

Chapter 23 – Wednesday Afternoon

“Take it Easy”

Luis

“How’s this week going for you?” Luke Nguyen asked me as we left the cafeteria.

“Intense.” As I reflected on the whole experience, “My life has been hauled out from all the rocks I was hiding it under. Many of the slimy things I wasn’t aware of. You?”

He gave a snort, “About the same. Amazing the things that come out from under those rocks.”

“Tch..., no shit. On Monday morning, my main focus was East. Now...”

“Confundium?”

“Exactly! Perfect word.”

“Rebbeca and Rosalee?”

“Strange, ain’t it.” Before my mind could venture into that maze looking for cheese, I decided to change the subject. “Have you hooked up with anyone this week?”

“Welllll... Maybe.”

“Kewl. Who?”

“Ah... You may not approve.”

“As long as it’s not my sister,” I half joked. My sister? NO! She’s just a little girl that should still be playing with dolls and having tea parties with her imaginary friends.

“I’d better shut up. I’d make a lousy tackling dummy.”

I sighed. Damn. “As long as you don’t intentionally hurt her.”

“Not my style,” he exhaled as he relaxed. “We’re just trying to figure this out ourselves.”

“I know that feeling all too well!”

“You and Rebecca I can see. You two were made for each other. But, how does Rosalee fit?”

“I think she’s fun and nice and all that, but I think she fits with Becca, not me.”

“Sounds serious.”

“Well, compared to how I feel for Becca...”

Luke pulled himself up to his full height and tried to look threatening, except for the smile. “Just don’t hurt her or I’ll-”

I growled at him playfully. Sorta playful. I guess. After a look at his expression, “Just practicing my game face.”

“God, I almost feel sorry for East.” He was a bit pale but stood his ground.

I nodded. We fell into an easy silence as we headed into the boy’s locker room. We walked through the doors and into the “inner sanctum” of the Testosterone Temple.

“This feels strange, like we’re doing something wrong,” he said.

“Yeah, it does. Have you enjoyed the girls?”

“You’d better believe it!”

“We’ve been working so hard all week, it’s empty by the time practice is over. At least I get peace in the showers.”

“I’ve been getting piece as well.”

“As long as-”

“I’ll see you in the weight room, right?”

“Yeah. Weights. You have to be careful, accidents can happen.”

“Chill. I respect her, okay?”

“Yeah, it’s just-”

“She’s your baby sister.”

“Yeah,” I sighed. “Let me soak for fifteen minutes and I’ll come spot you. I promise to behave.” I stuck out my hand and we shook. Then I remembered the messages. “I noticed you got a note at lunch.”

“No big. I was planning on being at Media Day anyway. Coach just wanted me to hang around after for a few minutes.”

“Me too. Any idea why?”

“Nope. I guess we’ll find out.” We split and headed our own way.

In a few moments, I was lowering myself into the big whirlpool tank. I took a chance and just hit play on the boom box and the Eagles started crooning ‘*Well I’m running down the road trying to loosen my load...*’ Good advice.

I relaxed and let my muscles go as limp as I could, while letting the heat and the jets do the rest. While breathing as deeply as I could in my relaxation meditation technique, I managed to disconnect my protective-older-brother circuit and took a look at Margie. Our Margaretta was a very cute girl. No. Beautiful. Her skin is lighter than mine and with the hair she’s been growing since, well—forever, she has quite an exotic look. A ball of energy combined with the Contadino compassionate streak, the ability to make herself invaluable, and seeks no reward other than doing an excellent job – she’s got tons going for her.

Okay, I could see how a guy like Luke could be attracted to her. I could also see how my precious *sorellina* could go for Luke. He’s like a foot shorter than I am, yet hell-on-wheels on the basketball court. I’ve seen him out jump guys taller than me. Plus, he’s going to probably grow another foot in the next few years. Aside from all that, he seems to have his head screwed on straight. Although he paled at my growl, he still stood up to me. Something many guys approaching my size won’t do.

Margie could do a lot worse.

Damn! I missed the entire song while thinking about that. I stretched, hit the back button, and decided to take it easy. For real this time.

It's a shame Jacuzzi or someone didn't make tubs like this for the home. Then again, most people would feel beat up by the pulsing action. To me, the high setting felt great. But, then again, I liked hitting offensive linemen. Go figure. To the average person, it would probably feel like a few rounds with the World Heavyweight Champion.

Ahh...

Damn! I missed the song again! A much more relaxed arm hit the replay button. Again.

Just as I was losing myself in the melodies of the Eagles, "Where's your rubber dickee?"

"Well, if it isn't the hollow dick. Girls still running in terror... No, wait. Collapsing in laughter." Mike Holloway, offensive lineman and his own zip code, settled into the tub next to me.

"I hear you're striving to be a great wit--"

"And, I'm halfway there, right?" I cut him off, with a grin.

"Oh, my. The science puke is studying languages now. You might even work up to real subjects soon." Mike was the resident student of philosophy and Western Thought.

"You know what happened to the first great philosopher, don't you?"

"It was brilliant. He chose the moral path, following his own convictions."

"I thought his last words were, 'I drank what?'"

"Jeez! Quoting *Real Genius*? Are the only movies you watch science based?" We shared an easy laugh. Then a serious mood settled over me.

"So, Mike, how do we beat East?"

"Carefully." I just raised my eyebrow and he got it. Game time.

Not only did I miss the song again, I missed the next few as we talked The Game. We both

knew this game would define our high school careers and the pressure was on. The press and pundits were favoring our powerhouse rivals. We knew better. We just had to turn our thoughts into actions. We compared notes and observations, tried to poke holes in our game plan, and reviewed all we knew about East.

Shit. I missed the whole album!

“Mike, I need to get out. I promised Luke Nguyen I’d spot him in the weight room.”

“Dude! Cavorting with roundball dweebs now? Have you no shame?”

“Dude? Gone surfer on us?” We tried out game faces on each other. We broke up in laughter at the same time. “Let’s humiliate them, Mike.”

“Deal.”

I managed to haul my boneless butt out of the tub, dry off, and flow over to the weight room. Luke was finishing a set of leg exercises on the twelve-arm monster.

“Ready for a real workout?”

“Bench press,” he said with conviction. In a soft voice, “Don’t look, but we have an audience.”

I helped him put a respectable 100 kilos on the bar and managed to discreetly check out the voyeurs. Rosa and Becca, arms around each other, were blatantly checking us out, mixed with whispers and giggles. When they caught me looking, I got a big wink from each.

Rebecca

“Art? Posing?” Rosalee asked in response to Rashad’s questions, the hallway was it’s normal lunchtime zoo.

“Hi, Rashad,” I said, trying to pull myself back to the moment. Turning to Rosa, “Rashad and I are in an advanced art class.”

“Ah, makes sense. So, are you going to pose?” she asked me with a smoky look in her eyes. Damn!

“I hope not. I discovered a new depth to my painting yesterday. With this week being so crazy, the only time I’ve had in front of an easel is in art and during the early afternoon. I have to see if yesterday was a fluke or for real, so I really need time to paint.”

“Well, maybe you can pose for me sometime,” Rosa said. Rashad forgotten for the moment as our eyes locked and souls opened.

“Then, I have a request,” his voice breaking our interlude. “I’d like you to pose for me this afternoon.”

“I really need easel time, Rashad.”

“It’s a reasonable request.” There was something in Rosa’s eyes I didn’t quite get, but she was uncomfortable. With me?

“Rashad, another time, please?”

“We’ll talk in art,” he snipped. After a glare at Rosa, he turned and walked off.

“He’s creepy,” Rosalee stated.

“What? Rashad? No. He’s just an artist. We’re all strange.”

“The way he was looking at you. Creepy.”

“Is that why you tensed up?”

“Yep.”

“I thought there was something, I mean... You and me...” Damn! My cheeks are getting wet, again.

She hugged me and all my worries vanished. “It’s been a real emotional roller coaster for you this week, hasn’t it?”

“To say the least.”

“And, now I’m in the mix.”

“Yeah.”

“Should I be?”

“YES!” Oops. Too desperate. Breathe. Relax. Have fun! “Don’t you dare think about getting out of my life now.” She caught my grin, which broke the tension and got us to laughing.

Wrapping her arm around me, she leered and said, “Come with me little girl and I’ll teach you the ways of women.”

“Oh no, Auntie. I’m just a wittle girl.”

We laughed and giggled all the way to the gym. She held the boy’s locker room door open for me. “Right this way, orgy central!”

“Nooo! Anything but... S-E-X!” There were a couple of guys changing that just blushed, stared, and tried to cover the naughty bits.

“That’s okay, boys. Nothing we ain’t seen before.” Grabbing my hand, she pulled me towards the back. We entered a realm unlike anything on the girl’s side. Oh, we had offices and a couple of training rooms. This was like comparing a shanty to the Taj Mahal. Offices, training rooms, a room with huge tubs, meeting rooms... Wow! I guess it is true, football and basketball are the money sports. We settled into a room across from the weight room to watch. Luke was working on this... thing? Yes, thing with twelve arms! I got it. A resistance machine. Except, this was nothing like the ones I’ve seen advertised.

I took a good look at Luke, who was moving his legs. As he did, a few of the arms moved. He looked good. I wondered what My Mountain would look like doing that. Maybe later. I turned to Rosalee. “So, what are we?”

“Good question.” She looked deeply inside me and our connection came back, without the physical contact. “But, I’m afraid we’re moving too fast.”

“I-I don’t have a reference...” She felt me beginning to collapse and wrapped me up in her arms and love.

“I really don’t either. I’ve never been in love before.”

“Well, it sounds like we need to figure all this out together. And with Our Mountain.”

“I think he is yours.”

“It doesn’t bother me, you with him.”

“Thanks. I think it would be fun, but...”

“Not the main attraction?” We both giggled at that.

“I think you and he need to get closer before you and I do much more than kiss and cuddle.”

“Okay.” Why did I feel sad about that? How should I feel? Would I ever know?

“No, really. Any plans?”

I told her about my allies and my hopes and dreams for tonight. We glanced at Luke every now and then while she helped me plan. I’m sure there was more than one giggle shared. We shared lives. I was fascinated to learn about hers. Living overseas when she was really young, she is still fluent in German and Tagalog—having found Internet groups to keep her immersed. I like music. Luis loves music. Rosa lives and breathes music.

It was easy to tell her about my sex life. That took... 15 seconds! Okay, I had more to tell about this week. Prior to that, it was romance novels, the occasional story off the Net, and my fingers. She gave me a PhD level dissertation on hers. I know Luke must have thought we were nuts with all the laughing and giggling. Not to mention the occasional stare, checking out his fine, developing bod.

“Oh, goodie,” she whispered to me. “Your Mountain is coming.”

“Our Mountain.”

“I think for now, we should leave it as Your.”

“We’ll see.” Then he came into my line of vision. He was floating... No, flowing into the weight room. Relaxed. Muscles loose. Not like his “game face”, just relaxed. Rosa started to tell me all about what a wonderful ‘weapon’ he had between his legs. I blushed, giggled, told her what it felt like to hold it in my hand. She promised to help me deal with

something that large. We occasionally caught him looking at us, so we would wink or bat our eyelashes, then giggle and laugh.

Before things got too graphic, okay—before things got to the live demonstrations on each other, darn it, the bell rang. Time for PE for me, Trig for Rosa. I believe Luis had AP Political Science.

“Why don’t I meet you after art,” she said to me.

“As long as you don’t mind me painting.”

“I do want to see your work. If you’re busy, I’ll just work on homework.”

“I’d like that.” We gave each other a wink with a promise.

“Ladies!” My Mountain’s boom voice flowed into the room. I launched myself into his arms while Rosa snuggled up to my back. “Ummm... A Becca sandwich.”

“Delicious. Let’s start nibbling!” Rosa whispered into my ear, loud enough for Luis to hear. He kissed me while she licked and sucked on my earlobe. I’d been on simmer since before lunch. They just kicked me up to boil. Suddenly, we broke apart, Rosa grabbed his hand, and started leading him towards the doors.

“See you after art, cutie!”

“I’ll walk you to art, sweetie.”

I stomped my foot. “You can’t leave me like this! It’s unfair! Get me all turned on and just walk off! With each other!”

“Maybe now you’ll let someone help you out in the showers.”

They did come back and each gave me a tender kiss that promised a universe and lifetime of love. Damn them.

I squished my way towards the lockers to put up my bag and jewelry, vowing to have fun in the shower.

Luis

Rosa and I got into the hallway and just cracked up.

“That was mean. Fun, but mean.”

“Rosa, she’s been conflicted. At first, scared of the showers, then disappointed when nothing happened to her. Hopefully, she’ll be a bit more aggressive about it today.”

“As I said, fun but mean.”

“Yep, let’s go on to class.” We started down the hall, side-by-side.

“Are you going to ask for relief?”

“My next class isn’t one where, uhm...”

“No suitable volunteers?”

“Something like that. I know she’s going to have volunteers in the showers. She got really turned on Monday.”

“Will you get jealous?” she asked, looking up at me.

“Nope.” I felt certain of that down to my bones.

“Why not?”

“We’ve talked about it, this week I mean. And... I don’t know, just won’t.”

“Oookay. We can talk more about it later.” She looked up at me, “Would she get jealous of us if I gave you relief?”

I came to a full stop and looked over at her. “I thought we decided to hold off?”

She wrapped her fingers around Junior while wrapping herself around my side, pressing her tits into my side. “It’s just relief.”

“I don’t feel right about this.” Why did I have to groan in the middle of that!

“He feels just fine with it!” And it felt just fine to me. Maybe Becca would understand... Wait! “Besides, just think I’m some random girl in class, but not someone in the class you’re going to.” The lines wrapping around the classroom came to mind and almost tripped me over right then. “I’m just some winner of the lottery.”

“Rosal!” Her hand speed up, her thumb running along the top in my second most perfect place and giving a little swipe across the head on each stroke. Her fingertips tickled my balls as she approached my body. “I’m..”

My mouth stopped functioning. My hips began to meet her strokes. Somebody was making these incoherent sounds, kinda like grunts. Amazing! It was in time to her hand.

“I’ll take the blame, Luis. Now... Come for me! Spray your seed. Shoot on the floor. Let me see your sperm! Show me what you’re going to flood Becca’s womb with.”

“Oh, YES!” My vision tunneled and suddenly I was looking up at the ceiling. One, two, threeeee, four distinct pulses before everything just quivered and oozed for a bit.

“God, Yes! Nice. So much. So wonderful. Next time in my mouth!” She purred into my ear. Then she stood on her tippies and gave me a kiss on the cheek. “Thank you.”

Another student called out, “Clean up in aisle three!” It barely registered.

Finally, my voice began making coherent sounds as my breath slowed. “I should be thanking you. Do you want me to-”

“Nope. Not enough time. Besides, I don’t have a problem with potential volunteers in my next class. I might even ask for the lottery. Sounds like fun.”

“It’s unique. I’ve had a few guys in each line.”

“Not a problem for me.”

“I noticed!”

“Bad boy, now get to class. I’ll see you at Media Day.”

“You sticking around that long?”

“Becca and I are going to hang after her art and my music class. I normally stay late as well, it’s good practice time for me.”

“Yeah. Becca normally does as well. Well, see you at Media Day.” That thought brought me down.

“You don’t sound thrilled about it.”

“A bunch of reporters hoping I’ll fuck up and say something they can use as dirt? Yeah. Fun.” She laughed at me, gave me a quick kiss, and headed off. Damn, she had a nice ass too.

“Whoa! Are you and Becca broken up already?” asked a guy in my Poli Sci class as I walked in the door.

“Nope. We’re doing fine.” My smile came quite naturally.

“Cheating on her?”

“Nope. That’s her new girlfriend.” At least I hope we didn’t just cheat.

“Whoa, dude!” He had a look of admiration as he headed towards his seat and I found mine. Before the teacher called the class to order, it would seem that Becca, Rosa, and I were the main topic of whispered conversations, pointed fingers, and incredulous stares. This is going to be a long class.

Rebecca

How many different ways can you hit a volleyball at a naked girl? I’m not sure, but my personal experience is a lot! Not that they were hitting them right at me. Just enough out of my reach that caused me to jump, stretch, and otherwise bounce my boobs and display my other bits. Instead of turning me on, it settled me down.

Maybe I don’t need relief in the showers. I wonder if Rosa gave Luis relief? He her? I’d like to see that. No. I’d like to participate, fully!

TWEET.

At least this time, I remembered to head towards the boy's. I stopped by my locker and took off my shoes, grabbed a towel, and walked to the shower.

And stopped. Look at all those... dicks. Cocks. Wangs. Peckers. All shapes and sizes, with more than one saluting my entrance. This could be fun.

Yet...

Why was I thinking about Luis? About Rosalee?

"May I wash your back?" a male voice asked.

"Sounds reasonable."

"May I wash your front?" another male voice asked. I could only nod my head as the first set of hands began working the muscles of my shoulders.

While four hands caressed my skin, my mind shut off. I totally surrendered to what, not who. The feeling of rough hands across my nipples sent shivers up through my head, rendering me incapable of speech. Again, across the sensitive buds, and shivers shot through my stomach and down my legs, rebounding off my feet and ended up getting caught between my legs.

The hands on my back were massaging, relaxing, and traveling down over my ass. I found my legs opening without having to say anything to them. More hands were added to the mix. Some stroking my legs, adding to the fire already building inside me. Some on my arms, which led my hands to pulsing pieces of flesh for each. Satiny smooth on the outside and hard as iron on the inside. Instinctively, my fingers wrapped around them and began stroking, marveling at the texture. Hard, yet spongy. Then a valley and ridge before the end. A furry wall at the other end.

Hands stroking. Fires building. Moans echoing off the tile walls. Flashes of light through my eyelids. Grunts and hips rocking on either side of me. The water flowing over all of us, hot and sensual.

"Shit!" I heard on one side as a new warmth splashed on my legs.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” Came from the other side as threads of warmth splattered onto my side and hips.

“Oh! My! God!” A female voice echoed just before I stepped off the edge of the universe and my pussy exploded.

As light returned to my eyes and slowly became boys in the showers, I could feel hands holding me up on shaking legs. My brain couldn't push words out of my mouth, but I felt my jaw moving up and down.

“Thank you, Rebbecca.” Came from the hands behind me. It was echoed around the shower.

Slowly my legs began functioning again and my power of speech returned. “Thank all of you, that was nice.”

I did manage to get a quick wash, with a fair amount of help. I managed to help a few more appendages lose a load. I don't know why I find that fascinating. I guess because I don't have one. None of them hard were as big as Junior was soft, which made me wonder if I really, really could fit that monster inside me.

Oh well, I'll find out tonight, if all works out. My list of co-conspirators just keeps growing.

Dried and dressed—I put on my shoes and jewelry and with bag on my shoulder—I ventured into the hallway to find My Mountain waiting for me. He looked a little sheepish. I took his hand and started walking towards art.

“What's wrong?” Was it me? No. Get off that line.

“Umm... Rosa gave me relief on my way to the last class.” He looked cute with his head down.

“Good for her.” I slipped my arm around his back. I really did need longer arms.

“You're not upset?”

“After what happened to me in the shower, are you kidding?” He looked at me with a stunned look. “Even if it hadn't. I'm glad she did. You needed it.”

“Umm... thanks. So, what happened in the shower?” He did pull me into a side-by-side hug.

“Hands! Lots and lots of hands. And one very good orgasm on my part.” I felt my face warming with that pronouncement. Even after doing what I did, I was embarrassed about saying it. “Now I have to figure out how to work ‘*many pricks a popping*’ into my new song.”

It took him a second, but he finally got it and started to laugh. That deep wonderful rumble I love so much.

The requests came. Even when we separated, the connection was very strong and just intensified when we touched again. It didn’t even register when others touched me. All I felt was Luis, his hands, his lips... And, Rosa wandered in and out of my daydreams. Her kiss. Her touch, the way she had fondled my breasts.

All too soon, we were at the art room. Francesca was outside herding her cats. “Ah, my Nakeds. No posing today for you two. You,” she pointed at My Mountain, “need to get ready for the game. Right *connazionale*? And, you,” she pointed at me, “need to work on your new style. I’ll give you a minute.”

As she walked into the room, I melted into My Mountain. The hug turned into a kiss, the kiss into melding. Our hearts did their special dance, a Tango I think. All too soon and not soon enough, we broke. Damn. Squishy again!

“See you at Media Day?” He looked at me hopefully.

“Wouldn’t miss it. I’ll be there with Rosalee.”

We gave each other a little kiss, little for us anyway. Off he went after we patted each other on the ass. Okay, we caressed each other’s ass. I caught myself about to giggle as I walked into the classroom.

Francesca and Rashad were standing inside talking and looking my way. He was gesturing wildly and his voice tense and loud. “I made a reasonable request and she refused me.”

“Rebecca, could you join us?” Ms. Rotella beckoned me. “I understand you refused a request?”

“Not really, ma’am. Rashad asked if I was going to pose today, I said I didn’t think so since I needed to work on my new style.”

“I asked her to pose for me after class.”

“Again, I explained that I really needed to work on the discovery I made yesterday. This class and right after have been all the time I’ve had this week for my art.”

“You’re not against posing, then?” she asked.

“No ma’am. Just the timing.”

“Okay, we’ll work out a time. Would you be against doing it next week or later?”

“No.”

“I don’t-” started Rashad.

“Good. All settled. Rebecca, you go to work and I will join you in a minute.” I hurried off as soon as I could. I could feel myself dropping into the zone and didn’t need to be distracted right now.

I looked around my work area for a piece to work on. My eyes looked over at the blank canvases. I pulled myself back and tried to focus on an existing work I could change. Once again, the eyes wandered over to the blank canvases. I gave in and selected one that hadn’t been Gessoed and pulled out my oil paint supplies, palette, and brushes.

As I set the canvas in the easel, I could see the finished painting and the layers to get there. I mixed the pigments I wanted to start with, loaded the palette, and began applying it to the canvas. Except, I wasn’t just putting the paint on canvas, I was letting the emotions flow for each stroke.

This stroke, a careful line that will be the edge of a face. Sadness. Pain. A dream not realized.

Or, this one, the base of the logs in the fireplace. Warmth. Happiness. Home.

“You’ve still got it, don’t you?” Francesca’s voice floated into my world.

“Yes ma’am. I’m no longer adding colors and lines. I’m putting emotions on the canvas.”

“*Perfetto*,” she said while she leaned in to study what I had already done.

“What’s the music you’re playing?” I asked. It was... well, different. Something I’m sure Luis would love. I also found it wonderful to paint to.

“You like?” I nodded my head. “*Bene!* It is by Carlos Santana and Alice Coltrane and called ‘*Angel of Air/Angel of Water*’. It’s about a voyage of spiritual discovery.”

“Could you write that down so I can see if Luis has it?”

She nodded, then “Oh, how did the phone call go?”

“Phone call?”

“USC. Fine Arts department. Dean.”

“Oops.”

“Yes, oops. Now go into my office at take care of it. *Immediatamente!*” She wasn’t upset, just anxious for me to jump to it.

Luis

Glad to have escaped posing today, sorry to be away from Becca, and ready to get to work, I flew across campus to the gym. Through the empty girl’s locker room to drop my stuff and around to the men’s. Walking into the weight room, remembering yesterday all too well, I was stunned to see Coaches Mc, Ames, and Hammer standing there.

“Again?” I asked while my insides turned to jelly.

Coach McFarland looked stern, almost angry. Then, slowly, his face cracked into a smile. Coaches Ames and Hammer were about to fall over laughing at this point.

“Gotcha!” they all said and turned to leave.

“Damn it! That’s not funny!” I yelled. I suddenly wanted to break something, someone.

Throw things. Shit. I didn't need this.

“Remember that feeling. You're going to need it Friday night,” Coach Mc said as he walked away. Their laughter echoing around the halls.

Grumbling, I set up the twelve-arm monster and went to work on a “light” workout. I started with my neck and worked slowly down my body. Each major muscle group I worked until they were stretched and filled with blood. Finally, twenty minutes later, I finished the last reps with my ankles. Somebody was playing some old Stones, *‘Sympathy for the Devil’*. Yep. Now, who's the devil? Me? Or this fucking machine? East?

Rosalee?

Whoa! Where did that come from?

Focus! East!

Standing, I wiped myself down with a towel and looked in a mirror. All my muscles were pumped. Veins standing out on my arms. My legs looked like sculpted oak. My torso solid. Six-pack, hell. I looked like I had the full case or maybe a keg. Now, to pump the blood around and push out the toxins.

I headed outside and started running around the track. Normally, there would be only a few people about. Today, there were trucks and vans with satellite dishes and reporters everywhere. I ignored them as I built up my speed until by the fifth lap, I was hitting a solid stride.

A sprinter from the track team appeared next to me. “Going out for track?”

I gave him a snort, “Right!”

“You're not doing bad.”

“This is full speed for me.”

“Oh,” was all he said. He down shifted and disappeared around the next curve faster than Michael Schumacher in his Ferrari. I let my mind clear as I ran the next couple of laps. Just as I was starting the eighth and last lap for now, the sprinter reappeared. “Last lap?”

“Yep,” I simply said. Good thing I'm conditioned and could still talk. Sort of.

“Why don’t I pace you. We’ll build up to a final sprint.”

“Told you. Full speed.”

“Wimp.” And he moved out in front of me. I could swear he was taunting me. I kicked a bit harder and started closing the distance. Just when I could almost reach out and thump someone, he moved slightly ahead. I kicked harder. He moved away. Harder I kicked. As I was just about to grab his neck and see if I could detach it from his body, we flew across the finish line.

“Holy shit! Did ya’ see the speed on that big bastard!” a random voice shouted. That distracted me from slaughtering the sprinter. Suddenly, I realized there was quite a crowd around the start/finish line, including Coach Mc and two people that looked strangely familiar, but I couldn’t place right then.

I couldn’t think about that right now. I slowed to a jog and let my body begin to cool down from the flat out run to pump the toxins out. The sprinter tossed me a big thumbs-up before taking off again. Halfway around the track I slowed to a fast walk and the sweat started pouring off me. As I approached the start/finish line again, Coach Ames, the defensive coordinator, threw me a fresh towel.

“Nice run, Luis. Fastest 440 I’ve ever seen you do.”

“That sprinter got me a little worked up.”

“That was part of the plan.”

“Plan? It was a set up?” He just laughed. Damn! Shit!

“Go on and get dressed and come out early. I want you to work the blocking sled with me for a while before practice.”

“Sure thing, Coach,” I managed through gritted teeth. If he weren’t a coach, and a damned good one, some choice words would be running through my brain, probably out my mouth.

Rebecca

“How did the call go?” Francesca asked me as I came back into the main room.

“She wasn’t in so I left a message and my cell phone number.”

“What took so long?”

“Just chatting with her assistant. Perhaps you can tell me who let the Dean see a preview of my work?”

“She has seen some of your work? That is wonderful!”

“Francesca!! Do Italians have pixie myths?”

“*Folletto* is what we call them.” Her smile was about to split her face. “Now get to work. You want to be able to send them examples of your new abilities.”

“Yes, Francesca the *Folletto!*” I gave her a mock salute which she returned with a pixie-ish smile.

It didn’t take long to get back into my zone. I buried myself into mixing the oils from pigments, feeling the emotion and passion I wanted each color to evoke. Intentionally, I mixed some colors a shade off from natural, so they would push out from the canvas. Nothing the conscious mind would notice. After all, the emotions were part of the deeper mind.

Slowly the picture emerged from the layers of colors and lines. The palette of emotions. Sadness, joy in hiding, warmth, and a chilling cold. Normalcy, shock, with a layer of terror. Dreams suppressed and suddenly relived.

“Wow!” Rashad’s voice jerked me back to the present. “That’s intense.”

“Thanks,” I managed. So close. I’m almost done with the main scene. I don’t think I’ve ever painted anything so fast. It would be just a matter of a couple of hours to finish all the little details.

“Do you have time to pose now, since you’re done?”

“I’m nowhere near done,” I snapped. Couldn’t he see it? Wasn’t he an artist as well?

“It looks fine to me.” Was he whining? Was he that insensitive? Out of touch?

“I still have a few things to do with the main elements, then lots of details in the background that need to be there. I need to focus on this.” Just before I lost my temper, my cell rang. “Hello?”

“Rebecca Davis?” A cheerful, female voice said from the phone.

“Yes, this is she.” I was focused on the painting.

“This is Dean Ruth Massey of the USC School of Fine Arts. Is this a good time to talk?”

“Um, yes, let me just clean up for a second.”

“Painting?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“Please call me Ruth, Rebecca. Would you like me to call you back in five minutes?”

“Please call me Becky, Ruth. Five minutes would be great.”

“Talk to you then.”

I pulled to phone from my ear and just stared at it.

“Now do you have time to pose?” Sarcasm made the whines worse. “Or, are you just refusing a reasonable request.”

“Rashad, I told you that I would pose. Just not now.” I began wiping my hands. “I need to be ready for a call in a minute.”

“Who’s so damned important, then. Your boyfriend?”

“Ruth Massey.”

“Who’s that?”

“The Dean of Roski School of Fine Arts at University of Southern California.”

“Oh,” he mumbled as he stomped off.

Before I could even put down the rag I had been using to clean my hands, a student I didn't know approached me and handed me a note. She was gone before I could thank her. Opening it, I saw it was a message from the Dean of the College of Fine Arts at UT-Austin. More pixie action, no doubt.

“This is getting weird,” I told myself out loud.

“What is?” Rosalee said behind me. Almost shocking me out of my non-existent clothes.

“Luis says he's thinking USC and UT as his main schools.”

“Yes..”

“And, today I get calls from the Deans of the Colleges of Fine Arts at USC and UT.”

“Sounds like a bit of a conspiracy.”

“Or strange coincidence.”

“Right!”

“Okay.” Can she read my mind?

“I accused Ms Rotella of being a pixie.”

“Well, the day gets more interesting!” With a wink, she patted my butt.

Before I could respond, my cell phone rang. I held up my hand to her as I answered.

“Becky Davis,” I said into the phone.

“Becky, this is Ruth. Is this a better time?” Came the tinny voice from the phone.

*** End of Chapter ***

Coming soon : Part III (Wednesday) - Chapter 24 – “Fortunate Son”