy's womanhood as she moaned and panted her way through an orgasm. When it had passed, she quickly redoubled her efforts to bring Lucy the same kind of pleasure.

She succeeded a couple of minutes later; I saw Lucy's head slip from between Rose's thighs as she experienced her own release; I could see her body reacting as the waves of pleasure washed through her, even as Rose was continuing her attentions between Lucy's clenching thighs. There wasn't any doubt that Lucy was going through a fairly powerful orgasm: the noises she made as it happened were loud, if inarticulate.

After Lucy had recovered, I heard Lucy ask Rose to stop, which she did. Lucy sat up again and told Rose "We shouldn't forget Dan.."; Rose's delight and anticipation were clear on her face as she sat up, too.

Looking forward to joining them, I waited to see what Lucy had in mind. With a few soft words and gentle touches, she got Rose positioned over my lap, facing away from me. I put my arms around her and began playing with her breasts as Lucy lowered her body and took me into her mouth; it was only a minute's work for her to get me completely hard and coated with her saliva. With that accomplished, Lucy indicated that she wanted Rose to lower herself onto my manhood - an instruction that Rose happily obeyed as Lucy positioned me at Rose's opening and held me steady as she settled onto me. Lucy lowered her body to the bed again, and I felt her tongue along the underside of my penis, moving from my scrotum upwards - apparently ending it's travels when it got to Rose's clitoris, judging from the moan Rose released.

Knowing what Lucy had in mind, I leaned back a little, taking Rose with me; then I opened my legs a bit more, moving Rose's with them, to make access easier for Lucy. Then, as I slowly thrust upward into Rose's tight, wet channel, Lucy began adding to the increasing arousal that Rose and I were already experiencing. Though Lucy's attentions were mainly on Rose's clitoris, she didn't forget me - she would frequently slide the end of her tongue down to where the underside of my penis was, at the juncture of where Rose and I came together (no pun intended!), letting it caress the underside of me as I slid in and out of Rose's vagina.

Between my hands on her breasts and nipples, my penis sliding in and out of her tight channel, and Lucy's oral attentions on her clitoris, it wasn't long before Rose orgasmed again. Lucy eager lapped the surplus of Rose's juices from my penis, and continued her oral assault on Rose's sex. Several minutes later, Rose peaked again, nearly screaming with the intensity of what Lucy and I were doing to her. When it was finished, Rose barely had control over herself and all but begged us to let her rest. I helped support and steady her while Rose lifted herself off of my manhood; then Lucy helped guide her to lie next to me.

With Rose sadly out of the picture for the time being, Lucy got to her hands and knees and slightly waggled her butt. That was all the invitation I needed, and I quickly moved to get behind her - after a short delay for Lucy to clean my penis of Rose's oils. Lucy reached back between her legs to guide my penis into position, and with my hands on her hips, I arched my hips forward to slowly bury myself in her in a single stroke.

It was only a matter of a few seconds before I was steadily pistoning in and out of Lucy's hot, wet sheath as she pushed back at me with each inward stroke. I leaned forward slightly and reached around and under her to take her breasts in my hands, feeling the slight shift in their weight as they swayed in time with my thrusts while I caressed and gently pulled on her erect nipples. Several minutes went by with us making love that way, the only sound in the room being Lucy's soft moans and the liquid sounds of our union. I was mildly surprised when I felt a hand on mine at Lucy's breast; I looked down to see that Rose had recovered enough to position herself underneath Lucy. Another touch from Rose, and I realized that she wanted me to move my hands. Straightening up again, I held Lucy's waist as I slightly increased the speed and force of my thrusts into her; below, Rose fastened her lips around one of Lucy's nipples. One hand moved to Lucy's other breast, and I could feel it when the other slipped between Lucy's thighs. As Rose used her hand and fingers to apply pressure to Lucy's clitoris, she was also adding to my pleasure when she would let her fingertips lightly drag along the underside of my penis. I was getting close to my release when I felt Lucy's vagina begin fluttering around me; a few more seconds, and her vagina clenched around me as she cried out, slipping into an powerful orgasm. With the added stimulation of Lucy's spasming vagina, I managed a few more strokes into her before plunging myself into her as far as I could before the first jet of my release erupted from the end of my penis.

After the activities of the previous night and the intensity of my climax into Lucy, I discovered just how tired I really was: despite wanting to hold myself in Lucy as her orgasm finished, I simply couldn't. Sliding my softening penis out of her, I managed to get myself lying down on the bed. With me out of the way, Rose quickly moved to a "69" position underneath Lucy, and pulled Lucy's hips down so she could begin licking and sucking on Lucy's opening - effectively vacuuming my semen out of Lucy's still-twitching vagina. Lucy's orgasm briefly intensified in response, but she still hadn't gotten back all of

her strength, and it soon began to taper off again.

Realizing that Lucy was nearly finished climaxing, Rose carefully eased herself out from under Lucy; and when Lucy indicated she needed to lie down, Rose guided her next to me before taking a position on Lucy's other side.

When all of us had gotten our breath and a little energy back, Lucy said "Thank you, Rose - that was *wonderful*."

I heard the happiness in Rose's voice when she replied "Not so wonderful as what you did for me, I think - but I am glad I was able to make you feel good."

Turning my head, I saw as the two of them kissed, neither of them concerned in the slightest about who the other tasted like. When their kiss ended, Lucy told Rose "And that was **very** nice of you to clean me up the way you did". I could see Rose blush at Lucy's acknowledgement of what she'd done before she answered "I liked doing that - it was like I was making love with you, but I could taste Dan at the same time."

Lucy laughed and said "Yes, I could tell you liked doing it!", making Rose blush again.

I started to apologize to Lucy for pulling out of her so soon, and she just looked at me before interrupting to say "Dan, after all the times you've made me feel **so** good making love with you - including this one! - you do *not* have to apologize for that; particularly after I let myself forget all you've done in the last twenty-four hours."

Hearing Lucy, Rose also realized that I hadn't caught up on my rest - and along with that, that Lucy likely wasn't fully recovered yet, either. Telling us "Wait here - I will be right back", she got up and headed out of the bedroom. She was back a few minutes later with sandwiches for Lucy and me, and cold sodas for all of us.

When she got into bed again, she moved next to Lucy again, and the two of them exchanged an occasional kiss between Lucy's bites of her sandwich.

When we were done eating, Lucy and I both thanked her; Rose simply gestured that it wasn't anything worth thanking her for. When we were done with our sodas, the cans were set aside and the three of us stretched out and got comfortable as we snuggled with each other.



I woke up the next morning to discover that Rose and Lucy had apparently gotten transposed. Lucy was spooning against Rose's back while Rose and I were on our sides facing each other. I was enjoying looking into her face when her eyes opened. She saw me looking at her, and faintly blushed before saying "I think I don't look so good when I

wake up in the morning."

I smiled and reassured her "Rose, you look lovely, *any* time!" before touching my lips to hers - and getting a distinct whiff of Lucy.

I grinned and asked "Did you two have more fun last night?"

She grinned back and answered "Si. Much fun for both of us, I think," not embarrassed in the slightest.

From behind her, I heard Lucy's voice say "Yes, it *was* a lot of fun. Almost too much fun, even."

Rose got a concerned look on her face and said "I am sorry if I made you too tired."

I heard Lucy's soft laugh before she replied "I said *almost*, Rose. I liked making love with you **very** much."

Since the two of them had obviously been able to stay awake longer than I had, I sat up and told them "Okay, since you two were busy after I conked out, I'll make some coffee and something to eat."

Rose started to sit up and protest, but Lucy gently pulled her back down and told her "No, its okay, Rose. He actually does know how to cook, and after last night, I think you need rest as much as I do. Let him go."

Rose didn't look all too certain that I wasn't going to destroy her kitchen in the process of making something unfit for human consumption, but didn't say anything else before I headed downstairs.

I went back up a little later with cups of coffee for them, telling them that I'd bring breakfast up shortly. Both thanked me for the coffee, and I could see Rose wondering what concoction I'd come up with.

She found out about five minutes later when I came into the bedroom. The tray I was carrying had a pile of scrambled eggs with cheese mixed in, crumbled fried chorizo, some potatoes cut into small cubes and fried, and a plate of warm flour tortillas - along with the necessary condiments, some salsa, and more coffee.

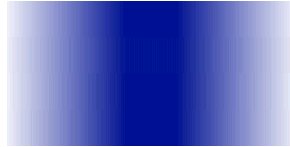
After I got seated on the bed - between them at their insistence - each of us took a tortilla and loaded it with our choice of fillers and had breakfast. Rose was visibly relieved to discover that I hadn't under- or over-cooked anything, and gave me an embarrassed grin around the food she was chewing when I asked "So my cooking isn't so bad?"

We stopped eating when the food ran out - and I was *not* the biggest eater of the three of us; that honor went to Rose, accompanied by playful teasing from Lucy and me.

When even the coffee was gone and the bed cleared of the tray and cups, Lucy suggested to Rose that the two of them thank me for making breakfast. What started as an

affectionate kiss from each of them soon devolved into a miniature orgy that left all of us tired, sweaty, and rather sticky - but temporarily sated.

We finally decided it was time to clean up; Rose got me and Lucy into the shower first through the simple expedient of claiming she needed to see for herself what I'd done to her kitchen.



Rose managed to convince Lucy and me to stay around for several more days - and relented then only because Lucy insisted that she *had* to get back to work.

Along the way, Lucy and I each spent the greater part of an entire day in bed with Rose - not just making love, but talking with her, and snuggling, and becoming *friends* with her, as well as being lovers. There were also a couple of times when all three of us engaged in some fairly intense debauchery, too. It didn't take Rose long to realize that neither Lucy nor I cared in the slightest who she made love with, or how long, or what they did; it was enough for us to know that she loved us, too, and that she was enjoying herself with whoever she was with.

The night before Lucy and I finally headed home, the three of us enjoyed a long and leisurely evening of making love with each other - Lucy or me with Rose, mostly, but with each other when she needed to rest and catch her breath.

Lucy and Rose both had tears in their eyes when I started the SUV the next day, and I admit to a lump in my throat, myself.



Lucy's first day at work after our return had everyone that knew her welcoming her back. Lucy had a look around, and saw that there had been some changes in her absence - only a few of them to the good.

Several of the Board members wanted to talk to her, and she let them know that she wasn't going to talk to ANY of them until the next Board meeting. They were considerably less than happy about that, but accepted it. Until that time, Lucy talked to a number of different people in the company, getting caught up on what had been happening, and why - deliberately avoiding hearing the filtered bullshit that so many of the other Board members spewed. When she came home each night, the time it took her to "decompress" from work was dramatically less than what it had been before we went

on vacation. She finally told me that she'd hit some kind of internal wall - that no matter what they did or didn't do at work, it simply wasn't as important as she'd thought before we'd left. She still wanted to do the best job she could, but she had decided that whatever happened at work could stay there; she had a husband and two daughters and a life that meant more to her than her work.

Of course, the day came for her appearance in the Board meeting. Knowing that she was going to have *something* to say, they had a secretary recording what she said. Months later, one of the Board members gave me a copy of the transcript.

"Before I left for the summer, I told this Board that I had been having problems doing the job that YOU hired me to do. I also told you that the authority you gave me when YOU brought me onto this Board was being undercut by politicking, incompetence, and sheer contrariness."

"I also told you that I wasn't going to fight with you any longer to do the job I'm *supposed* to be doing, instead of running around trying to undo your foulups, protecting my staff from your idiocy, and keep my department operating as the most cost-effective and money-making group in the entire company. I told you that you were free to do whatever you wanted while I was gone, and that I would be making just this one appearance before the rest of the Board after I'd had a chance to look at what changes you'd implemented in my absence."

"Well, I've had my look. And what I've seen tells me that you neither appreciate my efforts, nor respect what I've brought to this company. While I was gone, no less that **three** of you have transferred people out of my department to yours - apparently in an attempt to get them to straighten out YOUR screwed up operations. One of you arbitrarily changed a long-standing policy in my department that contributed *greatly* to our efficiency, despite having it explained to you how your change would have an effect **OPPOSITE** of what you said you wanted; then when efficiency plummeted because of YOUR ineptitude, you blamed my staff, and even fired two of them. Two more of you saw fit to try and take over my department by giving my subordinates instructions that you had no right issuing - and then blaming those people for the confusion and failures caused by YOUR contrary and conflicting instructions."

"In short, in the time that I've been gone, you've managed to undo pretty much every productive thing I've was able accomplish - and in the process, you've abused, bedeviled, and berated people that were doing the best work they possibly could under *your* incompetent management. What was once an effective team of mutually supportive workers has become a fumbling, incoherent **clusterfuck**."

"I told you before I left that if I didn't like what I found when I got back, I would see if I was to have the freedom to exercise the authority I'm supposed to have as a Board member. But the ill-considered, treacherous, petty, and grossly incompetent actions taken

while I was gone make that unnecessary. Accordingly, I am hereby giving the Board notice of my resignation from the company, effective the end of the current pay period." - which was less than a week away. She finished up by dropping an envelope on the Boardroom table and saying "Here is my letter of resignation, dated today. Under the terms of my employment, I will be divesting myself of every share of stock in this company as quickly as I can. With my absence, I don't see anything keeping the value of that stock from going anywhere but down the toilet. Good day."

With that, she turned and headed for the Boardroom door; the Chairman of the Board, Tom Smithers, demanded "And where do you think you're going to go? If you leave here like this, nobody's going to want to hire you!"

Lucy turned and answered "Why, I'm going home, right now, Tom. I've already got two offers to start somewhere else; apparently, other companies already know who's been keeping this operation going. I've got until Monday to let them know which one I'll take. So you see, Tom - you don't know any more about the industry than you do about this company; and now you're going to find out just how *ignorant* you've been!" before turning back again, and leaving the Boardroom.

I was surprised when Lucy got home from work early, of course - but the expression on her face told me that she was happy with what she'd done. Upstairs, she changed out of her work clothes - and into a swimsuit, suggesting that the two of us take the afternoon off. I changed, too, and we did that very thing. The phone rang a couple of times, and we just let the answering machine deal with whoever it was. Later, I heard Lucy deleting the messages as soon as she recognized the caller's voice.

In the days that followed, they tried all kinds of things to get her to stay - and none of them worked. Once, I accidentally heard her talking to someone on the phone, telling them "Listen, Paul - I'm not going to accept the heat, just because you guys have spent so much time bullshitting each other that you think *everyone* is doing it. If you clowns didn't have the brains before now to see that when I said I was going to do something, I did it, then that's YOUR problem - not mine. You guys screwed it up, YOU fix it. You don't know how? Then why did you screw with it? You don't know? *THAT* is why I quit! Goodbye, Paul."

When it got down to the short strokes, Lucy took the job with the company that was willing to put its promises in the contract they offered her. Her lawyer went over it, and pronounced it good before she signed it.

As she'd warned them, she sold off all the stock she had in the old company; within a year, it was trading at half the previous value. Within two years of starting at the new company, *it's* stock had gone up by over half - and was expected to keep going. As she got the chances, Lucy hired her previous staff away from the old company starting with the ones that had been fired while she was gone, further aggravating their problems -

though that wasn't why she did it, that it had that effect didn't hurt her feelings any.

We kept in contact with Rose, and barely a year after our little "problem", she told us that Muddy had asked her if she would be willing to come and work for him. The recipes he'd gotten from her had been extremely well received, and he wanted to hire her to ensure they stayed authentic. She was thrilled and flattered at the idea, but still a little uncertain that she could do it. Lucy and I both assured her that we'd enjoyed her meals tremendously, and finally got her to accept Muddy's offer. With her cooking for him, he's added a few more dishes to his menu, and has gotten even more popular. Muddy and Rose have each told us separately that they've been out on the occasional date with each other - and enjoyed their time together. Lucy thinks that there might be something developing between them; I'm not willing to bet against her.

All of us have been keeping in touch with each other. We're not holding annual reunions or anything like that, but it's rare for us not to hear from each other every few weeks.

All of the survivalists that we left behind ended up in various jails and prisons - it seemed that several of them had major charges against them around the country, and were using the group as a hideout of sorts. It also came out in the trial that the State Parks supervisor that we'd talked to had been sympathetic to the group, and took money from them in exchange for stonewalling complaints against them; he ended up in state prison along with the rest of them.

Robyn and Sandra have both graduated college; Sandra is working as a counsellor for a school system while she works toward a Masters degree as a social worker. Robyn is working as the entertainment director on a cruise ship, and having more fun than is probably good for her. Both of them have a limited number of boyfriends, though neither one has mentioned - yet! - an interest in any one particular guy.

Lucy and I have taken to being foster parents for kids that have run into trouble of one kind or another. A lot of the kids come to us pretty messed up from being abused one way or another, neglected, or outright abandoned; but we've been able to help most of them get themselves straightened out. We've even gotten letters from some of the early kids we got, who have gone on in their lives - they always thank us for the time we took with them, and the care we showed them. They also tell us that it was the way that Lucy and I loved and cared for each other that set an example for them.