**The Pool Girl**

by Leto Armitage

**Chapter 34**

After the chaos had settled down from finding out that Peter’s parents were coming to visit Lavi turned her gaze on Melissa.

Lavi, “All right, it’s time.”

“For what?”

“Your plan, the big dramatic whoopty doo thing you’ve been avoiding telling us. I swear you’ve watched way too many mysteries with dragged out reveals, Ms. Marple.”

Linda had started to get up and sat back down. Clearly, she wanted to hear this too.

“Uh, I really need to talk to Grace about it. What if...”

Melissa didn’t get to finish what she was saying as Lavi was already talking into her phone. “Yep, grab her, your mom, and Dr. Tahan too. Let’s say 7:30? Awesome.” She hung up and looked at Melissa. “They will be here at 7:30. You can tell us then.”

Melissa looked annoyed. “And when did you arrange that?”

Lavi crossed her arms. “You don’t have a monopoly on being sneaky babe.”

Melissa blew a raspberry at her. Lavi in response put her arms around Melissa and gave Melissa a deep kiss. They became lost in each other and I realized that while both had made love to me in the car they still hadn’t had their own time together. I wasn’t even part of it and my toes began to curl. Everyone looked a bit uncomfortable and looked away though no one could ignore it. Only Ji and I really watched. Rian especially looked like it might be a few minutes before he could stand up.

They broke apart and Lavi looked at Melissa. Lavi put her hands on her hips as if to ask, ‘Anything else?’

No one knew what to say after that except Ji who said, “Damn! Every time I smarted off to you I just got cut down.”

Lavi just turned and looked at her. “Stay after everyone else leaves and find out what happens if you try it now.” Ji went red at that and I couldn’t help it and started laughing.

Sylvia joined me and as she laughed yelled, “Remember the after we leave part!”

Rian quipped, “Wow Robert, you starting a harem?”

“No,” I said, “but I think Lavi is.”

Lavi seemed to like that idea. “Hell yeah!”

Syliva playfully, but with a fair bit of force, slapped her husband’s arm. “Don’t you get ideas.”

“I am as dull witted and absent of thought as the void my love,” Peter replied. Then he conspiratorially whispered to his daughter, loud enough for everyone to hear, “We’ll talk later.”

Sylvia rolled her eyes.

Once everyone calmed down people went into motion. Ji and Melissa put up leftovers while Syliva and Lavi made coffee for anyone who wanted it. I was instructed to sit and rest. Rian excused himself and walked home, apparently feeling that the estrogen level was about to reach a toxic threshold for his masculinity. Peter similarly decided to bail and Lavi said she would drive her mom home. I suspected that Sylvia really didn’t want to stay but felt a parent should stay if others were coming over.

Soon guests had arrived and we sat around the table. Sylvia, Linda, Melissa, myself, Ji, and Lavi were joined by Grace, June, Zahra, and Yussef. Melissa and I got two more seats from the patio so that everyone could squeeze in. The table had seemed really big just a few months ago. Everyone looked at Melissa.

“So,” she said, “I don’t think it’s a surprise that I’m quitting the team.” Grace and Zahra shook their heads. No surprise there. “I’m going to see Richardson tomorrow and tell her. Grace, will you go with me?”

“Sure.” Grace sounded unenthused but resigned.

Zahra looked at her Grace and as if to explain, said to Melissa, “It’s been bad. Richardson has always been a queen B but the last two weeks ... ugh. We had hoped that if you did come back... “. She looked at everyone. “But we didn’t really expect it.” She toyed with the edge of her head scarf.

“We’ve had two games,” Grace added, “they’ve been painful. T’wana is worse than ever.”

Lavi, “Are she and Richadson tight?”

Ji shook her head. “No, but Xinyi has her head up so far up Richardson’s ass she should be able to taste tonsils by now.”

“Mellie, do I really have to list the ways this is going down the toilet?” Grace stared at Melissa. “Seriously, if you’re gone just be gone, I’ve got a big enough mess to deal with if you’re just looking to stir the pot.”

There was a lot unsaid there. Melissa had filled me in that Grace wanted to go to a certain school with Owen who had a full football scholarship but she didn’t have the money. But apparently the school had only had their university accreditation for a few years and was just getting their football and cheer programs off the ground. The student captain of a national placing cheer team was a shoe in for a full ride according to Owen’s recruitment officer.

Zahra, “I don’t want to bail on you Grace but it’s getting old, fast.” Grace sighed, like it was another nail in her coffin.

“What’s going on?” Lavi.

Zahra looked at Lavi, “There are new rules about appearance, especially hair.”

Her father, Yussef, took it up. “The rule doesn’t say she can’t wear her headscarf but she does have to prove the hair is following certain rules even if it’s not visible so she has to take it off for inspection. So far it’s only been in the girls locker room but...”

“Let’s be blunt,” this was June, Grace’s mom, “we know Richardson never liked having to make changes for Zahra. It was shoved down her throat when you threatened to go to the school board Yussef. She’ll cover her ass but it won’t stop in the locker room.”

“I can handle myself,” Zahra said, “But the new routines ... she’s having me do the stuff most likely to make it come loose.”

“New routines? Is she planning on competing?” Melissa asked.

“She’s backed off from canceling it,” Grace said, “but holding it over me like a guillotine and she holds the rope. She’s pushing everyone twice as hard saying we need to do more tumbling and be more athletic if we really want to win. She has stopped the more modern stuff Christine started us on. Zahra, you can quit if you like. It’s just not going to work. Morale is crap.” Grace shook her head.

“How is everyone taking it?” Lavi asked.

“Varies,” Ji said. “Xinyi has been a gymnast since she was a kid so she’s loving being Richardson’s go to for some of the new exercises.”

Grace continued. “Shockingly T’wana loves it, I think because she gets to be top of the pecking order. She’s always hated the work but she’s soaking up the new dynamics.”

“And her favorite target? Amber?”

Grace shook her head, “Mostly but keeping it low key right now. Amber seems oblivious to it though. Amber is digging the new routine. She doesn’t like Richardson but she gets to cheer and the new routines are harder but need less coordination.”

“Makes sense,” Melissa said, “she’s got the rhythm of an old white man but in sheer strength and endurance...”

Grace finished, “There’s a reason with no guys on the team she does all the tosses. And we’re doing more and more pyramids and tosses, catches, all the old school stuff.”

Melissa winced and asked, Seriously?” She got a trilogy of affirmative nods in response.

Sylvia, Yussef and I looked around and clearly needed to be clued in. Linda came to the rescue.

“Those moves were staples when I was a cheerleader but already were discouraged.”

“Dated practices?” I asked.

“Unsafe,” June said, “did you know that cheerleaders get injured more than football players?”

I shook my head. It was news to me and apparently I was the only one from looking around. It obviously made sense to Sylvia and Yussef but they had been in this world longer than me. I thought about it and realized that in cheering the girls were at a hundred percent in every practice while something like football was very different.

While I was thinking they kept talking but I caught back up when Melissa asked “What about the newer girls?”

Zahra, Ji, Grace looked at each other. “Coraline and Emma seem fine,” Grace said. “It’s their normal. Haley I think will quit, she’s been down right vocal when Richardson walks off and T’wana picks on her when she gets tired of Amber. Jenny I don’t know. I’ve been trying to get something out of her but she’s super quiet. Twilight Zone to the rest of us though.”

Zahra scoffed, “Twilight Zone has jumped the shark then because it’s totally dull. Look, I like cheering, and you”, she singled out Melissa with her gaze, “and Grace always pushed us but we laughed a lot too. I mean, remember in tenth grade when I wasn’t jumping high enough. You made sure I learned to and you never made me feel bad about it.”

Melissa smiled, “I remember you whining you wanted a thigh gap instead of muscles.”

“Hey, I’m team thick thighs save lives now,” Zahra replied.

Lavi looked under the table, “You need a few more cupcakes babe.”

Ji giggled and said, “Robert can help with that.” Yussef’s eyes went a bit wide. June and Sylvia started laughing. Ji panicked, “Baking, I meant by baking!”

Linda poked at the table with a nail. “Can we move on, please.”

Melissa tried not to smile but cleared her throat. “So, how much has Lavi told all of you?”

Grace, “That you have some sort of plan but it’s a big mystery and that you’re not bending over for Richardson. So, out with it.”

Melissa, “It’s more than that. It’s also about giving us a shot at a national title Grace.”

Grace looked skeptical. “What do we do, knock off Richardson?”

With his cultured tone Yussef said, “I can not in good conscience agree to popping a cap in her ass but it has a certain appeal.” Zahra rolled her eyes.

“I wonder if Bubbeh still knows any of those mossad guys...” Lavi said.

Melissa cut Lavi off and gave her a castigating glance. “I’m being serious.” Looking back to Grace she said, “Bear with me, what do you have to have in order to compete?”

Grace, “Are you thinking about All Stars? I’m not doing scrub league, that’s not a title, it’s a, a...” she motioned to the other girls for help.

Lavi, “A pity fuck for the ugly chicks?” The room went silent for a second as Lavi seemed to realize they were in mixed company. “Well, it is.” She crossed her arms defensively. Sylvia had her face in her hand. I couldn’t tell if she was trying to not show her face because she was laughing or embarrassed.

Linda took in a breath, “Let’s move it on please.”

Melissa nodded to her mom and continued, “That’s not where I’m going Grace. I’m talking about the high school division, just like usual.”

Zahra, “What, we all transfer to East Ridge?”

“I hadn’t thought of that, no. I was thinking of Grace still being captain.” She let that sink in. Grace looked interested.

Ji, Lavi, Zahara and Grace all looked to each other as if to see if it was more obvious to someone else. It wasn’t. I however remembered back to the hospital room and her research on one particular school club.

Lavi, “That’s what Blackman was here for? She’s going to sponsor some kind of competing cheer group?”

Melissa, “Not exactly. It’s not going to be a new club and not competing with cheer. We compete in the dance category instead of cheer in the high school division.”

June must have seen my confusion because she interpreted for me, “It’s still high school cheer but more focused on dance routines like they do at half time instead of cheering during the game. Some teams do both but we never have. Honestly, the routines Melissa has done have blurred the lines a lot but that’s not uncommon.”

Grace interrupted, “This isn’t going to work. It has to be covered by insurance and Escobar isn’t going to go for that. He can kill it just on the basis that it isn’t in the budget. I know there’s a dance club but they just do recitals in the school so joining that is pointless.”

Lavi shook her head at Grace, “I still don’t get it, Blackman doesn’t have anything to do with the dance club.”

“But,” I said, feeling like the reader who solves the novel’s mystery in advance, “what if it’s a group that already has travel insurance? A dance team that isn’t a dance club?” I looked at Melissa and grinned. She grinned back.

It was Zahra who it hit first. “Blackman is the faculty advisor for the chess team. You want us to join the chess team?!”

Lavi’s eyes went wide, “I mean they travel for competitions but...”

Grace, “Have you lost your flippin mind?!”

Melissa tried to get them quiet but they kept talking over her so SLAM! I brought my hand down firmly on the table. I smiled, “To quote Lavi, Melissa is talking.”

She smiled in thanks at me, her elfin face very kissable. “First off, there is no chess club... “ she cut Zahra off, “there really isn’t, there is the Junior Gentle Person’s Association which put together a chess team but the Association has a broad mandate for cultural studies, which includes dance since they put one on each year. And they already have coverage for insurance since they travel for chess competitions. And Mrs. Blackman is on board, well, on certain conditions.”

Yussef cleared his throat. “Conditions? Are you suggesting they cheer the ... chess team?” Linda looked appalled. June and Sylvia looked like they wanted drinks. The other cheerleaders looked like Melissa had killed a soft cute woodland animal and covered herself in it’s blood.

Melissa, “No, but each of us will have to either do chess or work on the society events.”

Ji forgot she was in mixed company. “Fuck me.”

“Not now Ji,” Lavi replied deadpan. Sylva smacked Lavi on the arm for the second time tonight. “Ow!” So, that’s where Lavi got it from.

Grace just stared at Melissa. June was eyeing my wine rack.

“Who plays chess?” Yussef asked. Sylvia pointed at Lavi.

“Ug, I hate chess mom.”

“No you don’t,” Syliva said with practiced suffering in her voice.

“Fine, I don’t like regular chess where they sit around and take forever planning moves.” Lavi looked at everyone, “I used to play speed chess, that’s fun.”

“In competitions I’m sure they use a clock,” I said.

Melissa looked at me. “Do you play?”

“A little,” I said. “I have some sets and clocks up stairs. I was more of a pool player than chess. I played until I hit the point where it was all about memorizing gambits.”

“Same,” Yussef replied.

“I think the teas might be fun,” Zahra said, “I’ve actually thought about joining before but always been kind of afraid I wouldn’t fit in. And the chess, no thank you.”

“Well,” Melissa said, “Everyone there right now does both, so Blackman said the new rule will be everyone does two of the three - the tea events, the formal dance, the dance team but no one has to do all three. There is already a club president and vice president but we can elect our own team captain. She is fine with this being new but stressed that it can’t be a fake part of the club so if someone already there wants to join us we have to be open to it.”

Ji, “Including if they’re on the cheer team too?”

Melissa looked at her. “No one is on both?” It was meant as a statement but as she looked at Ji it came out as a question. Melissa was nearly an encyclopedia of other people but she had apparently missed something because Ji slowly nodded yes.

“Coraline,” Ji said, “She has tried to get Xinyi and Emma to join but they always said it was too nerdy.”

“Well, there’s nothing to hide and I guess that will be her choice,” Melissa said. She looked flustered, surprised she had missed it herself. “We’re not competing per se, so it’s fine.”

Lavi, “Only technically. We are talking about four of the six seniors on the team bailing.”

“Five,” Melissa corrected, “they already chose to kick the most beautiful member off.” She smiled at Lavi. Lavi smiled back and everyone at the table “awwed” appreciatively. Melissa gave it a minute and then looked at everyone. “So ... what do you say?”

Grace looked at her mom. “It’s still a national cheer title, just as prestigious.”

June said, “Richardson has a proven track record so I think your chances there are better with her but I don’t want you to have a stress ulcer at eighteen, kiddo, so I say go for it. We can figure the school out.”

Ji didn’t wait for Grace to reply and said, “Fuck it, I’m in.”

Melissa, “Really?” Ji just raised her hand for a fist bump with Melissa.

Grace, “You’re quick to jump in, Ji.”

Ji shrugged. “I’m stuck between a tiger and a dragon, I feel like bitch slapping one of the two.” That made Lavi and I both break into laughter while Melissa tried to hold it in. Everyone else looked at us in confusion. Ji just said, “Private joke.”

Linda, who didn’t seem the least interested in private jokes, or perhaps humor itself. “What about costs? The school usually covers part and the cheerleaders get a part of donations for football.”

Melissa nodded. “We will have to raise money for uniforms and travel but we get more say in it all too.”

Grace, “Zahra, where are you on this?”

Zahra threw it back at her, “What are you doing? I just do this for fun, if you and Mellie are doing this I’m in. You’re my sisters.”

Yussef squeezed his daughter’s hand affectionately. “From hardship comes fellowship. You’re sure?”

“For everything there is a season, including a time to dance.”

Grace grinned at that and looked at the assembled crowd. “Melissa, Lavi, you’re both eighteen so you can sign your own forms. Everyone else will need parents to sign. Mom?”

“I just want you to be whole and healthy babe, your aura has been down right sick lately. I promise we will figure out school if it doesn’t work.”

Linda cut in. “What would it take to really make this happen? Let’s ask ourselves this.” She sat there, unsmiling, a stern older version of Melissa, her blue eyes piercing but what she said was pure calculated reason. “Melissa is damn good; so is Grace. The rest of you are good but not exceptional. This will be uphill. You’re going to compete against schools that have done this division for years.”

“Linda, I’m not in the mood for your negativity.” That was Sylvia.

Linda looked at her new machatunim. “Sylvia, don’t take this the wrong way but shut your ignorant pie hole.” Everyone around the table’s eyes went wide. “This needs to be said up front and you don’t know shit about cheerleading. You don’t even make it to some of the home games. June, you have the same experience I do, be honest, as it stands right now what are their odds?”

June made a pained face. “Bad.”

“Exactly. But it’s doable, that’s my point. You three,” she looked at Ji, Zahra and Lavi, “need to up your game. The cheer division sometimes rewards big groups that are super flashy. The dance teams can get by with fewer members but they need to all be perfect because the judges will be watching each one for any fault. Hard work is what makes it happen. Your bodies will have to learn new ways to move.”

The girls took that in. It wasn’t kindly done but it was real and they felt it.

Linda continued, “Mellie, I’ve been worried about you a lot but I’m proud of you. This is amazing. I want you to do it but only if you and Grace get the support you need.”

Melissa looked confused. “Proud of me? I’m quitting cheerleading.”

Linda softened a little. “We can have that talk another time dear, but yes, I’m proud of you.” She looked at the room in challenge. “Now I want to know which of you little girls have the balls to do this.”

Damn. Linda threw that shit down. Sylvia and June looked aghast. Yussef started laughing.

Lavi grinned, “You know I’m down, you might just have to kick my ass sometimes.”

“Always my love,” Melissa replied.

“As dad says, iron sharpens iron,” Zahra added. “I already know you can kick my ass.”

Yussef, “And I support this fully. I know this is a separate division but make no mistake, Richardson will see this as an attack.”

Melissa looked at him. “Only if she makes it one. I will be filing the paperwork for our division competitions before anyone knows what is happening so she will have to be the aggressor. I need signed forms for at least four of us tomorrow by noon.” Yussef and Grace nodded their heads, they would make it happen and that made four.

Ji sighed out dramatically, “Oh well, I was thinking about cutting back on concert band anyway. This seems like as good an excuse as any.” She smiled.

“Will your mom sign the forms?” Melissa asked.

Ji shrugged. “I turn eighteen next week, I’ll sign them myself if necessary. But yeah, I don’t think she’ll have a problem. I just don’t want to have to lie to her or the brat.”

“Where do we practice?” Grace asked.

“Blackman said we can get official practice time in the auditorium, she can reserve it for us. Unofficially we are going to need more time and I suspect Richardson will fight to block us.”

“You are welcome at my home,” Yussef said. A chorus of similar offers came from the other parents.

It was Zhara that tapped the table and said, “Nope, should be here.” Huh?

“Why?” That was said almost simultaneously by her father and Linda.

“That feeling we had before school started when we were practicing here, the fun we had, that’s what we need to get back to. Doesn’t matter how hard it is, if we’re having fun it’ll be brilliant. And let’s be honest, the big yard, the pool, everything made it perfect.”

Lavi looked at me. “Up for cooking for a bunch of teenage girls again?”

“Only if I have help.” I grinned.

A lot more was said but none of it changed the fundamentals. Melissa, Lavi, Ji, Zahra and Grace were going to make the first competitive dance team at the high school and wage a cold war against an established faction.

Everyone but the three of us were gone and I sat at the kitchen table. Lavi and Melissa had their laptops open and were double checking things for school tomorrow, their first day back. It was only 9 pm but it felt like midnight. I walked over to a cardboard box sitting in one corner. It said “Dewar’s Double Aged” on the side and looked like it came from a liquor store. I pulled it open and found whiskey inside. Nothing from Dewar but six bottles of various brands. They were all Japanese whiskeys. I looked them up on my phone and discovered they ranged from very cheap to fairly pricey. I picked up one of the more expensive bottles, a 12 year old Yamazaki.

I turned to Melissa and Lavi. “Uh, why do we have a box of whiskey here?”

Melissa didn’t even look at me. “You were punchy the second day in the hospital and called some guy named Elvis. Rian found it on the back porch when he came around to get packages.”

“Oh.” I really should remember to get Elvis something for Christmas.

Apparently Lavi was more easily distracted from school because she asked “Who is Elvis?”

“Elvis Morales. He does errands for me or used to. Melissa does a lot of that now.”

Lavi, “And he will just grab you a case of liquor no questions asked and drop it on your back porch?”

“Uh, yeah.”

She shook her head and returned to world history. I kept the Yamazaki out and poured two fingers. Oh, that was good. I didn’t love it but I could appreciate the quality. It was smokey and the spice lingered on my tongue.

Melissa looked up, “Pain meds.”

“Only one, I promise,” I said. She returned to her work, her focus snapping back. Something was still wrong. I knew what. We had just eaten but I wanted something sweet. I found the fresh fruit drawer full from deliveries. Rian had been dutiful putting everything in the right place and since I hadn’t been here to cook it was bursting. I grabbed some Bartlett pears, a bottle of sweet wine, cinnamon and ginger. In minutes I had the pears poaching and in twenty more minutes had them on plates drizzled with honey. It had been more difficult than I had thought it would be. It was all simple work but I’d never done it with my left hand. But it felt good to be at the stove again. I turned around to start bringing the plates over and found Lavi and Melissa both standing there.

“You sit,” Lavi said. “We will get the plates.”

“In the future,” Melissa said, “ask for help with sharp tools. You were shaking.” She studied my face.

I grinned. “Yes, ma’am.”

Lavi got us forks and we sat. I can’t say the pears paired well with the whiskey but they were both good. I decided to put away the Yamazaki until others were over to share it. I still didn’t remember deciding to try a bunch of Japanese whiskeys but it did sound like the kind of thing I’d want to do.

Once upstairs I headed to the bathroom and shooed the girls off. This led to the most important experiment of today. For several days I could move enough that I thought I could probably pee by myself if necessary, especially if I didn’t bother with underwear. This theory was untested as the girls had jumped up to help if I even glanced at a bathroom. I turned out to be right. The sheer exaltation that rushed through me of being able to pee by myself was revitalizing. I wasn’t shy but that didn’t mean I wanted every piss to be a spectacle. I removed the rest of my clothes figuring I’d keep any middle of the night trips as simple as possible.

With a bounce in my step I re-entered the bathroom to find something that put a rise to a different kind of spirit. Lavi was reclined on her back, her knees pulled up as Melissa went for her second desert. Lavi was completely nude except for her wedding rings, her heavy breasts hanging to her sides. Melissa for her part wore a pair of white panties stretched over her toned ass. They seemed just a little too small and then I realized they were Ji’s, I just couldn’t see the Hello Kitty from this side.

I approached on my knees. Melissa started to raise her head but I smacked her ass awkwardly with my left hand. “I didn’t tell you to stop slut.” She aborted her change of position and returned to licking.

Lavi moaned as the tongue returned and murmured, “Right there baby, it’s been forever.”

I looked to the side and saw the phone already mounted and recording. I pulled the panties to the side exposing Melissa’s right ass cheek and reached across wedging it into her ass crack. SLAP. I rubbed the reddening skin and then repeated the slap. I rubbed some more. One soft hit, a second, a third and then another hard one to make her jump. Sometimes I’d cup my hands and make it loud without actually hitting hard but she shuddered at the sound. I built a steady slow rhythm.

After a moment I rubbed the reddening skin, hesitant to go too far until I knew how much she would bruise. “You little slut, did you get Melissa’s permission to eat her wife? Is she going to be mad at you for eating Lavi out?”

Melissa clearly got the game since she had suggested it earlier herself. In a little voice, I heard from between Lavi’s legs, “Hi Robert, she said I could make Lavi scream.”

Lavi giggled, “I just hope you’re hungry half an hour later again babe.”

Melissa slapped the inside of Lavi’s thigh, probably feeling that it was racist. Lavi apparently decided getting eaten was more important than annoying Melissa so she just closed her eyes and settled back.

I reached down and stroked Melissa’s cleft with my finger. “Did she say anything about me?”

“Nope, I guess you’ll just have to do what you want.” She wiggled her butt at me.

“Sounds good to me,” I said with a grin and moved to position myself above her. With her legs together I aimed for her cleft and worked my way in.

Melissa sighed, gently rubbing Lavi’s clit as she said, “You like that tight Chinese pussy? You want to cum inside me Mr. Carlo?”

I started to reach for her hips to hold her steady but my right shoulder complained by stabbing a lance of pain through me but the adrenaline of imagining Ji underneath me and feeling Melissa milk me, excited by the thought herself, dulled the pain. I put my hand down and squeezed Melissa’s ass, steadying myself as I pushed forward fucking harder.

I wondered if this would hit her buttons... “Well Ji, I do want to cum inside you. I talked to your mother. That wasn’t a real doctor she took you too. Those aren’t real birth control you’ve been taking. This is a fertile pussy I’m going to shoot into. I think you’ll look nice, your little titties filled with milk.”

I heard a sharp intake of breath and Melissa’s back arched, “Oh fuck yes.” Along the way she had forgotten to keep playing with Lavi who was watching Melissa with fire in her eyes and playing with her own clit and as Melissa shook against her Lavi’s own breath quickened.

I came inside Melissa and realized I was holding my breath. As I let it out a wave of happy endorphins and tiredness swept over me. I wanted to fuck Melissa again and again but suddenly my eyes felt heavy. Damn, I was still getting tired quickly. I managed to stay in place a moment enjoying the feel of Melissa beneath me as I softened and made contact with Lavi who looked at me with love. She made a come here motion. I scooted over and laid against her on my good side and fell asleep, her breast my pillow. I woke later and found Melissa on my other side on her phone. She passed me a bottle of water, I drank a few mouthfuls and gave it back to her before returning to sleep.

The sleep returned some peace to me and I slept deeply until morning. I had a doctor’s appointment after all.