

# Heiresses and Harlots

by anex

**Disclaimer:** This is a work of uber fiction. All the characters are mine even though they may resemble another familiar female dynamic duo. This story is my own work any resemblance to anything else is purely co-incidental.

**Sex:** There is reference to a romantic relationship between two women which is sometimes graphic. Go read something else if this is not your cup of tea.

**Violence & Language:** Some F words are here but not much. No real violence although a goldfish does meet an unfortunate end.

**Disclaimer 2:** No real goldfish were harmed in the production of this Uber Story.

**Teaser:** Darcy Edwards is a no-nonsense self made publishing tycoon, Cassandra Miller is a sassy and penniless hooker. A chance encounter sets the two on a journey of self discovery, friendship and love.

**Authors Note:** I live in the UK. I hope you will forgive any inaccurate references to places mentioned, I have not visited California in over 10 years. Constructive feedback always welcome: anex@hotmail.co.uk. Now on with the show...

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"Darcy! Glad to see you finally made it, I was beginning to worry" gushed MJ handing her best friend and most important client a glass of vintage champagne.

"Thanks MJ, sorry I'm late you know this place is a bitch to find. I got lost twice on the way from the hotel already." She smiled warmly and hugged her attorney and closest friend. "Congratulations by the way I'm really proud of you, and the house is spectacular." She gave MJ a carefully chosen and expensively wrapped gift for her house warming.

"You are completely NUTS!" yelled MJ when she opened the box to reveal the cheesiest looking snow globe ever made. It was a tradition the pair had started when they were poor college students to buy the cheapest tackiest gifts for each others birthdays and Christmases.

"I trust you'll put it somewhere of prominence in your lovely new home." Darcy added teasingly.

"It will go where I can appreciate it most of course - the bathroom." They both laughed. MJ met Darcy in Junior College and they became firm friends immediately. They attended and graduated Harvard together. MJ was celebrating her promotion to full partner in her law firm as well as moving into her stunning new beach house in Malibu. They had both done very well career wise.

Darcy was in LA for the week on business. Now the CEO of a successful publishing company she also had a string of other business interests on the side. In fact Darcy was recently featured in Fortune magazine as one of the top 50 most powerful business women in the US. MJ was currently helping Darcy acquire another company to add to her already impressive portfolio.

Darcy greeted and mingled for a while with some of the other guests she vaguely recognised whilst MJ was buzzing around playing hostess. She was not too keen on social gatherings these days but made an exception where MJ was concerned.

MJ eventually found a very bored looking Darcy on the veranda trying to deter the amorous advances of a young intern.

"Marcus! She's old enough to be your Mother!" Drawled MJ. "And in any case you are certainly not her type, now shoo." She glared at the young man who rather sheepishly backed away and left the pair of them alone.

"Sorry about that."

"Oh, don't apologise, although I was about to fake a seizure to get rid of him so it's a good job you showed up."

"I'll remember to have him killed tomorrow at the morning brief. Speaking of which; about your dinner meeting with Oliver Morris tomorrow night. We need to review his order contracts later... "

Darcy interrupted "MJ, it's Sunday afternoon, it's your party, try and relax for god sake. We can look at the contracts tomorrow. And besides you need to give me a 10 cent tour of your new pad seeing as how I probably paid for most of it in fees." Darcy had a very dry sense of humour and sometimes only her closest friend could tell when she was using it.

They all ate barbeque on the beach and played softball until MJ's delinquent mongrel dog joined in and decided to run off with the ball.

It was a very pleasant afternoon all around, but Darcy was itching to get back to her hotel. MJ walked her friend down the driveway to her car.

"Next time you're in town I expect you to stay with me OK?"

"Well I think I'll take you up on that, your place has certainly got the edge over the Regent that's for sure. I'll see you at the office tomorrow." Darcy hugged her friend goodbye and turned to get in her car.

"What's with the car Darcy, you having some early midlife crisis?" MJ gestured toward the gleaming dark blue Aston Martin DB9 that was Darcy's car.

"Something like that, I'm thinking about buying one so I arranged a test drive and they gave me this for the week. But I've got to tell you it's like Star Trek in here and I haven't got a clue how any of this stuff works yet" she motioned to the on board navigation system and plethora of dials and buttons. "It's great to drive though." She winked at MJ and put on her aviators as she started the engine, the supercharged v8 purred into life.

*Hmm... definitely early midlife.*

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On the drive back to the hotel her cell rang, it was her mother.

"Darcy, your father's been taken ill, he's had a stroke." Her mothers voice was shaky and broken. "Darcy, are you there?"

"Yes" came the emotionless response.

"Look", there was a long pause, they both knew this conversation could have been recorded and played back a thousand times to save them both the trouble. "I know it's difficult, I don't want to fight, but I think you need to see him, make your peace."

"I am already at peace mother, *he* still thinks we're at war?" Darcy could feel her jaw ache through her clenched teeth.

"Oh Darcy please, I'm begging you don't do this, not now," her mothers heart wrenching plea for reconciliation was falling on deaf ears and she knew it.

"If that's all I'll have to be going now, I'm not hands free and there are police everywhere." She flipped the small device shut abruptly ending conversation. Darcy refused to concede she was upset by the news of her fathers illness on some level. Her mother had always tried to find ways to reconcile their 10 year rift and Darcy allowed herself to believe this was just another elaborate attempt to do so. As she was contemplating the various schemes and angles of her mothers latest ploy she suddenly realised that she had taken a wrong turn and was now hopelessly lost, again.

Pulling the car over down a side street she turned the engine off and sat in silence for a moment collecting her thoughts. She had not spoke to her father since she graduated from Harvard and he had kicked her out of the house for being 'a fucking queer' as he put it. Her mind was now replaying the whole incident in vivid clarity and she fought to suppress the painful memories. She removed her sunglasses and pinched the bridge of her nose between her thumb and forefinger.

*Tap tap tap.* Darcy jumped out of her skin at the sound of someone knocking on the passenger window.

"Hey, you in there, looking for a date?"

Momentarily stunned by the unexpected intrusion and even more unexpected question Darcy was unable to reply. She simply stared, bemused, into the beam of bright green eyes peeking through a long reddish coloured fringe; eyes that were now fixed on her keenly waiting for a positive response.

When her wits had returned Darcy pressed a button in the centre console and the passenger window slid down 6 inches. "No, actually I... I took a wrong turn and now I'm lost" Darcy did her best to explain the misunderstanding.

"Sure you are honey and I'm Oprah Winfrey"

"No seriously, I'm lost. Could you please tell me how to get back onto Lincoln Boulevard, I need to get to the Regent Hotel."

"Sure can. For ten bucks" the girl cocked her head to the side and regarded the driver expectantly.

"I'm not going to pay for directions!" Darcy huffed incredulously at the audacity of this young woman.

"Suit yourself, but I ain't the one who's lost sweetie." The girl stepped back and leaned against a lamppost taking a compact out of her purse she casually checked her appearance and waited for her next trick.

Darcy feverishly pressed and poked an assortment of buttons and dials looking for the navigation system this car was supposed to be equipped with. She was usually pretty quick at figuring this stuff out but she was uncharacteristically flustered by the presence beside the car. *Fucking hell!*

"Alright" she eventually conceded with a frustrated sigh and the girl stepped back over to the passenger window.

"Hey, this a cool car, bet she handles really well" the girl smiled and leaned her forearms onto the sill of the door as she spoke, revealing a rather ample cleavage that Darcy couldn't help but notice straining at the forest green blouse.

"Here, look I've only got a twenty if you have any change I..." she proffered the note to the young woman

who all of a sudden opened the door and plopped herself in the passenger seat closing the door behind her in one fluid well practised movement. Leaving Darcy with that bemused expression again.

"For twenty I'll take you there myself!" She snatched the note out of the drivers hand, folded it into quarters and tucked it into her bra.

"Hey you don't have to come along, I mean, if you just tell me I'll find it." Darcy found the whole encounter somewhat overwhelming but she was also rather amused by the tenacity of the young red head.

"No way, it wouldn't be right, besides I've always wanted to ride in one of these." She wiggled her butt down into the soft cream leather seat and slipped her seatbelt on as if to close the deal.

*Oh my god, I've just picked up a hooker!* Suddenly a police siren sounded in the distance and Darcy panicked started the engine and floored the throttle. The car leaped forward with a screech of rubber on tarmac and they were off into the early evening sunset.

"What's so funny?" Darcy asked as she anxiously checked all her mirrors for signs of a hot pursuit.

"Geeze are you always so tense?" She continued to giggle.

"Well, you see, it depends on whether or not I'm being chased by the police for curb crawling!"

"Relax. I'm sure the police have much better things to do... next left" Darcy hadn't thought about the direction they were heading in until the instruction suddenly brought her back to the purpose of this encounter.

Darcy still had no idea where she was, for all she knew this slip of a girl could be a bunny boiling axe wielding homicidal maniac leading her towards a bloody and violent execution style murder. It was Darcy's turn to laugh at the preposterous set of circumstances she found her self contemplating.

"I'm Darcy by the way" she offered in the way of polite conversation and to ease the tension of the situation "And you are?"

"Candy" the young woman responded absently whilst fiddling with various buttons in the centre console. Suddenly a street map appeared on the computer screen in the middle of the dashboard.

"Shit! How did you manage that!" Darcy now seemed to have a permanently bemused expression.

"It's quite simple really. Oh this is fantastic, this car is amazing. Didn't you use the satellite navigation?"

"Would I be asking you for directions if I did? That can't be your real name either" Darcy commented sceptically.

"Okaaaay... what do you want my name to be honey?" Candy responded in her 'working' tone.

"Oh please!" Darcy rolled her eyes at the suggestion. "I'm not a... *client*, I'd appreciate it if you didn't use that tone with me." There was a few moments of silence.

"Cass, short for Cassandra. Now take a right at the lights."

"Been a *working* girl long?" Darcy was starting to wonder about this young woman, she assessed she was in her early twenties and was curious to know why she chose this particular line of work.

"Not really, only a few months. Now take a right and were on Lincoln, your hotels about six blocks on the left." Cass directed and didn't offer any more information.

The luxury sports car pulled up outside the opulent 5 star Regent hotel. A valet opened the drivers door and Darcy exited the vehicle opening the trunk to retrieve her briefcase. Her passenger was already standing on the sidewalk as Darcy came around the back of the car. The doorman hovered patiently behind them but sensing they weren't ready to come in yet moved back to his position.

"How are you going to get back?"

"I'll get a cab with my well earned 20" Cass patted her left breast indicating she had the cash.

"Cass, it has been interesting meeting you, and I thank you for your services" Darcy offered her right hand as was customary and natural to her.

Cass for her part had enjoyed her brief excursion and was almost sorry to say goodbye. She accepted the hand squeezing it warmly, smiling up into the bluest eyes she thought she had ever seen.

"Good bye Darcy, the pleasure was all mine" and with that she turned and walked away into the warm late summer dusk.

Darcy stood for a moment regarding her retreating form before going inside her hotel. She was about to go to the reception desk to check for messages when a sudden pang of curiosity struck her. She turned around and went back outside to find Cass sitting on a bench waiting for a bus.

"I thought you were getting a cab?" Darcy said as she walked over to where Cass was sitting.

"I decided to take the bus." Cass casually replied wondering why this woman really gave a damn.

"Can I at least buy you a drink then put you in a cab back to wherever you want to go?" Darcy felt slightly guilty the poor girl was having to get the bus all the way back from where she came. The sentence just blabbed out of her mouth as if some other person was talking, and she stood for a moment feeling awkward and foolish waiting for an answer.

"Sure, that'd be nice" the petite red head reached out and linked Darcy's arm to direct them both to a non descript bar across the street from the hotel.

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The bartender looked up from the sport section to view the couple that just walked in. Some tall drink of water in faded jeans and loose white cotton shirt and a small cheap looking broad in high heeled red boots, short brown skirt, skimpy green top and a bad red wig. They sat in a vacant booth in the corner and the bartender went over to take their order.

"Hi ladies what can I getcha?"

"Beer for me" Said the smaller woman.

"Same for me" Replied the taller one.

"Comin up" the bartender placed an undersized bowl of peanuts in the middle of the table and the smaller woman dived right in virtually emptying the contents in one go. The man just raised his eyebrows and continued pulling the beers.

"You want something to eat, my treat" Darcy offered and had to chuckle at the wanton display of snack lust.

"Well if your buying then sure, I'm starving, god these taste good." She chewed and savoured the small snack licking the salt off her fingers to complete the task. The beers were placed on the table along with another bowl of peanuts. Sure enough the same thing happened again and Darcy was wondering just how many bowls she could eat before she could be satisfied. Then the bartender sensing the smaller womans obvious need for sustenance asked if they would like to order something to eat.

"Yeah, I'd like a double cheeseburger with a side order of chilli fries, onion rings and a slice of blueberry cheesecake - er please" she looked back at Darcy to see if she was going to add anything to the ample order but she declined and the bartender went away with a curious expression on his face.

"I er, have a very fast metabolism" Cass suddenly felt the need to explain herself.

"Yes I see" Darcy was smirking as she took a good gulp of her beer.

They were comfortably quiet for a moment when Darcy's cell rang again. She flipped open the lid looking at the name flashing "Mel" and closed it again.

"Someone you don't want to talk to?" Cass nodded to the phone on the table and continued slugging and chewing.

"Yeah, you could say that" Darcy sighed and suddenly a cloud seemed to grow dark around her eyes. "My ex."

"Oh, wanna talk about it?" Cass was genuinely concerned and stopped what she was doing to convey her sincerity.

"Not really" Darcy, half smiled, half sneered, "I don't want to get into that right now" Darcy was not in the mood for talking about 'Melissa', she mentally spat the name out as she thought about her - *the mother of my child, the lover I had shared my life with for 5 years, the woman I had trusted, adored and who betrayed me in a way so Machiavellian even Shakespeare could not have written the plot.*

The food was placed on the table and sure enough Cass dived in again with even more relish than before. *When was the last time this girl had eaten?* Darcy's dark and shapely eyebrows were raised in amusement, she was enjoying Cass's obvious relish of a good meal almost as much as Cass was enjoying eating it.

"OK, I'll split a deal with ya." Cass offered after swallowing a huge mouthful of food. "I'll tell you how a poor little country girl from Austin, Texas" she chewed a bit more "winds up a hooker on the streets of LA. If you tell me about that phone call you just ignored" she pointed the half eaten burger at the discarded cell phone.

Darcy considered this proposition for a moment figuring she only had to impart the highlights and thought it a fair trade to gain an answer to the burning question she had had from the moment this curious character had jumped into her car.

"All right, it's a deal" Darcy once again offered the customary seal of approval and Cass accepted.

They ordered another round of drinks and Darcy switched to Jack & Coke with ice.

"Well, let's see... I'm your classic poor white trailer trash kid. My mom died when I was 2 and my dad was a drunk and a compulsive gambler, we moved from place to place constantly when he couldn't pay the rent or got in some kind of trouble. He ended up in prison for armed robbery and I went from one foster home to another. I got into a string of trouble in my teens, had an abortion when I was 15 and dropped out of high school. I lived with this guy for a while but we fought all the time, one day he beat me so badly I ended up in hospital with a broken jaw and three fractured ribs. When I got out of hospital I decided to get as far away from all that shit as possible.

My friend Shelly moved to LA for work so I joined her hoping to start a new life. But Shelly lost her Job soon after I arrived and we both desperately needed the rent so we took whatever work we could find, waitressing, cleaning stuff like that. It's hard to get permanent steady work that pays worth a damn in this town.

It's not exactly my lifelong ambition to be hooker, and you have to play by certain rules so it doesn't get to you. You know, I had dreams when I was a kid that I'd meet some handsome prince and live happily ever after. I've learned the only person you can rely on is yourself. There's no prince charming going to rescue me, I've got to rescue myself." She pondered this last statement for a moment with a sad hollow chuckle. "I don't believe in fate, I think we make our own destiny. So when I can scrape enough cash together I'm going to go back to college, finish my education and get myself the hell out of here and try to live a half way decent life. I'm not a bad person, I just don't think I got the best start you know."

"That's very philosophical of you" Darcy added and leaned back to take another sip of her drink.

"OK, that's my end of the bargain, what about yours." Cass was now devouring the blueberry cheesecake, in between eating the rest of her chilli fries. She offered Darcy a bite but Darcy again declined raising one dark curiously amused eyebrow.

"Hmm, well I met Mel when I was a Junior Editor at a publishing company in my home town of Chicago. I was 23, fresh out of Harvard with the media world at my feet. I excelled in my job and did very well for myself. Mel also worked in publishing and her star was on the rise too. We had a lot in common and got along really well, it was just a matter of time before we became 'involved'. Mel's parents were pleased when we moved in together - mine were... well let's just say that's another story. Eventually Mel wanted a family and we decided to look at the options, I had never really thought about it but the idea kind of appealed to me too.

It turned out that Mel wasn't able to have kids without a donor egg, so I of course obliged and we now have a beautiful 4 year old daughter called Gabriella." Darcy paused to show Cass a photograph of the tot with her at what appeared to be a fun fair. She was the image of Darcy, the same azure eyes and long dark hair.

Mel settled in to her role as a full time mother and I was working long hours often out of the country, starting up my own publishing company. One day I came home unexpectedly to find a strange car parked in our drive. I quietly went into the house, I don't know why I felt suspicious, but my instincts were correct. I caught Mel and her lover rolling around like dogs in heat in our bed with Gabriella asleep in the next room!"

Cass was leaning in listening intently her eyebrows were furrowed in a concerned manner.

"Well let's just say things got ugly after that and I am now in the middle of a bitter custody battle. Mel wants to move to England, that's where her boyfriend comes from. I can't let her take Gabriella away from me she's my whole life. She has tried every trick in the book to ruin me and my reputation to try to score points at the custody trial."

"Where is Gabby now?"

"*Gabriella* ," Darcy corrected "is with Mel, she has her until next weekend then I get her for a week. It's really hard explaining to a 4 year old the concept of why her two mommies aren't living together anymore. I try to protect her and be civil to Mel when we are together but with some of the shit she's pulled lately it's getting really difficult."

"Wow, that must be really hard to deal with" Cass's reaction was genuinely sympathetic.

"You have no idea, I miss my daughter terribly. Which reminds me" she sniffed briefly and blinked to clear the mist that had threatened to descend. "I need to call her to say goodnight" Darcy picked up her phone

and slid out of the booth over to the bar to make the call.

Cass could hear Darcy's voice raise in angry frustration as she obviously was trying to speak but the other person must have been ranting on at her, she figured it must have been Mel. Eventually she could hear Darcy's tone change into a soft smooth sweet voice as she spoke to her little girl.

"Hi Princess, have you missed mamma? Oh sweetie that's OK, I'll be home soon and we'll get you another one. He's in fishy heaven now with all his buddies... yes and Nemo's there too. I love you too Princess, be good, sweet dreams."

Darcy returned to her seat and ordered another round of drinks.

"So, what sort of *rules* do you have in your job?" Darcy said to change the subject.

"Well, its kind of a trade secret, but seeing as you are not a client I guess I could tell you but then again I'd have to negotiate a secret of yours in return" she bargained.

"I see, and just what sort of secret are we talking about." Darcy was amused by the young woman's ability to barter for information.

Cass thought hard for a moment. "Hmm, you'd have to tell me all about last time you had earth shattering bone crunching red hot monkey sex."

"What!?" Darcy nearly sprayed her drink across the room.

"Well, have we got a deal?" a cheeky pale eyebrow squirmed up above the red fringe.

"OK, but you'll have to go first, I may have to think about this." Darcy stirred her drink and took in the devilish little grin she was being offered.

"Fine by me." Cass was very amused at Darcy's obvious embarrassment but thought this was a great way to take her mind off her troubles.

"Let's see... The first rule, never ever kiss a client on the mouth, too personal. Second rule, there's the look - always wear something you would not normally be caught dead in. Hair, definitely not mine, makeup too much and attitude, well actually that is mine. Third rule always use protection and that includes a can of mace if things get out of hand. And finally, think about the money."

"So in other words you assume an alter ego?" Darcy added.

"Candy is certainly that, I doubt even my dad would recognise me if he were here right now. OKaaaay, now *your* secret." Cass finished and leaned forward in anticipation of Darcy's intimate revelation.

"Okaaaay" Darcy mimicked, "it was last New Years, I was skiing in Japan near Mount Fuji with friends. There was this Japanese chalet maid working at the lodge we were staying in. She was, as all Japanese appear to the Westerner, demure and courteous. To me she was a smouldering volcano of lust and desire, and very, very beautiful. She was my Geisha. Her name was Tei, meaning chaste and pure. But as it turned out to my good fortune she was quite the opposite.

I had twisted my ankle whilst trying to snowboard one day and returned to the lodge early. She was in my room turning down the bed when I limped in. I spoke a little Japanese and she asked me if she could look at my ankle. I took my sock off and lay on the bed. She preceded to massage my foot and ankle in a way that was both relieving and very stimulating. Her hands worked their magic up my calf and she asked if I wanted more. But the look on her face told me it was she who wanted much more.

Pretty soon she had me naked and writhing in passion as those magic hands touched places on my body I



never knew existed. The only problem was the walls in those Japanese lodges are literally paper thin! I think I must have caused an avalanche somewhere she made me scream so much."

"I knew it" Cass clapped her hands as she revelled in her accurate assessment.

"What?" Darcy was slightly flushed at revealing this intimate detail.

"You are a screamer!"

The bartender choked on his beer and looked away in embarrassment as he had been listening in on the conversation.

Both women laughed and Darcy had to admit she was indeed a 'screamer'.

"Well, it's getting late and I did promise you a cab." Darcy concluded with a sigh of regret the evening was drawing to a close.

"Oh, yes, I'd better be going, I'm supposed to be *working* you know." Cass too felt a pang of sadness she would probably never see Darcy again after this.

They both felt a strangely familiar connection, the evening had been a pleasant surprise and neither really wanted it to end just yet.

"Cass, look I know it kind of seems... well I said I didn't want to be a client but I've enjoyed your company and I wondered if you would consider staying with me tonight as a sort of... business arrangement if you like."

"I'd like that Darcy but I'm afraid I need to charge you the going rate. Shall we say... 200 bucks."

"200! How about 150." Darcy bartered.

"Deal" hands once again were shaken.

"I'd have paid 200." Darcy finally admitted.

"I'd have taken 100." Cass confessed.

"Shit!" they both cussed in unison and laughed.

They finished their drinks, Darcy paid the cheque and gave a generous tip and they left the bar.

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They crossed back over the street to the hotel. The doorman was waiting and tipped his hat to the two women as they walked up to the grand entrance.

"Good evening Miss Edwards" he said as he opened the door for them.

"Good evening Henry" Darcy politely replied and smiled warmly to the man pressing a note in his hand.

Once inside they headed to the elevator.

"Hold that for me would you" Darcy asked Cass as she pressed the button to call the elevator.

Darcy went to the front desk to check her messages. There was a document arrived from her office in Tokyo and a few phone messages, one from her mom and of course the obligatory one from Mel, saying the maid had walked out and Darcy had better get her another one. *Fucking get one yourself you silly bitch, you're fucking living in the house for chrissake!*

Darcy went back to the waiting elevator where Cass appeared to be in some sort of flirtatious conversation with a buss boy. She eyed him suspiciously and he blushed bidding her a good evening.

"I bet this place costs more per night than I make in a year"

"I wouldn't know" Darcy sounded a little on edge, she had been reminded again that Cass was indeed a hooker. A hooker she was now taking back to her hotel suite. She looked furtively around to see if anyone was watching them and then back at Cass who was gawping at the vast marbled lobby area dripping in classical art and exotic fresh floral arrangements.

The elevator arrived and an older couple got in with them. The old man was transfixed by Cass's obvious attributes, a distraction his wife had to jab him in the ribs for. Cass for her part found this quite amusing and adjusted those said assets rather shamelessly so that the old geezer got more than he bargained for. Darcy observing this interaction could only smile apologetically as the old couple got out on the 12th floor. The elevator eventually reached the top floor and Darcy exited promptly as Cass brought up the rear. Darcy pushed her cardkey into the door and entered the spacious and luxuriously appointed penthouse suite.

"Holy crap this place is like a goddam palace!" Cass couldn't help but gush over her surroundings. "Geez are you some kind of millionaire?"

"Yes" was the simple answer she received.

Darcy placed her briefcase and documents on a table and picked up her Wallstreet Journal to scan for news on the takeover her company was involved with. She then went over to the bar and poured herself a large scotch and handed a cold bottle of beer to Cass and said she should make herself at home before plonking herself down on an overstuffed sofa in the lounge area to read. Cass wandered around for a while figuring Darcy was busy she decided to use the bathroom.

*God the bathroom is bigger than my goddam apartment! This chick must be loaded, I can't believe my luck Shelly is gonna freak when she hears about this.* Cass checked her appearance in the mirror and noticed a small box of dental floss on the counter which she preceded to use after all she had just eaten. There was a gentle knock on the half open door and Darcy entered the room startling Cass so she spun around hiding the unsightly flossing material behind her back.

"I was going to order some room... what have you got there" Darcy was eyeing the young girl with suspicion. "Look, if you're into any kind of drug shit then I'm afraid you'll have to leave" her tone was fierce and she moved toward Cass to see what the girl was hiding behind her back.

Cass backed away but there was nowhere to go and Darcy pulled her arm forcefully around to see that she was clutching... dental floss.

"I, I'm sorry I thought it was..."

"Drugs? Cass cut her off "You think I do drugs." She laughed knowingly "of course you do, after all I am a prostitute and isn't that a big part of what we do, Hmm?" Cass grabbed her purse off the counter and pushed passed a very stunned Darcy.

"Cass wait, I'm so sorry I didn't think" She stumbled after her and managed to get in front of the door before she could leave. "Please, I am so sorry, I don't want you to leave on account of my over-reaction" there was a long uncomfortable silence.

"Alright, I won't, but I want you to know right now I've done some crazy shit in my time but I've never done drugs" Her green eyes flared and brimmed with tears. "Now, did you mention something about room service" A small smile crept back into her cherubic face and Darcy felt relieved her misunderstanding was forgiven.

"Ah yes, I was wondering if you would like some champagne and strawberries." Darcy offered in her apologetic state.

"Hmm, sounds weird but OK" Cass then proceeded back towards the bathroom to complete her dental hygiene task.

Darcy made the call and then opened up the balcony window to let the sweet evening air mingle into the room. She spent the next few moments gazing out over the city, she had stayed here on many occasions but never really looked at the view the suite afforded her over the valley and into the hills. She felt for a brief moment peaceful and relaxed, it was a familiar yet foreign sensation. She hadn't felt this way since... anyway it had been a long time and she knew it. She was shaken from her musings by a knock on the door.

"Room service" said a young mans voice.

"Come in" said Darcy noting it was the young buss boy from earlier who blushed again when Darcy made eye contact with him. "It's alright just leave the trolley there I'll sort it out" Darcy stated and pushed a twenty into the young mans hand for his services as she closed the door behind him.

She picked the bottle out of the bucket and read the label Moët & Chandon noting the year was not quite a vintage but pretty good nonetheless. Popping the cork she poured 2 glasses and carried them out to the balcony setting them down on the table along with the bowl of strawberries. She picked up her paper and went back out onto the balcony to wait for Cass.

Cass came out of the bathroom and found Darcy staring out over the valley below.

"A penny for them?"

"Hmm?"

"Your thoughts silly"

"Oh, well I wasn't actually thinking of anything really"

"Good, then I don't have to pay up"

They both chuckled and Darcy offered the tall champagne flute to her guest and raised her glass in a toast.

"To..." Darcy paused carefully considering this blessing for a moment and Cass tilted her head in anticipation. "Destiny" she concluded and Cass touched her glass to hers, the clear ting of the crystal rang out and the note carried off into the night air as the two women drank and acknowledged the other silently.

"Now, you must try one of these," Darcy offered Cass the fruit "strawberries bring out the full flavour of the champagne"

Cass popped one of the succulent red fruits into her mouth "Ooh, mmm that is sooo good" she was in rapture at the taste sensation.

And then it struck Darcy why she was so captivated by this young woman. She had forgotten what it was like to enjoy the simple pleasures and wonder of the world around her and somehow Cass reminded her she was alive after being dead for so very, very long.

"I'm glad you like them, here let me top up your glass" Darcy moved to get the bottle from inside and as she passed Cass gently caught her wrist in her hand.

"Why Miss Darcy, are you tryin' to get me tipsy?" She drawled in her best southern belle accent.

"Well Miss Cassandra, I do believe I am" Darcy retorted in the same well executed inflection and laughed.

---

They chatted comfortably giggling like two teenage girls at summer camp for the rest of the evening. Darcy looked at her watch it was almost 11pm and she needed to speak to her office in Tokyo. They had moved into the large lounge area and were watching old Lucy re-runs on tv and eating chocolates from the complimentary welcome basket that Darcy always received off the hotel but never touched until now. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to work now Cass, why don't you go have a relaxing soak in the bath and turn in, I'll be a while yet and I don't want you to wait up for me."

Cass was sitting cross legged on the floor surrounded by a pile of chocolate wrappers. Darcy thought she looked like a kid on Christmas morning. Then she thought about her 'Princess', and her heart ached to see her daughter again, she couldn't bear the thought of losing her in this spiteful custody battle Mel was waging with her.

Cass saw the pained thought flicker through those beautiful ice blue eyes "OK but don't work too late you need to get some rest." Cass stood up and shook herself down. She reached for Darcy's hand and with both of her hands gave it a warm squeeze. "I've had the best time tonight, thanks Darcy, I think you're an amazing person".

"I've had a great time too Cass, I've not laughed this much in a long while, I think you're amazing too." She lightly kissed the backs of Cass's hands and gave her a warm and contented smile. "There's t shirts and boxers in the top dresser draw" Darcy added. Cass acknowledged the offer and returned the smile and then left her alone with her work.

Darcy stretched out her lengthy frame and flexed her arms above her, she piled her long raven mane atop her head and held it in place with a grip. She switched on her laptop and reviewed her e-mails then began making a series of conference calls.

Cass closed the bathroom door, she could hear Darcy saying something that sounded like "mushy mushy" and then speaking in what must be Japanese, and thought it sounded quite... well... sexy. She turned to face her reflection in the mirror and started to remove her 'Candy' disguise - Boots, clothes, red hair and makeup. There underneath that entire garb was the young, sassy kid from Texas - Cassandra Miller. She felt foolish pretending to hide her identity from Darcy any longer, after all, who was she kidding - really. She showered instead of bathed and her thoughts quickly turned to Darcy. Cass had not met anyone like her, hardly surprising since she didn't move in her circles. But she felt more like being herself with Darcy, she was easy to talk to and very interesting to listen to. Charismatic and quite charming, she felt as if she had known this woman all her life. *Who am I kidding she's out of my league. But still... I'm here, maybe I'd better make the most of it, what the hell.*

She towel dried her long golden hair and ran a brush through it sleeking it back from her face and down the middle of her back. She wore a snow white soft terry robe with the hotels crest emblazoned on the breast pocket as she padded into the master bedroom. In the top draw were indeed an impressive assortment of t shirts and boxer shorts. She picked a cropped blue t with a superman logo together with red boxers and changed into them. Never a phone booth round when you need one. She chuckled to herself.

She wandered back into the lounge to ask Darcy if she wanted anything but she was gone.

She turned to see her stood on the balcony staring out into the void with a far away look in her eyes.

"Hey"

Darcy turned and nearly didn't recognise the figure standing there. *My God, She is beautiful, and I am staring, stop staring, now, stop it, say something.*

"Wow, you look erm... different."

"Yeah, I'm afraid I have to come clean and tell you who I really am... I'm superwoman!" Cass made a fist in the air and stood on one leg to imitate the flying motion.

"Ok, I believe you, just don't go jumping off any tall buildings." She motioned to the fact they were on the roof of a tall building.

"Is everything OK?" Cass moved along side the taller woman and softly took her hand in hers. It didn't take an Oracle to see Darcy was troubled. "Darcy, why don't you let me give you one of my patented massages, you look like you need to relax."

Darcy inhaled deeply, "well, I guess I could use it."

"C'mon, I know a good place we can go." Cass led her back into the lounge and sat her down on the sofa. Whilst kneeling in front of her she removed Darcy's shoes and set them aside.

Cass picked up her right foot and placed it in her lap, she pressed her thumbs firmly into the middle of her sole and pushed in and up to the ball of the foot. The skin she noted was soft and smooth and her foot was elegant and in proportion to her frame. *You are so beautiful and very, very sexy, Darcy Edwards.*

Darcy for her part was curious as to her true intentions but made no effort to resist. *I wonder where she's going with this, god she looks hot, wait... oh shit she's turning me on, hmm I suppose it is her job, what the hell...*

Darcy sighed deeply and moaned as Cass ministered to her appendage. *Very good, mmm, please continue...* Her eyes fluttered shut and as she sank into the cushions she was beginning to feel like she was floating on a cloud.

Cass attended to the left foot in the same manner now noting that Darcy was in rapture at her touch. She placed her foot flat on the floor and rose up on her knees lightly tracing her fingertips up Darcy's endless legs to the top button on her crisp white shirt.

Darcy's eyes flew open at the realisation but she didn't move or say anything, she simply gazed directly into those soft seductive verdant green eyes and understood what was being said without words, just actions. She acquiesced to Cass and closed her eyes again to enjoy the sensation.

Cass nimbly unbuttoned her shirt to the waist and peeled the material back to reveal a delicate white lace bra containing two perfectly pert, round full breasts in an unmistakably aroused state, and a washboard flat stomach to die for. Darcy's head fell back and Cass saw her cue to begin her assault. As the long elegant neck craned back Cass rose up seductively between Darcy's legs and placed a series of feather light kisses just below her left ear. "I want to hear you baby" she whispered into the delicate shell as she continued to pour soft molten hot kisses onto Darcy's neck, collarbone and upper chest. Her hands raked up Darcy's ribcage turning the area into a mass of gooseflesh. She then brought her hands round to firmly cup both breasts grasping the hardened tips she could hear Darcy vocalising her pleasure.

"Ah, yes, mso good" Darcy gasped as the assault started to gain momentum.

Cass deftly unhooked the front clasp releasing the now heaving chest from its lace restraint and immediately consumed the left nipple, biting, licking and gently blowing around the dusky rigid flesh. Releasing the hardened bud from its delicious assault she ministered the same attention to its twin. Then she traced the taught sinews around Darcy's throat with the tantalizing tip of her tongue, inhaling the unique scent and taste of her as she went. "Mm... you taste and smell sooo good. Now, you just relax, let me handle this, OK?"

"Ok" Darcy croaked, her body was in total surrender her mind was shutting down to everything but the sensations created by this beautiful creature. Darcy's hips involuntarily pushed upwards searching for contact against Cass's body. Cass pulled the zipper down on Darcy's jeans without stopping her oral exploration of Darcy's upper torso. She then proceeded to snake her right hand through the opening to cup Darcy's overheating sex.

"Oh baby you are so ready for me" Cass moaned as she licked and sucked the firm heated flesh of Darcy's stomach, dipping her tongue into the exquisite naval as she went. She could feel Darcy's underwear was saturated with her desire. She unbuttoned the waistband and easily slid the denim over Darcy's long smooth elegant legs and tossed them aside. All that remained now between Cass and her goal were the delicate white lace panties.

"Yesss, suck me baby" she listened to Darcy purr and whimper her pleas of encouragement. "God I want you inside me." Darcy grabbed a handful of Cass's soft golden hair to emphasise her point but Cass would not be rushed in her treatment. She gently nuzzled the damp crotch of her panties as her small hands gripped and massaged the firm muscular thighs. "Your so wet honey" she husked into Darcy's concealed sex, "I bet your pussy is aching for me isn't it?" Cass was luxuriating in the obvious torment she was meting out.

"Yeah it's aching for you... Cass... pleeeaaase..." Darcy felt she would explode if she wasn't touched and just then she felt Cass bite her hard through the lace barrier sending a shockwave that lifted her entire body off the couch and made her cry out in ecstasy. Cass's hands made light work of removing the small garment just at that moment revealing the core of this tall beauties desire.

A thin strip of dark curls glistened in the glow of the muted tv, *mm Brazilian... I like that, can't play sports in long grass.* Cass quickly moved back up to Darcy's face "Look at me." Cass commanded seductively and Darcy obeyed through her aroused haze. "I'm gonna make you cum so hard, your gonna scream for mercy - got it." Cass's green eyes flared darkly in emphasis and Darcy weakly nodded in submission. Their eye's were locked into each others and Cass was momentarily tempted to throw all caution to the wind and kiss this gorgeous creature senseless - *No no no Cass, not good... you've already broken several rules tonight don't go there you're gonna get hurt.* She somehow reined in her desire and sank back down to fulfil her promise.

And what a promise it was. The first touch was barely a breath but Darcy sensed it like a bolt of summer lightning. Her thighs spread wider and her toes curled reflexively into the deep pile carpet and she sank back down ready to drown in this exquisite act that was about to be performed on her. Cass gently parted her slick outer lips with her thumb and forefinger keeping her other hand firmly squeezed under Darcy's tight round butt. "Ready?" She questioned wantonly.

"Yes... do it" begged Darcy.

Cass then made one deep powerful stroke from back to front with her tongue savouring Darcy's delicious flavour for the first time. Darcy cried out at the contact. "Mmm, you taste so good baby, I'm gonna have to eat you with champagne sometime" Cass suggested.

"Promise... me" Darcy cried between ragged breaths.

"Oh I think I can safely promise you that" Cass purred as she started to explore proficiently Darcy's most intimate places with devastating accuracy.

Darcy's pelvis undulated in time to the steady pace Cass was setting, she could feel the familiar pre-orgasmic sensation starting to build in her nerve centre. She became more vocal and Cass sensed she was climbing to the edge. Cass slowed momentarily working two fingers steadily around her opening before plunging into her heated shaft with force. Darcy bucked and thrust herself onto Cass crying shamelessly for more. Cass played with her like she was conducting a symphony, touching and teasing her body in chorus to a lustful melody she knew very well. As she added a third finger to the fray she felt Darcy beginning to climax.

Seizing her hard swollen clit between her lips she sucked and stroked it firmly with the flat of her tongue, curling her fingers upward seeking that sensitive location inside to maximise the sensation. She sent Darcy crashing over the edge into a blinding pulse of light. Darcy sang her release and then fell back into the paralysing oblivion of post orgasmic bliss. She could feel her cum soaking the fabric of the sofa.

"God that was so intense!" Darcy managed to utter whilst raggedly exhaling.

"Oh boy, you really are a screamer" Cass licked and savoured the juices from her lips and chin.

"Wow, you really are superwoman" Darcy quipped as she reached out to pull Cass up into her arms.

They snuggled up silently together on the sofa in the afterglow of the carnal act they had just performed. Cass was highly aroused but strangely content to lie in the arms of this enigmatic woman.

When Darcy moved to reciprocate Cass gently declined and insisted they went to bed so that Darcy could rest - so Darcy reluctantly agreed, and soon they were both fast asleep contented in each others embrace.

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Darcy woke to find Cass draped across her still dressed like superwoman snoring lightly, she carefully extracted herself and slid out of the bed and went into the bathroom. She looked at her reflection in the mirror casually at first and then did an almost comedic double take at the huge hickey just above her left breast. Oh shit! Nice Darcy very classy, the little minx really made a meal of you last night didn't she? Hell I practically begged her - who am I kidding. Best 'bone crunching' - what did she call it? - 'red hot monkey sex' I've had in a long time though.

Darcy laughed to herself and shook her head, she turned the lever in the shower and stepped in. As she was lathering her lower regions she noticed more evidence of the previous nights passionate encounter. My god what has she done to me. She touched the various marks and scratches she had accumulated thanks to Cass. She luxuriated in the pummelling heat of the water for a few moments and let her mind wander back to last night.

However, she soon realised her conscience was beginning a war with itself. On the one hand Cass was a hooker, someone who Darcy had picked up off the street - albeit mistakenly. On the other hand Darcy felt a strong connection to Cass, she was comfortable around her, she felt a sense of peace and happiness she had not felt for a long, long time. She reasoned that she was riding an emotional rollercoaster with her family and work was her only escape. But she also found an escape in Cass, she found she could talk and laugh and release her emotional energy. It was uncomplicated and very freeing and Darcy discovered she needed it, she needed Cass just now. Her decision was made.

She finished showering and went back into the bedroom to find Cass still fast asleep. She dried her hair and went to the closet to pick out a suit and shirt.

As she dressed a sleepy voice asked the time. "It's almost 7am" Darcy sat on the edge of the bed to look at the mussed pile of blonde hair and sleepy green eye's peeking over the covers. My god she's adorable.

"There's a 7 in the morning now too?!" Cass croaked.

"Absolutely is and I've got to go to work."

"Ok... I'll be up and out of here before you go and..."

"Cass" Darcy interrupted "you don't have to go, in fact, I've been thinking." She paused trying to find the right words to phrase her next sentence. Cass sat up yawning and rubbing her eyes. "I'm in town until Sunday. I've got a few social engagements this week and I'd very much like it if you'd stick around and accompany me. I'd compensate you very well for your trouble. I just need..."

"Just how much 'compensation' are we talking here" Cass interrupted and had to mentally pinch herself to make sure she hadn't dreamed all this.

"Well, lets say 500 a day plus expenses ought to cover it" Darcy offered feeling unusually nervous.

"Hmm, I'd have to give it some serious thought and check my schedule." Cass said sarcastically referring to her lack of social engagements.

Darcy didn't realise the joke due to her sudden feeling of anxiety. "Oh, I'm sorry I didn't realise you..."

"I'm just kidding with ya, what did you think I'd say - NO!"

Darcy let go of the deep breath she didn't realise she'd been holding. "That's great." Wow where did that come from, what the hell is wrong with me?

She reached into her purse and pulled out a thick money clip, counted out the full amount including last night's fee and placed it on the bedside table. "I'm going to be gone most of the day, I'd like it very much if you'd take this and go get yourself something elegant to wear for dinner this evening", Darcy gave Cass another 500 dollars then arose from the bed to finish getting ready.

"Darcy, this is all so, so overwhelming, I don't know what to say..."

"I just want you to have fun OK, and whilst you are here as my guest please treat the place as your own. Here's a spare key, when you are ready to go out, ask the front desk for a limo driver and they will take you any place you want to go, I'll see to it before I leave." Darcy rose off the bed toward the door.

"Hey Darcy"

"Yes?"

"I'm gonna treat you so good you're not gonna want to let me go."

Darcy smiled at the young woman and then said with a more serious tone "At 3000 dollars plus expenses I'd expect a good time. Oh and Cass, I will let you go."

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Darcy approached the front desk and was greeted by the Manager, Mr Montague. A portly man with a faux English accent.

"Good morning Ms Edwards, I trust everything is in order?"



"Yes Mr Montague, excellent as always. I have a guest staying with me, she's my erm cousin (Good one Darcy - very convincing) and I want you to make her as comfortable as possible whilst she is here, anything she wants put it on my account."

"Of course Ms Edwards. And will your erm cousin be staying with us long?"

"Until Sunday. Please can you have my car brought around now" Darcy tried to act as nonchalant as possible.

The Manager did as he was bid and Darcy exited through the main entrance to await her car.

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Darcy met with her board of directors at 8am. The board had reviewed the proposal Darcy had drafted for the acquisition of Morris Distribution Inc. The takeover bid was hostile and Darcy's investors were nervous about it. 15.2 million was no small amount to ask but Darcy's case was compelling and persuasive. With approval from the board and major shareholders Darcy's plan would swing into action by the end of the week.

MJ arrived promptly at 10am to review the order contracts as discussed the previous day and found Darcy humming to herself as she walked in to her friend's spacious office.

"Well someone's in a cheerful mood this morning." MJ placed a stack of files on Darcy's desk.

"Oh? no more than usual." Darcy was sitting casually in a large soft leather reclining chair idly scanning through the daily financial reports.

Amy, Darcy's assistant came in with a tray of cups, assorted biscotti and a steaming cafatierre of freshly brewed Java. Darcy thanked her and the pair sat down at a large black marble meeting table to discuss their business.

MJ always the professional got straight down to business and launched into a pile of legal documents. But it soon became apparent that Darcy was not totally focused on the task at hand.

"All right, spill it Edwards" MJ always referred to her friend by her surname when she was being playful. "What's going on?"

Darcy simply feigned an innocent look "I guess I just got out the right side of bed this morning for a change."

"Oh yeah, who's bed?"

"Well, Morgan Jane Sinclair aren't we presumptuous this morning." Darcy used MJ's full name as was customary in their banter. Darcy enjoyed keeping little secrets from her friend just to tease her mercilessly knowing how MJ hated it. Of course she always spilled the beans but this was something she wanted to keep to herself for now. MJ would just have to endure this torture a little while longer until Darcy was ready.

---

After Cass was showered and dressed she called room service and ordered a full cooked breakfast with all the trimmings. As she chomped her way through bacon, eggs and pancakes she remembered to call Shelly and tell her about their good fortune. She thought it would help both of them out after all Shelly was always

there to lend her a few bucks when she needed it.

"Hi, listen your not gonna believe where I am..."

"Where the hell did you go last night, I thought something terrible had happened to you and Jimmy's going nuts for the rent!"

Cass managed to calm her friend and explained all about meeting Darcy and the retainer she was being paid for her services.

"Holy shit we're rich!" cried Shelly down the end of the phone so Cass had to hold it away from her ear.

"I'm going to leave some money for the rent at the front desk for you to collect OK. And Shelly, where do I go to get something nice to wear for dinner?"

"Honey, there's only one place you can go in LA - Rodeo Drive baby!"

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Cass handed the envelope with the rent money to the reception clerk who regarded her rather too snootily for Cass's liking. She asked for a driver and the clerk acknowledged but then made a rather covert phone call to someone and then turned away to shuffle some papers. Cass drummed her fingers on the desk impatiently and waited for her ride.

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Cass stepped out of the limo and asked the driver to meet her back here in 1 hour. She wandered down the street looking in the windows and marvelling at the beautiful people all around her. Eventually she plucked up the courage and went inside a boutique that seemed somehow less threatening than the rest. Cass browsed a few items and noticed there were no price tags on anything.

"Can I help you?" came a haughty sounding voice from behind her.

"How much is this?" Cass enquired pointing at a smart evening dress on display.

"Oh, I don't think that's your size."

The woman was obviously a galactic bitch thought Cass. "I didn't ask what size it was I asked how much it was."

"I don't think we have anything here that would suit your taste" she smirked at several of the other sales assistants who had gathered to witness the 'scene'.

"Ah, I see, well I guess I'll just have to take my custom elsewhere then." Cass was seething but she figured that she would keep her dignity and left without causing a scene.

Her limo was waiting as planned and took her back to the hotel. Inside Cass was boiling but she didn't want to breakdown in public and willed herself to suck it all in until she could get back to her room.

Cass stormed through the lobby to the elevators and pushed the call button several times pleading with it to hurry up as she feared she could not hold the dam of tears back any longer.

"May I help you Miss?" The hotel Manager suddenly appeared from nowhere.

"Erm, no you may not." Cass responded indignantly, things were going from bad to worse and now she was being harassed by the goddamn 'sphincter police' for no reason.

"Are you a guest with us at the hotel?" The chubby man persisted.

"Yeah actually I am, I'm staying in 2525" Cass was now getting very annoyed and upset.

"Then would you mind stepping this way" the Manager extended his arm towards a door off to the right of the reception area and Cass grudgingly obliged.

Once inside what must have been the Managers office she could tell she was going to be in for some sort of lecture/interrogation so she prepared herself for the confrontation breathing deeply to steady herself.

"I would like to offer my sincere apologies for any embarrassment Miss...?" the Manager began.

"Miller" Cass offered her surname figuring this pompous ass was gonna get some before the cops got here so what the hell.

"You see Miss Miller, your 'cousin', Miss Edwards, has asked me to ensure you are afforded all the facilities of our Hotel during your stay. And I just wanted you to understand that we at the Regent are very proud of our reputation, and Miss Edwards is a very important guest, so we are prepared to overlook certain policies to accommodate her wishes. However, I take it you will not be returning to the Regent once Miss Edwards has left?" The Manager's tone was very cordial but his point was clear.

"I guess I won't" Cass gave him a green glare that could have burned a hole through steel.

"Then I'm glad we understand one another." The Manager could see the girl was upset, her eyes were brimming with unshed tears and her hands were wringing together nervously

"Is everything alright Miss Miller?" Mr Montague's tone had softened when he could see the girl was on the verge of tears.

"No" choked Cass "Things are far from fucking alright" and that's when the dam broke, Mr Montague offered the sobbing girl a handkerchief which she used thoroughly. After a few moments collecting herself she told the Manager about her humiliating shopping experience.

Mr Montague listened intently and then picked up the phone and dialled a number.

"Oh, that's just perfect, go ahead call the cops then see if I care! I've got..." Cass was getting ready to rumble when suddenly;

"Ladies department please" Mr Montague smiled warmly across at the young blond who had completely frozen in mid sentence.

"Bridget, hello it's Bernard, listen I need you to do me a small favour" Cass listened to the conversation in stunned silence.

Barney - as Cass referred to him thereafter - had arranged for the limo to escort Cass to a department store across town where he assured her she would be treated with the utmost respect and her evening attire issues would be resolved.

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Cass was putting the finishing touches to her hair and makeup when the phone rang.

"Hi Darcy, I'm almost ready" she listened to the soft silky voice on the other end of the phone and felt a sudden shiver down her spine.

"I'm running late, I'll meet you in the cocktail lounge at 7pm and we can go to the restaurant straight from there" Darcy finished the conversation and smiled to herself at the prospect of seeing Cass again, she had thought about the girl on and off all day and the anticipation was, well, frankly intoxicating to her.

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The lounge was bustling when Darcy entered just before 7.15pm. She scanned the room but couldn't see any sign of Cass, as she approached the bar she was instantly struck still by the vision that turned to greet her. Cass wore a simple classic black silk cocktail dress with matching organza wrap draped loosely around her alabaster shoulders, her hay coloured hair was piled up atop her head with a few delicate wisps framing her flawless beauty. She smiled broadly when she saw Darcy.

"You're late" Cass gently chided.

"And you are stunning" Darcy offered in complete awe at the beautiful woman standing before her.

"You are forgiven" the petite blond reached up to kiss Darcy politely on the cheek.

The pair left for dinner together with quite a few appreciative looks from several patrons as they went.

---

The dinner meeting with Morris had been a tense affair which was not entirely unexpected. Cass had been the only highlight of the entire evening for everyone including Morris's son Taylor who flirted shamelessly with the Texan beauty much to Darcy's annoyance. On the ride home Cass babbled endlessly about the exquisite food and the fancy cutlery and how fabulous she felt in her elegant new outfit.

"Did you see me in there tonight, I was a maniac" Cass was going to joke about the snail flinging episode when she realised Darcy had not been listening to a word she had said since the time they got into the limo. "Hey, are you mad at me for something?" beat "Darcy, you in there?"

"Oh, yeah, sorry I guess I'm just tired" Darcy was wrapped in a shroud of deep contemplation. She had been thinking about Taylor and Cass, when her mind should have clearly been on the acquisition of the Morris empire. Instead she wasted the entire evening in a seemingly jealous haze, and for that she was annoyed with herself.

The two women returned to their suite without any further conversation. Cass could see Darcy was brooding over something and thought she'd better make herself scarce so she went in the bedroom to get ready for bed. She stood for a moment in the full length mirror and took one last look at herself before she changed. "Another disguise Cass, what do you call this one, Cinder-Freakin-Rella?!" she mocked herself aloud and sighed at her reflection.

"Cinderella's got nothing on you" Cass jumped when she heard Darcy's low smoky voice, she turned to see her leaning casually against the door frame to the bedroom, a jack and coke swinging loosely at her fingertips.

Darcy slowly walked over to where Cass stood in front of the mirror, she offered Cass a sip of the drink

which she took. The ice chinked in the heavy tumbler as Darcy gently took the glass from her and placed it on the night stand, Cass watched her intently and didn't move. Placing her hands gently on the young woman's shoulders Darcy turned her back to face the mirror once again. Cass gazed passed her own reflection to look at Darcy now standing behind her, tall, dark, beautiful with eye's like chips of ice regarding her hungrily. Darcy bent her head and grazed her lips in a gentle kiss on Cass's bare ivory shoulder.

Cass closed her eyes and inhaled deeply at the tender touch. She felt a strange energy building up inside her and an overwhelming compulsion took over. Before she knew what she was doing she turned around to face the dark woman who's arms now enfolded her. Darcy's eyes asked the question and Cass's lips spoke the answer with an exquisitely passionate and sultry first kiss. Cass was quickly lost in the sensation, her primary rule all but a distant memory as she submitted to her heart and her desires. Lips and tongues gently questing, exploring this warm un-chartered territory.

The kiss was perfection. Darcy too was lost to its power and as the contact deepened she felt her soul had been returned to her. Darcy reluctantly broke the kiss to gaze deeply into Cass's eyes, she saw the same realisation reflected back at her. Both women knew this was more than just a kiss, they had both crossed over an invisible boundary into a foreign land. Each realising they had never been to this place before, but somehow it felt like coming home.

Eventually they parted.

"Your trembling." Cass whispered.

"So are you" Darcy observed with a slightly chaste smile.

Darcy delicately brushed the thin straps of Cass's dress off her shoulders with her fingertips, replacing them with more gentle kisses. Next she reached behind Cass and slowly peeled the zipper down as she nuzzled at Cass's pulse point sending shockwaves of desire down the young blonde's body. The dress slipped effortlessly like water to the floor and pooled around Cass's slender ankles. Cass was not wearing a bra, her young nubile breasts made such a device redundant. The delicate lace panties soon followed suit. Cass made an attempt to remove her high black satin heels. "No" breathed Darcy "leave them on." The tall beauty took Cass's hands and guided them to her lips where she kissed them slowly, reverently, "now, undress me."

Cass did as she was asked, and leisurely removed her tall lover's bespoke Saville Row shirt and trousers to reveal a body almost divine in its construction. The young woman paused to drink in the naked form that exuded sexuality and strength such that Cass had never thought possible. Darcy smiled playfully at her admirer.

"You like what you see?" Darcy's velvety voice lowered a full octave accentuating her desire.

"Very much" Cass purred and leaned in for another hot searing ardent kiss. Her body now completely awash with sensation and hunger for the tall goddess.

Darcy again reluctantly broke the torrid kiss and turned Cass back to face the mirror. She released the pin securing the blonde's locks and allowed them to tumble freely around her shoulders. Darcy inhaled deeply as she nuzzled the flaxen bangs as if she were taking her last breath on this earth. Parting enough of the locks to expose the creamy elegant neck Darcy began lightly nipping and kissing the exposed skin. Her strong hands glided gracefully over the smooth muscled torso of the petite woman in front of her who arched instinctively against Darcy's naked body seeking more of the exquisite contact, drawing ragged whimpering breathes as she went. Cass reached her left arm back over her shoulder and threaded her small fingers through the long midnight tresses.

Cass' eyes were shut tight, Darcy wanted her lover to bear witness to the physical act being performed on her. "Watch what I am doing to you" she husked in the smaller woman's delicate ear. Cass' verdant eyes

flickered open as Darcy brought her hands around to caress and massage her aching young breasts. Cass' legs were weakening she wasn't sure how much longer she could stand. She moaned at the exquisite contact, her sex pulsed wildly coating her inner thighs with her need till they glistened in the soft low amber glow of the table lamp.

Darcy pushed her firm breasts into her back whilst simultaneously pushing her own dripping wet sex into her lovers firm cheeks. She tightly gripped her strong fingers around the protruding pelvic bone and ground herself into the warm pliant flesh of Cass's sweet cheeks groaning loudly at the erotic contact. "I want... to watch us... come together" Darcy gasped in between the pre-orgasmic spasms that were ripping through her. Cass's head fell back as Darcy's right hand released it's grip and snaked deftly between her molten folds causing Cass to cry out in ecstasy. Her clit spasmed needily as Darcy's talented fingertips stroked and fondled the swollen bud.

"Oh baby I need to feel you too" Cass reached her right hand behind her to seek out the centre of her lover. Darcy cried out immediately as she felt the pressure being applied to her own throbbing clit. "Mmmsowet" Cass murmured unable to make any noise fully coherent as her body began its ascent into orgasm. Their fingers softly pumping into each other becoming more urgent as the need for release beckoned.

Their bodies danced wantonly to the intense sexual rhythm "Iwannacum!" Cass panted as she watched the scene play out in the mirror like some hot porn video.

"YES! Oh god Cass, let go" Darcy cried out as she felt the sudden jolt of her orgasm blast through to a billion nerve endings all at once.

The earth shattering sensations sent the two lovers crashing breathlessly in to a heap on the floor. They lay there for several minutes holding each other in silence, each listening to the others breaths and pounding hearts.

Eventually the spent pair moved onto the bed, their body's moulded into each other. They kissed and held each other until the night drew its final breath and extinguished the stars.

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Darcy woke suddenly to daylight pouring in through the bedroom window, and the phone ringing incessantly. She squinted at the clock. "Oh, Fuck!" she yelled making Cass groan and shift increasing her tight grip around Darcy's lean torso. "Cass, Cass honey, I'm late for work, I've got to get up." Darcy pried her young lovers arms and legs off her and hurried naked to the bathroom, whilst talking on the phone to a very worried MJ. Cass slept on, substituting the real Darcy for a Darcy scented pillow.

Darcy scribbled a note and left it on the nightstand. She took a brief moment to gaze at the woman who was quickly consuming her heart before she gathered her things and left for the office.

---

On the drive in to her office she made several frantic phone calls. She had left her phone on silent when they had gone for dinner last night and had 12 missed calls and several messages from various people. One interestingly from Morris who had called her to say he wanted to discuss the details of her proposal today at her office. She had set up the meeting for 2pm via MJ.

Her mother had rang to say her father was still in hospital but they might be letting him out tomorrow. Yeah like I give a damn. And Mel had rang to say the custody hearing had been postponed for a further 6 weeks and that Darcy had better not be trying to bribe anyone into burying the matter altogether blah blah blah Darcy deleted the message before she got to the end of another Mel tirade.

It was 10am when Darcy eventually got into her office and MJ was waiting for her.

"Darcy, is everything OK?" MJ enquired again not satisfied with the answer she got on the phone earlier this morning. "Are you sure you're not coming down with something?"

"I'm fine MJ, just a little overtired I guess" Darcy walked and talked grabbing a cup of coffee on the way into her office.

"Could you possibly have a case of the blonds?" MJ cracked nudging Darcy's shoulder as she shuffled through some papers.

"And just what do you mean by that!" Darcy raised her left brow incredulously at the accurate diagnosis.

"Morris said you were accompanied to dinner last night by a very attractive and charming young blond." MJ waited to see the reaction but Darcy kept her poker face. "Apparently, she had Taylor wrapped around her little finger and he convinced the old boy to take your proposal seriously. We should give her a job, what did you say she was called?"

"I didn't, and don't think for a minute you are getting any sordid details." Darcy cut her off. She realised things were getting out of hand. What had been a casual fuck with no ties was certainly not what it was turning in to. The mention of Taylor's name brought back a jealous pang and for a moment Darcy felt angry. "I need to be alone for a moment MJ, please have Amy hold all my calls."

MJ recognised the tone and backed off closing the door behind her. Darcy looked out of her window onto the man made lake. Several geese were settling on the water and the sun glinted off the surface like a million diamonds. What is wrong with me, I'm fucking bird watching instead of closing the deal of the fucking century. I need some space to sort my head out.

Darcy walked out of her office without a word to anyone, MJ caught sight of her leaving but Amy said she had no idea where she was going.

Darcy drove through the valley and up into the foothills of the sierra range. She deliberately turned her phone off and had no idea where she was going. She felt small and lost figuratively and literally, her focus and control were crumbling and for the first time in her life she had no idea what she was going to do about it.

---

Cass awoke around 11am - which was still quite early for her. She stretched luxuriantly like a cat and revelled in the very recent memory of last night with Darcy. Her scent lingered heavily and gave Cass a strong visual flashback to the powerful physical and emotional release she experienced last night. She had no idea that she could feel this way about somebody. Darcy had melted away her persona and Cass felt like she was finally herself after playing the part of a stranger all her life.

She suddenly felt frightened. Darcy was no longer a client. How could she let this person go after she had opened up so much in such a short space of time. Cass tried to reason with herself but it was no good. The muscle in her chest that was previously there to simply give her life would surely break if Darcy was not there to keep it pumping. Oh boy I'm really in the shit aren't I?

She swung her legs out of bed and looked at the clock on the nightstand. She saw the note and felt a sudden sense of foreboding as she opened it.

Cass

Gone to work. Have a good day shopping.

Thanks for last night.

D xxx

Next to the note was another 500 bucks. She visibly relaxed and decided to visit Bridget again for some fashion advice. Burying her dilemma in the back of her mind for now.

---

Darcy parked her car in a truck stop by a deserted mountain road in god knows where ville. She turned off the ignition and sat there staring unseeingly at the view over the valley below. Her mind was racing. She could normally multitask ten things at once and handle any crisis with calm detachment. So what was going on, why was she having trouble focusing on things. Cass was the variable that had changed all this it was clear. Her feelings for Cass were unlike anything she had encountered before, even Mel; she hated going back to the thought of her first serious relationship to examine her feelings back then. She realised long ago she had never truly loved Mel, but you don't grieve what you don't know her mother used to say.

Could she be in love with Cass? Was it possible to feel this way so quickly? She wanted to see Cass, wanted to be with her more than anything else in the world right now with the exception of her daughter... and then - BAM - that's when it hit her, the realisation that she was in love for the first time in her life. She was seized by a sudden ecstatic euphoria, she laughed uncontrollably to herself and then cried in heaving sobs. If anyone was watching they might have thought this woman completely insane!

A strong compulsion consumed her and she picked up her phone to call Cass, she just needed to hear her voice and everything would be well again, it would give her enough strength to carry her back to reality.

"Hey" Darcy suddenly had forgot how to speak English.

"Hey yourself, missing me already?" Cass gave herself a big mental punch in the gut. That molasses voice on the other end of the phone set Cass into a jabbering idiot mode.

"Well, honestly, yes I was." Darcy had regained a rudimentary vocabulary again.

"That's nice to know, cos I am missing you too." The admission was startling to Cass but she couldn't help herself. Neither of them could.

"I'll see you tonight then, we'll go somewhere special, just the two of us." Darcy promised.

"Till tonight then" Cass finished.

"Till Tonight, Bye" Darcy hung up the phone and she was suddenly rejuvenated. She started the car and drove as fast as the law would allow back to her office.

---

She'd been gone a couple of hours but she still had time to go over the Morris project before the 2pm meeting. She called a briefing with her senior staff and advisors to review the proposal. MJ observed the CEO must have had some sort of epiphany during her disappearance but she wasn't going to mention it again, she was just grateful to have her back to her usual focused single minded self.



---

Bridget had been an enormous help to Cass, when she left the store she had several gorgeous outfits, including some extremely revealing undergarments. The limo driver loaded up her shopping haul and whisked Cass away to a luxury spa that Barney had the hotel concierge book for her. She was treated to a full massage, pedicure, manicure and waxing - ouch! Gotta keep the grass short, she chuckled to herself.

She arrived back at the penthouse suite refreshed, primed and pampered. She could get used to this. But the best thing of all was the thought that soon she would see Darcy.

---

The meeting was extremely constructive and Darcy had managed to convince Oliver Morris that her proposal would regenerate the Morris Empire with the commercial success it had not seen since the 80's. Darcy and Morris eventually agreed a deal and left the suits to sort out the details whilst they walked together around the lake.

They strolled in comfortable silence for a while enjoying the mid afternoon sun. "I trust you Darcy," Morris eventually spoke. "I know my company will go on to bigger and better things thanks to you. I'm a stubborn old man, but I have come to realise that I have devoted my life to my business, whilst my family grew up around me and I didn't even notice. I have to stop now before it's too late." The old man sighed heavily as they sat down on a bench together to watch the birds on the lake. "Sometimes you need to take a look at the little things to realise the true value of this life we've been given."

"I understand." And Darcy truly did understand, for the first time in her life. They watched the birds together - it was a moment she suddenly wished she could have shared with her own father.

---

"Hi mom... how's dad?." Darcy had asked a question she thought she could never have asked again before today.

"Oh, Darcy!" her mothers broken sobs down the phone told her that she was going to need a few moments to gather herself so Darcy continued to speak.

"Look mom, I'm not saying I'm going to welcome him with open arms but I'm ready to try if he is. I know he has never approved of my... lifestyle but I can't change that, I'm still willing to be his daughter if he is willing to be my father and a grandfather to Gabriella."

"It's a start." Janice sniffed "He's out of hospital. He... he's been asking for you Darcy, he asked about Gabriella too."

"I'm surprised he even knows she exists!"

"Darcy please"

"Alright, alright, I said I'd try, old habits die hard I guess." Darcy said they would visit when she was back home in Chicago next week. They said their goodbyes and Darcy felt a huge sense of relief wash over her.

---

Darcy bounded up the hotel steps so quickly the doorman could barely open the door in time.

"Room service" She said seductively as she knocked on the door to her own hotel suite.

Cass giggled and opened the door. Darcy's jaw nearly hit the floor as Cass paraded her latest purchase.

"Oh my Miss Cassandra, are you tryin' to seduce little ol' me?"

"Why Miss Darcy, I do believe I am."

Darcy slowly backed Cass away from the door as she closed it behind her with her foot. Cass was wearing a red Victoria Secret number that Darcy was sure was illegal in 35 states!

They made love slowly on the dining room table, then moved into the bedroom where Cass introduced Darcy to another little purchase she made that day. Darcy had always wanted to try a strap on but Mel had never been willing. Cass wore the appendage this time however, and Darcy nearly shattered the windows with her passionate vocalisation.

The lovers lay limbs entwined amongst pillows and crumpled satin sheets. They dozed for a while in between kissing and caressing one another.

Darcy checked the time, it was still only 8.15pm. "Hey Cass, you hungry?"

"Mmm, always" Cass nipped at the nearest piece of flesh she could sink her teeth into.

"Oww!" Darcy jumped and swatted the hungry little Texan lightly on the butt. "You're gunna pay for that!" In a lightning manoeuvre Darcy flipped the petite figure over onto her back pinning her wrists above her head and straddled her slender hips. Cass squirmed beneath her and Darcy felt the unexpected but very welcome penetration of her lovers phallus. And their passionate dance began again.

---

They dressed casually and Darcy as promised whisked Cass away for an evening of fine dining and dancing. Cass discovered to her delight that Darcy was quite the dancer. They eventually ended up in a small Jazz club called the Blue Hat that Darcy frequented when in LA because they served the best Manhattan in the universe.

The band was winding down for the evening when Darcy out of nowhere got up and went over to the sax player and whispered something in his ear. He nodded enthusiastically and signalled to the rest of his band members. Cass watched in fascination from her table as the tall beauty picked the microphone off its stand. The band started to change the tempo and Cass instantly recognised the melody as "The Nearness Of You".

"It's not the pale moon, that excites me,  
That thrills and delights me,  
Oh no, it's just the nearness of you..."

As Darcy sang the first few bars Cass caught her breath, captivated by the enigmatic performance, a voice so clear and rich it resonated into her very soul. It was as if they were the only two people there, the singer and her captive audience of one. Their eyes locked in an intensely personal bond. Darcy sang from her heart and gave a rendition that would have made Billy Holiday sound like a rusty screen door. The lyrics poured out of her with such heartfelt expression Cass could scarcely believe. The words washed over Cass and carried her away on tidal wave of unbridled desire for this amazing woman.

Darcy finished her song to a rapturous applause from an appreciative crowd with cry's for more, Darcy graciously declined and made her way back to their table. Cass immediately flung her arms around the tall womans neck and held her tight until she could regain some control over her emotions.

"Wow, that was incredible, I love that song. Of course you are going to have to give me another more private performance later."

"Oh, you can count on it." Darcy smiled seductively and leaned in to kiss the young woman passionately.

---

Thursday saw Darcy taking a very rare day off to spend more time with Cass. They got up early to Cass's dismay as Darcy had quite a full day planned. They had spent a blissfully happy 4 days together but now a dark cloud began to loom on the horizon. And although both women knew how they felt about each other neither could bring themselves to talk about what would happen with their relationship after Sunday.

Darcy dressed in slim cut faded jeans and a tight white Prada tank top. She wore her raven hair long and loose. Cass thought she could give any supermodel a run for their money even if she wore a trash bag - god she looked hot! Cass for her part wore her new Armani jeans and a light blue Ted Baker T.

They left the suite but instead of going to the elevator, Darcy went through the service door and up the fire escape to the roof. Cass followed slightly bemused until she saw the waiting helicopter which was now powering up its engines. They climbed aboard. Darcy passed Cass her com headphones so they could speak to each other. Cass gripped Darcy's hand so tightly in her excitement Darcy thought she might have broken something!

Darcy gave a thumbs up to the pilot and they lifted off, in moments the city was just a sprawling jigsaw on the ground. Cass never let go of Darcy's hand all through the flight. They landed 20 minutes later at what Cass presumed to be a vast vineyard.

They exited the chopper and a middle aged man dressed all in denim wearing a beaten up kicker hat came over to meet them.

"Cass this is Marty Sherman, my vineyard manager." Darcy was busy giving the old boy a big bear hug.

"Pleased to meet you Cass" he gave her a warm smile and shook her hand heartily with both his big rough hands.

"Your vineyard?" Cass looked awe struck at this new revelation.

"Well it's more of a partnership really, I know squat about growing grapes, Marty here's the expert, he runs La Boveda." She smiled and the trio walked over to the huge estate house nestled between a variety of pines and neatly manicured lawns.

They ate a delicious light brunch Mrs Sherman had prepared before heading to the stables across a large cobbled courtyard at the back of the house.

"I hope you like horses Cass." Darcy had not thought to question her young lovers partiality to the equine species.

"I've erm have never actually ridden a horse before. Yep, strange I know being from Texas an all" she joked and smiled rather nervously.

"It's OK we'll take things nice and easy" Darcy assured the now rather uneasy looking blond.

The groom brought out Cass's mount first. A grey mare of about 15 hands with gleaming black tack and hooves.

"This is Tashi, Tashi this is Cass." Darcy made the formal introductions and Cass hesitantly at first stroked the mare's velvety soft grey nose. The horse responded with a soft snort which made Cass flinch but she continued to pet the animal trying not to show just how nervous she was.

The groom returned next with Darcy's horse, a striking Palomino thoroughbred mare about 16 hands called Ashanto. She greeted the mare with a treat and ruffled her forelock before nuzzling the horses neck and whispering words of friendship and affection into the long yellow ears. Darcy made sure the horses tack was secure before helping Cass up into the saddle. She swiftly, in one fluid and well practiced movement mounted her own trusty steed and with a few basic instructions to Cass on steering and stopping they rode out of the yard together like two old cowhands - well almost.

"You OK?"

"Yeah, I think so."

They walked their horses up a well worn trail with Darcy keeping a watchful eye on her riding partner.

"So where are we exactly?" Cass enquired once she had found the courage to speak and ride at the same time.

"Napa Valley, I've had this place about 4 years, it was one of my first solo projects. I leave the vineyard business to Marty, mostly I just come to ride and get some fresh air and exercise. Gabriella loves this place, I'd like to live here permanently if I win custody. Speak of the devil." Darcy's phone was ringing. "Hi Mel what's up" she managed to sound polite as she didn't want to darken her mood by getting into a scrap with Mel. "OK well I'm sure you've got it under control, does she speak English?" She held the phone in the air whilst Mel droned on and on, she smiled and winked at Cass. "That's just great, OK well I'll see you Monday then, Bye."

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They rode until they came across a small copse of trees which offered shelter from the midday California sunshine. A small stream trickled through the middle and the riders dismounted to let the horses drink and rest. Darcy led Cass over to the base of a large oak tree; she sat down resting her back against the trunk and motioned for Cass to lie back and rest her head in Darcy's lap. They were surrounded by birds chirping, insects buzzing and a gentle breeze ruffling through the leaves. It was a serene moment they both savoured for a long time in comfortable silence.

"Cass, can I ask you something?" Darcy said after a while.

"Anything."

"I need to know what your plans are after Sunday? I mean are you planning to continue... 'working'? Darcy found her insides beginning to twist.

"I was hoping to go back to college, finish my education and after that, well, I'd have to see." She fidgeted nervously with a long blade of grass. "To answer your question, no I'm not planning on going back into that particular line of work again." Their eyes met for a long moment.

"Come with me?" Darcy barely whispered her voice choked with emotion.

"I can't" Cass's eyes started to brim with tears, her chin quivered as she strained and willed herself not to cry.

"Why Cass, why can't you?" Darcy's eyes were also starting to sting and Cass reached up to cup this beautiful noble face and wipe the single tear away with the pad of her thumb.

"What about Gabriella and the custody trial. Mel would think her Christmases had come at once if she found out about me."

"She won't, she can't I won't tell a soul about your past."

Cass laughed a hollow laugh "well that's just it, I'm afraid my past will always catch up with me. Darcy, I never meant for this to happen, I'm so sorry." Her soulful green eyes were pleading forgiveness.

"I don't understand, we could be so happy together, Gabriella would love you I know it and you would have everything you ever dreamed of. Why is not possible?"

There was a long silence as Cass struggled to find her voice for what she was about to reveal.

"I'm afraid... I... I have a criminal record, and it's kind of long." Cass reeled off her rap sheet like a shopping list - grand theft auto, shoplifting, assault and of course prostitution to name but a few. "It wouldn't take Columbo to find out about me and I don't want to hurt your custody chances."

"Is that what your afraid of?" Darcy could hardly believe her ears that she would sacrifice their happiness on some gamble that Mel would find out about her. "Oh, baby, c'mere." Darcy reached down and cradled her arms around the young woman. They held each other tightly until their emotions calmed.

"Look, we can work something out. We can keep a low profile until the custody case is over and then whatever happens we can still be together."

"I don't think I'd ever forgive myself if you lost your daughter because of my past."

Darcy gently lifted Cass off her lap and stood up. She flipped her phone open and called MJ. The conversation lasted only a few minutes and Darcy paced back and forth during it. She explained her predicament to her closest friend and MJ had given her the best advice she could.

"Well, what did she say?" Cass found she could hardly breathe.

"She advised me to stay single until it was over." Darcy slumped to the ground and reached for Cass to hold her and they cried in each others arms until there were no more tears left to cry.

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Cass was afraid Darcy would bolt for the hills when she had revealed the full extent of her past deeds. Mostly they were wild teenage acts of rebellion, and Darcy reconciled Cass was a victim of her circumstances. A product of her social environment and that in spite of all she had endured in her short life she was kind, compassionate and daring with a wild sense of humour. Her spirit was free and to deny her of it would be like starving her lungs of oxygen.

They had walked most of the way back to the stables, Cass unused to horseback riding was finding muscles she never knew she had and they were screaming at her to stop.

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It was mid afternoon as the pair took off in the helicopter back to the hotel to get changed for their evening excursion; which Darcy was keeping tight lipped about.

Darcy drew a large bubble bath for the pair to soak and relax after the days exertions. Exotic fragrances mingled in the candle light to sooth the senses, Cass leaned back against her lovers lithe frame as Darcy gently sponged warm water all over her aching body.

"HmMMMM that feels soooo good" Cass sighed deeply as the aches and pains were magically soothed away by Darcy's talented digits.

"Cass, please say you'll at least think about my offer."

"I don't know what to think at the moment which is why I can't give you an answer."

Darcy had proposed a number of ways in which they could continue to see each other without the risk of Mel and her vicious pack of attorney's finding out.

"I can't bear to talk about this anymore right now Darcy, please can we just enjoy the rest of the evening, I don't want it to spoil your surprise." Cass was feeling emotionally drained and she was afraid if they didn't stop it would ruin what little time they had left together.

"OK OK" Darcy wisely acquiesced and the subject was firmly closed for now.

They switched places and Cass gently washed Darcy's ink coloured mane lavishing it with the most expensive hair products she was sure money could buy.

After tending to each others bathing needs they made love. Darcy was so gentle and tender Cass felt she could never be so completely loved again if she lived a thousand lifetimes. Afterwards they slipped on their robes and padded into the bedroom where Darcy had another surprise in store.

Cass gasped in shock when she saw the most beautiful dress she had ever seen laid out for her on the bed. "It's your size, I checked." Darcy explained. "It's vintage couture, worn by Lauren Bacall at the Oscars in 1967."

"You're kidding me right!" Cass picked up the delicate full length red velvet and satin evening gown and held it up to herself in the mirror. "It's incredible! I don't know what to say...I"

"Please say you'll wear her."

Cass flung her arms around Darcy's neck and kissed her passionately "I take it that's a yes then!" Darcy laughed and they hugged each other fiercely.

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Both women took their time getting ready to ensure they were perfectly presentable for the coming evening. "I take it we're not going bowling then" Cass joked as she stepped out of the bedroom to offer Darcy her first glimpse of her in the outfit.

Darcy turned around and caught her breath "Simply stunning." There were no other words to describe the vision in red.

Darcy chose a more contemporary Gaultier backless full length black evening dress. Cass too was overwhelmed by the elegant and sophisticated woman Darcy truly was.

"Now, I just have one more thing to complete your ensemble." Darcy picked a black velvet box off the dining table and slowly opened it in front of Cass.

"Oh. My. GOD! Are those real?" Cass went to touch the 250,000.00 dollar diamond and ruby encrusted necklace just when Darcy jokingly snapped the lid shut on her fingers. The smaller woman shrieked and giggled in shock and excitement.

"Now these are only on loan so don't get too excited," Darcy placed the precious jewels around her loves slender neck and stepped back to admire their complimentary beauty. "Perfect."

---

The two women drew plenty of admiring onlookers as they gracefully walked through the hotel lobby and into their waiting limousine.

"I feel like a celebrity" beamed Cass as the stretch vehicle whisked them to their secret destination.

The limo arrived at a small air field alongside a waiting Gulf Stream jet. Cass was visibly awestruck. "Come on you should be used to this by now!" Darcy teased.

They boarded the plane and were served champagne and strawberries by the steward. "How thoughtful" said Cass raising her glass to Darcy she proposed a toast, "to destiny" she smiled affectionately as their glasses chimed. Darcy leaned in and kissed her tenderly on her full lips savouring the delicious flavour of Cass and Dom Perignon.

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They disembarked their jet a half hour later in San Francisco where another limousine took them to The Grand Opera House in the middle of the City.

Cass was aghast at the venue. She clung tightly to Darcy's arm as they hurried through the grand annexe. They had arrived a few minutes late but the usher quickly seated them in their private box. Cass had never really heard any Opera before but was excited by the atmosphere in the large theatre. She had absolutely no idea what to expect. Her heart jumped as the orchestra struck up the overture to Mozart's Marriage of Figaro.

Darcy observed the young woman as she watched the performance intently with a fresh wide eyed enjoyment and obvious delight. When the finale was over the audience and Cass stood to give a riotous applause. Afterwards Darcy commented that opera was not everybody's cup of tea, however, if experienced first hand one could appreciate it even if they never truly grew to love it.

It was a wonderful, magical evening that they would both remember for a lifetime.

---

On Saturday morning Darcy and Cass drove the Aston to a country club estate near Santa Barbara owned by a business acquaintance of Darcy's called Robert Marshal. Darcy was playing in a pro-am charity polo match with her team the Dark Warriors against Marshal's team the White Tigers. On the way to the event she explained the proceedings to Cass so she would hopefully enjoy the spectacle more. Cass was beginning to feel slightly nervous. It sounded kind of dangerous to her but she kept her feelings to herself

so as not to concern Darcy.

Darcy was passionate about her polo and played the sport every chance she could. She was rated a 3 goal player which meant that she was nearly at professional standards. The term "goal" does not refer to how many goals the player will score in a match but indicates the player's value to the team. Player handicaps range from "Novice" 10 goal to "Perfect" -2 goal.

Darcy had several polo ponies brought up from her stables at La Boveda in a custom built horse trailer. Darcy's team livery and corporate logo 'DE Inc' were artfully painted on the side in black and silver. The two women entered the trailer by the side door and Cass joked she could go back to living in a trailer if it were like this one.

"Make yourself at home for a moment whilst I get changed." Darcy went into another room connected to the living area. "There's some juice and stuff in the ice box" she called from her dressing room.

Cass rummaged around the small kitchen area and found a can of soda. She took in her surroundings noting the various photographs of horses that adorned the wall. One picture in particular caught her eye of Darcy sitting on a chestnut colored horse with Gabriella sitting in front of her. They both looked really happy and next to it was a picture of another woman with Gabriella as a baby who Cass presumed to be Mel. She was beautiful, elegant and slim with long wavy reddish colored hair, Cass thought she looked a lot like Julia Roberts. She too was smiling, it looked like they were on a beach in happier times Cass pondered.

"That's Mel" Darcy pointed out seeing Cass studying the photograph.

"Oh, she's very beautiful." Cass stated suddenly feeling a little jealous her gaze focused on the picture. She turned around to see Darcy standing in the doorway dressed in her polo uniform and caught her breath. She looked striking in snow white jodhpurs and black polo shirt with a silver number 2 over her left breast pocket. She wore brown leather riding boots with thick knee protectors and tucked under her arm was her black helmet with white wire faceguard.

"Well, on the outside maybe." Darcy said with a tinge of bitterness which quickly passed. "Hey, can you do me a favour and plait my hair for me, I don't want it getting in the way."

"Sure, I'd love to." Darcy sat on a stool whilst Cass ran a brush through her raven hair, separating it into 3 long even lengths. She concentrated on her breathing but found the combination of the intimate closeness and Darcy's appearance quite overwhelming and before she knew where she was her lips had found the taller woman's. Darcy reciprocated with the same ardour and pretty soon the exchange got more physical.

Cass fumbled at Darcy's zipper but Darcy restrained her hand and pulled back breathlessly.

"No, we can't" Darcy gasped her body reacting vehemently to the advances of the blond but she resisted. "I've got to go. They'll be starting without me at this rate."

Cass acquiesced reluctantly and backed away. "Alright but don't think you can look that hot and get away with it for too long."

"Oh," Darcy raised a sultry eyebrow "I don't want to get away with it... believe me" she slid a firm muscular thigh in between Cass's legs to emphasise her point. The young woman nearly ripped her clothes off but before she could react properly Darcy let go and backed away. "I need strong legs just now and you are making me weak at the knees Miss Miller."

Just then there was a knock at the door. "Ms Edwards are you ready?" It was Eddie her groom.

"Yeah, I'll be out in a minute." Darcy called. "Now behave yourself or I'll have to sort you out later."

"Ooh I like the sound of that, I'd better be bad then." They quickly kissed once more and then Cass finished plaiting the tall woman's hair with Herculean restraint.



---

Darcy took Cass to the corporate VIP area reserved for players and various guests of the sponsors. She was a little uncomfortable at first; Darcy was mingling with her guests and introducing Cass as her good friend to all sorts of people Cass could never hope to remember the names of. Darcy introduced her other team mates; Jesus Cesar Carrera (4) and Anton Rodriguez (3) representing the professional players, both from Argentina and Lane Michaels (1) an excellent amateur player. The pa announced the first chucker was to begin in 10 minutes. Darcy took Cass by the hand and led her to a quiet corner of the marquee.

"Be careful Darcy" Cass was suddenly filled with butterflies.

"Don't worry about me; it's the other team you have to worry about" Darcy joked but she could see Cass was actually scared for her. "Hey, it's just a friendly game, have some champagne and enjoy the show, it'll be over in 45 minutes then we'll have the rest of the afternoon to look forward to." She wiggled her expressive eyebrows suggestively.

They hugged and Darcy left the marquee with her team mates to mount up. Cass wandered back into the main area and plucked a glass of champagne from a passing waiter. She thought a little light refreshment might ease the tension she was feeling.

As she was looking around at her surroundings and trying not to think about Darcy's safety a familiar voice called her name and she turned to see Taylor Morris standing behind her.

"We'll this is a pleasant surprise" said Taylor charming as ever he gallantly took Cass's hand and kissed it.

"It's nice to see you again Taylor. When did you get here?" Cass was genuinely pleased to see a familiar face.

"About 30 seconds ago, and you were the first glorious thing that caught my eye." Said the smooth handsome sandy haired you man.

Taylor led Cass over to where his father was just getting seated at the side of the playing field. They exchanged greetings and Cass felt more at ease now although that may have had something to do with the champagne.

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Darcy as captain led her team out onto the field for the first chukka. She looked incredibly dashing on top of her grey polo pony that Cass recognised as Tashi. She trotted the animal up and down and took a few practice swings with her mallet. She exchanged a few words with her team mates then they took their starting positions. From the moment the horn sounded it was full throttle action.

Cass had never seen anything quite like it. The grace and speed of horse and rider was quite breathtaking. Darcy was soon charging up the field trying to evade her marker whilst hammering the ball up toward the oppositions goal. She took a swing but was shoved off course by her opponent and missed. She wheeled the swift little pony round and swung her mallet underneath the pony's neck connecting solidly with the tiny white ball sending it accurately into the path of her number 4 who hammered it into the goal.

At the end of the first chukka the riders left the field to change ponies and the spectators were called upon to tread the divots, which was a tradition in polo.

Things were pretty even between the two teams and the match was tied at 4 goals each toward the end of the second chukka. During a brief pause in the game to adjust her girth Darcy glanced over at Cass. Cass was being charmed by Taylor and Darcy could see her laughing at something he was whispering in her ear.

She saw how Taylor was flirting with Cass and it sparked an intense feeling of jealousy inside her, she urged her pony into a flat out charge up field and tried to focus back on the ball but had misjudged her angle of attack. She collided heavily with her marker sending her and her pony crashing to the ground. The crowd gasped and fell silent.

Cass didn't see the accident as much as felt it. She looked up and suddenly everything was in slow motion. Darcy lay motionless on the ground, her pony had rolled on top of her and was trying frantically to get up. The other players had dismounted and rushed to the scene. Cass could hear her own heart pounding in her ears mingled with the strangled cries of the injured pony as it tried to stand. She froze as people from the crowd surged forward passed her to see what had happened.

Paramedics were on the scene instantly and the Vet was also tending to the stricken animal.

"Cass, Cass" Taylor repeated trying to get the young womans attention.

It was like some sort of dream happening to someone else. Taylor tried to lead her away to the marquee but she shrugged him off angrily and with a sudden burst of energy surged forward toward her fallen love. She frantically pushed through the crowd until she saw what she had hoped was not her Darcy.

Lying perfectly still as if she were asleep was a beautiful dark haired woman that looked just like Darcy, a thin rivulet of blood trickled out of the corner of her mouth and down her pale cheek.

"No! Oh god Darcy NO! Cass reached for her but the stewards and paramedics kept her away. Her lifeless body was placed onto a stretcher and then taken away in the back of the ambulance.

"I'll take you to the hospital" Taylor was suddenly along side a very shocked and shaking Cass. She simply nodded and he escorted her off the field with him.

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Bright light... sharp pain... hard to breathe... so cold...

A cacophony of voices faded in and out of Darcy's semi-conscious mind. "I need a C-spine chest and pelvis and four units type specific" "Chest tube is in" "She's tacking" "A systole " "Charge to 120" "CLEAR!"

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It had been 4 hours since Darcy was brought into the ER at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Taylor had taken Cass there and waited patiently with her for news.

A doctor appeared at the front desk to pick up a chart. Cass rushed over and asked him for information but he could not or would not say what Darcy's condition was.

More time passed. It was now dark outside, a nurse who was going off duty walked passed Cass as she was standing outside for some air.

"Please nurse, can you tell me how Darcy Edwards is?"

The older nurse regarded the young womans distraught face, puffy, red and streaked with tears. Her compassionate nature compelled her to relieve this young woman of her suffering.

"Your friends in surgery, she's suffered a massive head trauma and internal bleeding but she's showing good synaptic responses so it looks as though she's not suffered any significant brain injury."

"Will she be OK?"

"She stands a good chance of making a full recovery, but with this type of head injury there are sometimes other things that are affected such as speech, memory and personality."

"When will she wake up?"

"It's too soon to say, she'll be placed on a ventilator and kept sedated whilst her condition is monitored."

"When can I see her?"

"That depends, her family have been notified but nobody will be able to see her until she is stabilised in the ICU. There's nothing more you can do except go home get some rest and come back in the morning."

Home... Darcy is my home. Thought Cass.

Cass thanked the nurse not realising if she felt better or worse for knowing. She went back inside where Taylor was still seated in the waiting area. He had been such a rock during this crisis and Cass would be eternally grateful.

They finally left the hospital around midnight when Cass was eventually informed that Darcy's surgery had gone well and she was recovering in the ICU. Taylor took Cass back to the Regent and said he would come for her in the morning to take her back to the hospital. When she was finally alone in the hotel suite she broke down and sobbed in heaving gulps until she made herself physically sick.

She slept fitfully in a dreamless unfulfilling sleep. She awoke several times reaching out for Darcy but found only emptiness. Eventually when she could stand it no longer she dressed and packed her things ready to leave. She went downstairs to the lobby and asked to see the Manager.

Barney appeared and immediately took Cass into his office for some privacy. Cass explained what had happened to Darcy. Barney was very empathetic, he offered Cass the suite for as long as she needed it but she declined. Barney said he would take care of Darcy's personal belongings. Cass thanked him for everything and he arranged for a driver to take her where she wanted to go. They hugged each other goodbye and Cass promised she would let Barney know how Darcy was doing.

When she got back to her apartment Shelly was out and the place was a mess. She decided to call Taylor to let him know where she was figuring he would be on his way to the hotel soon. She caught him just as he was about to leave and said she would just as soon meet him at the hospital if it was OK.

Cass arrived just before 10am, Taylor was waiting for her. The nurse called Abbey she had spoken to the night before was on duty and agreed to let Cass see her stricken friend. She went on to explain that Darcy had had a comfortable night and what to expect when she saw her. Darcy's family had not yet visited which Cass thought was strange. She followed the nurse into the ICU, they stopped outside a door at the end of a long corridor.

Cass hesitated to enter as Abbey opened the door for her, she was afraid of what she was about to see.

"It's OK Cass, go on, I think she would like the company." Abbey stepped aside and gestured for her to enter. Taylor hung back to let her have some privacy and closed the door behind her.

The room was dimly lit. Darcy lay peacefully with her arms at her side above the crisp cotton sheet that covered the rest of her battered body from her chest down and her head was heavily bandaged. Cass stifled a sob and held a shaking hand to her mouth. She tentatively reached out to touch her and lightly stroked the back of her hand against Darcy's pale cheek. Darcy was intubated on a ventilator with an array of wires to monitor her stats and tubes to hydrate and medicate her. She listened as the machine breathed steadily and

monitors beeped intermittently.

"Hey Darcy, it's me Cass" she whispered affectionately. "I don't know if you can hear me, I hope you can. Please don't leave me, you have to get better, I love you so much I couldn't go on without you." Tears rolled freely down her face as she looked upon the woman who she hoped was to become her life until this awful tragedy.

She sat next to Darcy and spoke to her soothingly words of affection and encouragement to get better. She had no idea how much time had passed when Taylor woke her.

"Cass this is MJ" Taylor introduced her to Darcy's best friend.

"Oh, hello MJ, Darcy told me a lot about you."

"It's a pleasure to meet you. I came as soon as I heard how is she?"

Cass explained what the nurse had said, just then a doctor came in and asked them politely to leave as they needed to examine the patient. So the three of them went to the cafeteria to wait.

---

Taylor left MJ and Cass at the hospital. They made their way back to the ICU but stopped just outside Darcy's open door when they heard voices inside.

"That sounds like Mel" MJ whispered.

They stayed outside and listened.

Mel was talking to the consultant neurosurgeon about Darcy's prognosis. He was very non-committal about it saying it was still too early to tell.

"Aunty J!" a little voice shrieked from down the other end of the corridor.

MJ turned to see Gabriella racing towards her with Darcy's mother walking behind her.

"Hey squirt, give your favourite aunty a big hug." Gabriella clung tightly around her torso with her arms and legs.

"Hi Judith." MJ greeted Darcy's mother with a kiss on her cheek and a comforting hug. Judith looked pale and tearful. "This is Cass, Darcy's friend." Cass shook Judith's hand.

"Mamma's hurted" the little girl told her.

"Yes I know sweetheart but the doctors are going to make her better." Comforted MJ.

"MJ" Mel said by way of greeting in an affectionless tone. "Who's your friend?" she said referring to Cass.

MJ introduced Cass and the two women regarded each other suspiciously. Cass noted Mel's demeanour was not one of a woman who had nearly lost her child's mother.

"Well this is all hardly surprising, I told her that damn game would probably get her killed." Mel said with a callous tone.

"She's going to be OK Mel." MJ emphasised still holding on to Gabriella.

Mel pointedly took Gabriella off MJ. "There's no point hanging around here I'm taking Bri back to our hotel to wait for news."

Judith & MJ both gave each other a telling look that Cass caught. After Mel had left the three women went back into Darcy's room to sit with her and talk.

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Darcy was kept in a coma to allow her body time to recover and for the swelling in her brain to reach acceptable proportions.

For 3 days Cass, Judith and MJ kept a vigil at Darcy's bedside, talking to her and holding her hand. A constant stream of hospital staff would come and check her crits and deliver flowers and cards from well wishers. It was 10pm Judith & MJ had gone home, Cass was falling asleep when she suddenly felt her hand being gently squeezed. She looked up to see Darcy's eye's were slightly open, she softly spoke Darcy's name and saw her respond with a slow blink. She could not move or speak but she was awake. The relief in Cass was tangible, she called for a nurse, who in turn called for the doctor.

Soon the room was bustling with medical personnel, Cass was asked to leave whilst they worked on Darcy to extubate her from the ventilator and perform a thorough examination of her physical state.

Cass was waiting anxiously in a small chapel annexed off the ICU. Abbey found her there pacing back and forth.

"She's asking for you Cass."

Thanking Abbey she immediately bolted past her and rushed to Darcy's room almost colliding with a hospital porter as she went.

She stood frozen in the doorway not daring to move. Darcy was sitting up looking ashen and gaunt, her eyes were dull and sunken.

The two women looked at each other with all the feeling that words could never express.

"Scratch my nose would ya." Darcy weakly asked trying to make Cass smile.

An emotional tidal wave swept over the young woman, she sobbed and laughed at the same time as she rushed to Darcy's side.

"Oh Darcy, I was so scared!" she placed a gentle chaste kiss on the pale woman's forehead; her lips lingered on the cool skin as she whispered "I love you."

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Darcy was transferred to a private medical facility in her home town of Chicago three days later.

Cass stayed in LA for a few days afterwards sorting out her affairs with Shelly before packing to join Darcy.

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Darcy's recovery and rehabilitation would take months. Her own doctors had advised complete rest but it was not a practice Darcy was used to. Her business needed her and although she had a team of very capable directors and staff she still wanted to be involved in any key strategic decision making. And so it was that Darcy had her hospital room turned into a virtual office. Amy, Darcy's assistant and various company associates would come in for meetings and of course MJ would visit and call as often as she could.

Darcy had arranged for Cass to stay at her apartment in the city, it was a short ride on the 'L' to the Brooke Medical Centre. Cass would visit during the day and spend the evening at Darcy's place. And that's how it was for the next 3 weeks until Darcy was released from hospital.

Judith, Darcy's mother would visit daily too and Cass thought Judith was the epitome of motherhood. It made her wonder just who she would have been had she known her own mother; it was a wish she had never truly acknowledged until she witnessed the care and compassion of a loving parent first hand.

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Mel brought Gabriella to visit only twice during her stay.

There were two things in life Cass was certain of. The sun would rise, and Mel was a colossal bitch. She was sure Mel had perfected a way of making everybody feel as though they had just crawled out from under a rock. Had there been some sort of qualification for bitches then Mel had graduated summa cum laude - Darcy had half joked, after a particularly prickly encounter that afternoon...

Cass was teaching Darcy, Judith and a couple of the nurses a new card game she called Dick Head - just the name had Darcy in fits. It was a strategic game, the idea was to get rid of all your cards and the last person with any cards left was a Dick Head; they were all laughing as Darcy was now a Dick Head 3 times running. Then Mel had walked in and just her very presence seemed to send everyone scattering for cover like deer into a forest including Cass.

"Hello Darcy" Mel said flatly almost annoyed she had to be there. I need you to sign this consent so I can take Bri to England for a short vacation.

I'm fine thank you for asking! She hated Mel calling her Bri too.

"For god sake Mel I've hardly seen Gabriella." Darcy was trying to stifle her anger in front of her daughter who was now climbing on the bed to snuggle beside her.

"And who's fault is that!? I just need a week, it's not as if you can do much with her anyway, and besides I'm sure your little blond embryo will keep you company."

"Embryo?!" Cass silently mouthed incredulously at Judith outside the door they had been eavesdropping from.

"Mamma what's a memblio?" Gabriella queried as she played happily with her Barbie whilst cuddled against Darcy's side.

Darcy shot Mel a withering look. "It's a tiny baby sweetheart."

"Are we getting a tiny baby mamma?"

Out of the mouth of babes!

"Erm, no princess we aren't." The little girl seemed satisfied for now with her mamma's answers and went

back to dressing her doll.

"When are you planning on leaving?" Darcy had returned her cool gaze to Mel.

"Tomorrow." Mel said quite matter of factly and held the piece of paper expectantly in front of Darcy for her to sign; which she grudgingly did but not before calling her lawyer and reading every last word to annoy Mel.

Mel left Darcy alone for a couple of hours with Gabriella, her 'embryo' and Judith to do some last minute shopping.

Judith took Gabriella down the hall to get a soda.

"Mel wasn't always like that" Darcy felt odd almost apologising for her ex's behaviour after they had left.

"Well it seems pretty ingrained to me. Whatever did you see in her?"

"It's hard to tell now" Darcy laughed ruefully, "but she was funny, carefree and gregarious. She was the life and soul of any social occasion and we had some pretty wild times together. We had our spats like any couple but after Gabriella was born she became really depressed. I tried to get her to see someone about it, I was sure she had post natal depression. But she blamed it on me for not being there all the time. I made an effort and tried to stay home more but things just got worse. In the end we hardly spoke and our physical relationship was non existent. The truth is it tore us apart and we just couldn't bridge the gap to get back to where we were."

Cass simply nodded and reached over to give Darcy a much needed hug. They sat in silence contemplating this for a while. Cass was the first to speak.

"At least you have Gabriella." She said to console the dark brooding woman.

"For now..." replied Darcy solemnly.

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Darcy's apartment was spacious but sparsely furnished except for Gabriella's room. She had bought the place in a hurry when she and Mel separated. She didn't have time to make it into a home given that she was away more often than not on business these days.

It was Darcy's first day out of hospital and Cass wanted to make her home coming special. She had brought Darcy a few welcome home gifts including a telescope so Darcy could spy on all her neighbours. And a Jellybean gumball machine as Darcy once said they were her favourite candy - except the liquorice ones. Darcy loved the gifts and promised she would not spy on the hot chick who lived in the building across the street - much.

Cass had made an Irish stew and the pair ate in front of the open fire seated on several large brightly colored cushions scattered around the fireplace.

"Mmm that was delicious." Darcy exclaimed whilst mopping up the last of her gravy with a piece of fresh crusty bread.

"I'm afraid it's the only thing I can really make that tastes like food." The young woman joked.

"Well it sure beats the hell out of anything I could cook." Darcy said as she finished her last bite.

Cass cleaned up and came to sit back down next to Darcy plumping her pillows and making sure she was comfortable. They sipped champagne and listened to music, just content to be finally together again.

"This has been quite a month for us hasn't it Cass?"

"To say the least." Cass was thoughtful for a moment as she reflected on some of their adventures. She reached for Darcy's hand and laced their fingers together resting her head on Darcy's shoulder. Darcy placed a loving kiss on top of her head.

"Judith, MJ and Taylor have been very good to me. I don't know what I would have done without their help and support."

"I think Taylor has a thing for you" there I said it, and casually enough she hoped so that Cass could not read anything in to her observation.

"Well if he has a 'thing' for me I bet his boyfriend won't be too happy."

"You mean... he's gay?" Darcy was genuinely surprised and to say the least, relieved.

"Is your gaydar on the fritz or something?" Cass looked up directly into those deep crystal blue eyes.

"Must be cos I never picked up on it. He just seemed too friendly towards you, very tactile and..."

"Are you jealous?" Cass interjected playfully.

"Maybe." Darcy smirked the corners of her mouth twitched upwards.

"Well maybe I can put your mind at rest." Cass leaned up and gently brushed her lips against the taller woman's. Darcy moaned softly on contact. Oh how Cass had missed that sweet sound. They kissed for a long time, tenderly, full of care and love, each feeling an intensely powerful surge of desire and need to re-connect physically as well as spiritually. It had been several weeks since they had made love, the morning of Darcy's accident to be precise.

"I need you Cass." Darcy husked after they broke apart for air.

Cass slowly pulled away and sat back on her heels. The soft glow of the firelight surrounded her like the aura of an angel. She regarded Darcy for a moment who was now lying on her side with her chin resting in the palm of her hand.

"You're so beautiful" said Darcy in awe as she watched with barely restrained longing for this exquisite creature to come to her.

Cass crossed her arms pulling at the hem of her t shirt and in one fluid movement removed it. Darcy raised her eyebrows at the action in sweet anticipation. Cass reached behind to unhook her bra. Sending it to the floor to join its fallen comrade the t shirt. She stood to unbutton the low rise jeans sliding them down her smooth well defined legs along with her panties and kicked them aside.

Darcy watched the spectacle unfold luxuriating in the young woman's ability to ignite every sensory output she had. Her eyes drank in every inch of glorious flesh and she swallowed hard as she thought of kissing that cute little mole just above the well of her naval. Darcy loved it when Cass toyed with her like this, the overwhelming compulsion to take the young woman hard and fast was barely controlled. It excited her all the more keeping it at bay.

Cass allowed her lover this view until the urge to consume Darcy overtook her. She reached for Darcy's hand and silently requested for her to stand. They stood toe to toe; Cass was a head shorter than Darcy. She breathed in the fresh natural scent of her as she leaned in to caress the base of her



neck with her lips. Her small fingers worked blindly to unbutton the dark blue cotton shirt whilst her lips and tongue worshiped Darcy's long elegant neck and strong jaw line. "I need you too." She peeled the material back over the broad well-built shoulders allowing its own weight to send it floating to the floor. Darcy stroked Cass lightly, whispering words of affection and encouragement as Cass continued her pleasurable task.

Soon they were both naked, holding each other closely basking in the glow of the firelight. Their bodies memorising each curve and plane of soft silken skin. The Nearness of You started playing as if on cue as to prelude their lovemaking, they simply gazed into each others eyes and smiled knowingly before sinking down to the cushioned floor their lips merging their bodies into one glorious paradise of feeling.

Cass gently guided Darcy onto her back worshiping her body with every ounce of her being. Her questing hands reached into the dark locks and suddenly Cass stilled her actions and froze.

"What's the matter?" Darcy opened her eyes searching for an answer to this abrupt stoppage.

"I... I can feel it." Cass stuttered, her face had grown pale. Her fingers had involuntarily brushed the left side of Darcy's scalp behind her ear and she felt the short stubble of hair growth and raised fleshy scar. She was shocked by her own re-action and ashamed at herself.

Darcy quickly took her hand and kissed it tenderly. "It's OK, it doesn't hurt." She soothed, confused by Cass's response assuming she was afraid to harm her.

"I'm sorry Darcy I didn't mean, it just brought back the painful memory of seeing you so close to death." Tears sparkled in the corners of her eyes as she replayed in her mind the events that nearly took her soul mate from her.

"Sshh, don't cry, hey c'mere." Darcy cradled the distressed young woman in her arms until she sensed her calming. She gently kissed the top of her soft blonde head. "You know what?"

"What?" Cass sniffed slightly.

"I'm glad it happened." Darcy's tone was genuinely light-hearted.

Cass looked up at her puzzled by the statement. "How so?"

"Cos I get to have you here with me of course, forever... I hope." She reached down to claim the lips, heart and soul of her Cass. And vowed she would spend an eternity loving her.

Now it was Darcy's turn to question those smiling eye's. "What?"

"I guess my dream really did come true after all."

"Oh yeah, what dream was that?"

"To be rescued by a handsome prince, except she turned out to be a beautiful princess."

The end... for now.

Part 2 – Tycoons & Tearaways