Cutting Loose

Chapter One

It was a cold, grey day at the end of October, and Roy Lee McCoy walked into the office at Stebbin's Used Autos & Scrap Metal for the last time. His nose filled with the familiar stink of cigarette smoke, old metal, and tobacco juice as he stood at his boss' desk.

The old man looked up from his paperwork. "Yeah?"

"I'm here for my check, Mr. Stebbin." Like I have been every second Friday for the past five years, you cheap bastard.

"Right, right. Nearly forgot. Here you go, kid. Let me see," he said, holding onto the envelope as Roy Lee restrained the urge to tear it out of his hands. "You're taking Monday off, right?"

"Yes, sir. I'm visiting some friends of mine up in Lexington over the weekend."

He frowned. "Lexington? Kentucky? They don't go to the college up there, do they?"

"No, sir. They work for a welding company."

"Good. Good. Stay away from those smart-asses at the college, boy. You can't learn nothin' from them that you can't learn down here." He spit a brown stream of tobacco juice into a styrofoam cup by way of punctuation.

Except how to shave, brush my teeth, and use deodorant, he thought. "My check, please, sir?"

"Right." He tossed it on the desk. "If you're taking Monday off, you don't get paid for the day. You've used up your vacation days."

All five of them. "Yes, sir. I understand. Have a good weekend." Picking the envelope off the desk, he nodded and walked out the door.

Standing outside the small, shabby office, he broke into a triumphant grin as he opened the envelope and pulled out the check. Last time. Last time I'll have to grovel in front of that dirtbag. He fingered the paystub reverently as he climbed into his car.

Twenty thousand, four hundred and seventeen dollars. And eighty-two cents.

It'll be enough. It has to be enough.

After cashing the check at the bank, he drove his old Dodge through the small, decaying business district, taking care to stay below the speed limit. He pinched his lips together as he passed his aunt's hair salon, noting that all three chairs were empty. He briefly glimpsed Eileen, sitting at her desk, reading a magazine.

The town's dying, he thought. Why am I the only one who can see it?

Maybe the residents of Deer Creek, Alabama had just stopped caring. Passing the city limits, he increased his speed until he hit the turn-off onto Saw Mill Road. He guided the car expertly along the rutted, potholed track, and then swore viciously.

His father's truck was in the driveway.

What the hell is the old man doing here, he thought as he maneuvered his car past the truck and into the dooryard. It's football night at the high school. He should already be there, reliving the glory days when he was seventeen.

Taking care to keep his expression calm, he climbed out of the car and went into the house.

The smell hit him like it always did, a combination of old sweat, dog piss, and stale beer. "I'm home!" he called, and hung his keys on the hook by the front door. His father's old beagle, Jack, came up to him, wagging his tail.

"Roy Lee? Get your ass in here, boy!"

Working hard to keep the contempt from his face, Roy Lee walked into the living room.

Dale McCoy might have been a handsome man once, but those days were long gone. Overweight and with three days of stubble on his

chin, he sat on the ratty old couch in a pair of greasy jeans and a faded sweatshirt. A bottle of beer stuck up between the seat cushions.

As always, Roy Lee was confused when he saw his father. A sick mingling of love, disgust, and pity roiled his mind. How could the man he had admired so much in his childhood have fallen so far?

"What the hell's this bullshit I hear about you going up north this weekend?"

"I told you about it last week, Dad. I'm visiting Ethan and Billy Joe up in Lexington. I'll be back Monday afternoon."

Dale frowned and scratched his balding head. "Maybe you did tell me something about it. But this old brain don't remember things like it used to." He took a swig of beer, draining the bottle, and belched. "All right, you can go." He held out his hand. "Let's have the rent now, boy." When Roy Lee hesitated, he scowled. "Come on, boy. Sixty a week, just like we agreed."

Seething, Roy Lee pulled out his wallet and handed him a trio of twenties. Dale staggered to his feet and shrugged into an old denim jacket, stained with dirt and engine oil. Shoulders hunched against the cold north wind, he left the house, the screen door banging shut behind him. He paused with his hand on the handle of the truck's door.

"Get yourself down to your aunt's and get your hair cut. You look like a god-damn hippy."

Then he was gone, the truck weaving down the track.

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Roy Lee restrained the urge to jump in the air and scream with triumph. With his father gone for at least the next four hours, there was nothing stopping him from leaving. And by the time the old drunk realized he wasn't coming home from his "visit" to Lexington, he would be so far away that he could never find him.

Not that he will care that much. All that matters to him is the money I bring home that he uses to buy beer and cheap whiskey. And the fact that I pay for the groceries. And half the damn utilities these days, too, since he made the decision that I was "renting" from him.

Renting my own bedroom. In the house I grew up in.

Dammit, Roy Lee, stop fucking around and get moving.

He backed his car up as close to the front door as he could. Pulling the folded cardboard boxes out of the trunk, he carried them to his bedroom, the one part of the house which he had managed to keep in decent shape. Rather than the filthy, smoke-stained walls of the living room or kitchen, his bedroom was painted a cheerful yellow. The floor was swept clean, with small, hand-knotted rag rugs throwing up bright swatches of color.

He unfolded the boxes and sealed the bottoms with duct tape. All right. Let's do this. In less than twenty minutes, he was packed. Clothes went into three of the boxes, which he carried out and stowed in the trunk of the car. His books and CDs went into others. Miscellaneous items, like the rugs, framed pictures, and his notebooks full of scribbled notes for stories, went into the last.

Roy Lee paused for a moment, looking at a family portrait that had been taken when he was thirteen. His father, still able to present a decent face to the world, smiled, standing at his wife's side, while Jillian McCoy rested both her hands lovingly on her son's shoulders as he sat on an ottoman in front of his parents.

He remembered that year. He had sprung up nearly half a foot in eight months. And a year later, his mother, driven to distraction by Dale McCoy's alcoholism and financial recklessness, had left one night, never to return or even to make contact with her husband and son.

He shook his head, dumping the picture into the last box and jamming it into the trunk. Grabbing his overnight bag, he made a last pass through the bathroom, gathering up mouthwash, toothpaste, and his razor. He took a minute to look in the mirror.

Light blue eyes and sandy brown hair met his tight-lipped gaze. Tall, with long, gangling arms and legs, the only thing he had ever wanted from his father was his height. He took a deep breath, resting his forehead against the mirror.

"Calm down, McCoy. You can do this." But it did little to settle the sick feeling in his stomach. Could he really jump into the unknown all by himself?

He frowned as he considered his hair. He was getting a little shaggy. Maybe his father was right for once.

He stopped in the doorway of his bedroom. The bookcase was bare, the closet and bureau held only a few clothes that he had worn out or didn't want. He had even stripped his bed of the sheets and blankets and stuffed the pillows into the back seat of the car. With a muffled curse, he spotted the second-hand laptop on his beat-up desk and stuffed that into his bag.

In the kitchen, Jack had pissed on the floor again. For once, Roy Lee didn't stop to clean it up.

Let Dad take care of it. It was his belief that Dale's casual disinterest in house-breaking his dog was what finally drove his mother to leave. He remembered her crying in bitter frustration as she mopped up dog urine from the kitchen floor, while Dale, unemployed for the past six months, sat at the kitchen table, playing solitaire and listening to Rush Limbaugh.

He tossed the overnight bag into the passenger seat of his car. He took one last look around, his throat tight with love and despair.

Should I leave a note? Tell Dad why I can't stay any longer?

Aunt Eileen. I can get a haircut and tell her on my way out of town. I can trust her to keep it a secret for a week or so. He fished his cell phone out of his leather jacket and dialed her number.

As the phone rang, he glanced at his watch. 5:42. Hopefully she hasn't closed yet.

"Curl Up and Dye Hair Salon, Eileen Harris speaking."

"Hi, Aunt Eileen. It's Roy Lee."

"Hey there. How's my favorite nephew?"

"Not bad. Do you have time to give me a quick trim? I'm on my way out of town and want to look good."

"No problem, kid. Otherwise I'd just be going over to the high school to watch our boys get turned into paste by Moulton again. How long?"

"Ten minutes."

"I'll be here. See you soon."

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Eileen Harris looked up and smiled as her nephew entered the salon.

"There he is. Good lord, child, you're looking more and more like your daddy every day."

"Thanks, I think," Roy Lee replied, taking off his jacket. He hung it up and gave his aunt a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

"Now, don't be like that, Roy Lee. Your daddy's not a bad man. He just has...problems. And don't complain about looking like him. Dale was a fine-looking man when he was younger. That's why my sister fell in love with him."

"Right. And what do you hear from Momma these days?" he asked as he sat down in the barber chair, his eyes suddenly sharp.

"Nothing at all, Roy Lee," she said, the lie coming easily to her lips after nine years. She thought she might be able to trust her nephew, but Jilly had asked her to keep her mouth shut until she decided it was safe to make contact with her son. And it wasn't going to be while Roy Lee was living in the same house as the man she ran away from.

She grabbed her spritzer and wet down her nephew's hair, smiling as he cringed away from the cold spray. "Ack!"

"Oh, don't be such a baby," she said. Noting the time, she glanced out the front door at the rapidly-dwindling evening light. "One second, honey." She walked around the counter separating the waiting area

from where she worked, turned off the neon sign and locked the door. "I don't need any more customers tonight. Once I am done with you I'll go home for some dinner, than wander over to the high school. Maybe that way I won't hear Bobby Ray tell the story about how he scored four touchdowns against Polk High School for the ten thousandth time."

Roy Lee grinned as Eileen began trimming his hair. "Or my dad telling everyone about the time he had a pick-six against Russellville."

"And they would've gone to state if the referee hadn't blown a pass interference call," they chorused in unison, knowing the stale story by heart.

She sighed, wondering how her life had come to this, mocking her husband and brother-in-law in a crappy hair salon on a Friday night. She bit her lip, wishing she could go back to the eighteen-year-old girl she had been, and tell her not to take Bobby Ray's engagement ring.

Or even further, to visit her beloved older sister and tell her to stay away from Dale McCoy, that the hell-raising young man would turn into a bitter drunk living in a house gone to shitshack shambles.

She looked at her reflection in the mirror as she laid down the trimmer and took up the scissors, pulling up Roy Lee's hair and cutting it even with the line of her fingers.

Still damn fine looking, she thought smugly. Her light brown hair, the same shade as her nephew's, fell in one straight, shining wave past her shoulders. Dark brown eyes looked back at her from a face that was all but untouched by her thirty-seven years. A few crow's feet around her eyes were all that set her apart from girls half her age. Being on her feet all day made sure her legs were strong, and she had not packed any excess pounds around her middle. She stretched her arms high, working the kinks out of her back, smiling as the knit wool of her sweater caressed her large, firm breasts, having left the house this morning without a bra.

"So, what are your plans for the weekend?" she said, finishing with the scissors and picking up the trimmer to shave the back of Roy Lee's neck. His shoulders are getting broader. I think he's finally growing into those arms and legs of his. About time. He's damn near twenty-three.

He shifted uncomfortably below the apron she had tied around him to catch his hair. "Well, I'm leaving town tonight."

"So I heard," she said, finishing with the trim and starting to comb his hair into place. "Driving up to Kentucky to visit some friends, from what your daddy told me. He bent my ear about it for dang near half an hour this afternoon. I told him you were a grown-up and that if you wanted to take a road trip every now and then, it wasn't none of his business."

Roy Lee raised his head and met her eyes in the mirror. "No. I am leaving town tonight. For good. I've got the car packed and I'm hitting the road. I'm not coming back here. Ever. I want you to tell

Dad in a few days. Just so he knows I'm safe. It's more than Momma ever did for us."

"What!?!"

Eileen spun her nephew around in the chair and looked at him with shocked eyes.

"What do you mean, you're leaving?"

"Exactly what I said." His face reminded her of her sister, the night she had shown up on her doorstep while Bobby Ray was out on patrol in his squad car, before he got promoted to deputy sheriff. Bleak and determined, she had told Eileen she'd had enough, and she was leaving Dale. "If I stay here much longer, I'll never get out. I'll be stuck taking care of Dad until he dies, and by that time it'll be too late for me."

"Roy Lee, you can't be serious." She didn't know if she was trying to convince him or herself. Her hands dropped to the arms of the chair and she leaned over him, face close. "You don't have any money. You won't have a job. What are you going to do? How will you take care of yourself?"

He didn't answer, and with a pleasant shock she realized that his eyes had fallen into the gaping neckline of her sweater, looking deep into her cleavage. She felt a stirring in her belly, a deep warmth that occurred all too seldom these days.

"Hey," she said, snapping her fingers. "Eyes up here, buddy." He looked up, flushing scarlet. "Answer the question," she ordered, drawing on her authority as his aunt. "How are you going to take care of yourself? Where are you going?"

"I've got twenty grand in the car. All the money I've saved from my job for the last three years, after I gave up on going to college. I pulled it out of the bank last night."

"Whoever gave you the cash will talk. That big of a withdrawal draws attention."

"I told Velma at the bank I was looking to buy a truck. No one around here will think that's weird."

Eileen gave an approving sniff. "Okay. You've got the money to last you for a while. Any idea where you're going?"

"I have a few ideas." Her nephew looked at her warily. "But I'm not going to tell anyone until I get there. I'm sorry, Aunt Eileen, but not even you. I trust you to tell Dad that I've run off and I'm not dead. But I need to make sure he can't find me."

"Just like your Momma," she said softly.

"I'm sorry." Roy Lee pulled the apron from around his neck and stood up, handing it to her. "I've got to get on the road." He pulled out his wallet and placed five twenties on the counter. "Thanks," he

said, not meeting her eyes. "For everything." He looked at the front door, obviously about to leave.

For one fractured instant, she looked around the shabby hair salon, the empty chairs, the half-used bottles of gel and spray, the scattering of unswept hair on the floor. She closed her eyes and made her decision.

"Take me with you."

"What?! No. No way. I'm going alone."

Eileen wadded up the apron and hurled it into a corner, for once not caring about what the salon looked like.

"I've got to get out of here, Roy Lee. I'm dying in this place." She moved closer to him, face intent. "I've wanted to get away for years, but your uncle..." She swallowed. "He makes sure I can't. The last time I tried he tracked me down before I got to Huntsville. Had the state police looking for me.

"But if I leave with you, he won't know how to look for me. Or where. Hard to put out an APB on my car when it is sitting here in Deer Creek."

She rolled up the arm of her sweater, displaying a livid green and black bruise on her upper arm. "See that? That's what I got for walking in front of the TV while Monday Night Football was on last week.

"Please," she said, hating the way her voice sounded, thin and desperate. "I won't be any trouble. I can help drive. I can cook for you when you get your own place." She stepped forward again until he was trapped against the counter, her body pressing into him, her trim waist nestled against his thighs. Unable to believe what she was saying, she stated, "I'll do anything you want." Remembering his reaction to her cleavage, her hand dropped to his groin, cradling him. With a surge of pride she found that he was erect, his hot hardness throbbing against her palm.

"Anything," she whispered, a jolt of unexpected lust making her ache.

Are you insane, her mind shouted at her. Why don't you just validate every single white-trash, redneck stereotype that northerners have about us? Trying to seduce your own nephew? That is just sick.

I don't care, she replied. He's my ticket out. Out of this town, away from Bobby Ray, somewhere I can start a new life.

Plus, he's not bad looking at all. Seducing him won't be a hardship. Not after having put up with my husband for the last seventeen years.

Keeping her eyes locked on his, she unbuttoned his jeans, pushing them down below his waist. She slid her hand inside the waistband of his boxers, and smiled as his steely length filled her palm. More than filled. God, what would that feel like inside me? For the first time in years, she felt the welcome bloom of desire for another man,

not the sterile ritual of masturbation while Bobby Ray was at the police station, safely distant.

Cradling his heat, she slowly rubbed him, fingers taking the slick pre-cum from his slit and spreading it around the sensitive head of his glans, while Roy Lee gasped like a landed fish.

"What do you say, baby?" she crooned, her nipples turning hot and hard inside her sweater. "I saw you looking at my titties earlier. Take me with you and I'll let you do more than look." She knelt down, his jeans now pooled at his feet, her eyes locked with his, her tongue sliding out to caress his thick, hard cock.

At the first touch, her eyes rolled up in her head. So good! The salty taste of strong male sweat and clean scrubbed skin lanced through her mouth. She ran her tongue up his shaft, hands reaching around to slide up his strong thighs, cupping his firm young ass-cheeks. Her mouth opened wide, taking in his head, then slid down the full length of his shaft until her nose was nestled in the wiry hair of his groin.

His hands settled on the top of her head, and she waited, cringing, for what was to happen next. The pain as he pulled her hair, then the savage pounding as he thrust her up and down on his length, until her lips were raw and her throat was bruised.

But instead, a tender miracle. His hands, light as butterfly wings on her hair, only rested there, seeming only to serve as proof that this was actually happening. Emboldened, she bobbed on his rod, for the first time in years taking actual pleasure in the act of arousing a man.

Good Lord, is this what it can be like? This sense of power, of control? Pleasing him without being a simple receptacle? One hand came up to cradle Roy Lee's balls. The other joined her mouth on his phallus, stroking in time as her head rose and sank. Above her, she heard her nephew hiss in pleasure, and her efforts redoubled.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Roy Lee's head whipped around as the knocks sounded on the front door of the salon. In the dim light, he saw a shadowy shape, peering in through the window.

"Aunt Eileen, you're not gonna believe this, but the mailman's here."

Swearing softly to herself, she rose to her feet, fiddling at one ear. "Turn around, but stay behind the counter," she said quietly. She walked to the front door, opening it to the figure of Melvin Pettini, the mailman.

He smiled broadly as she answered the door, then faltered at her grim gaze. He cleared his throat. "Hello, Eileen. Have your mail here."

"You're late enough," she said sourly, taking the stack of bills and junk mail from his hands. "Louisa Preston keep you longer than usual today?"

"Don't be smart, Eileen. What were you doing behind the counter? All I could see was this boy here. You're lucky I didn't call your husband."

"You shut your dirty mouth, Melvin. That boy," she snarled furiously, "is my nephew. And I was looking for an earring," she said, opening her hand to display a golden loop in her palm. "So unless you've got something else to say, get lost."

She shut the door in his face, fuming as he slowly got back into the mail truck and trundled up the street.

"Nice save," came a voice from behind her. Eileen turned, ready to bite Roy Lee's head off from simple frustration and anger, then caught herself, reading the honest admiration in his eyes. He pulled his pants up, buckling his belt, looking everywhere but at her.

"He really beats you?" he asked.

She sighed. "Yes. Remember that broken arm at Thanksgiving three years back? That didn't come from no fall down the stairs, I can tell you that."

"How long will it take you to pack?"

"Ten minutes."

"Let's go."

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She looted the cash register on her way out the door, leaving it unlocked behind her.

"Let whoever wants it take whatever they want," she said on their way to her house, voice spitefully gleeful. "It'll make it all the harder for Bobby Ray to figure out where the hell I went. Maybe he'll think there was some sort of botched robbery and I've been kidnapped."

"Any money in the bank for the shop?" Roy Lee asked. "If you're starting over, you're going to need all you can get."

She shook her head. "I had to beg for an extension on the rent last month. I paid it three days ago." She handed him back the hundred bucks he had paid for his haircut. "Take this back. Let's make the last one on the house."

"So how much have you got?"

Eileen held up her purse. "I've still got the ATM card for the shop. But there's less than a thousand dollars in the account. I made a couple hundred today. I can draw on Bobby's accounts, but that'll leave a trail. I'd rather leave them alone for the time being."

Roy Lee nodded. "So maybe a thousand dollars. Well, I can cover for you for a while, but the money will run out sooner or later."

"Don't worry, kid," she said, kissing his cheek, then his ear, her hot breath sending shudders down his spine. "A good hairdresser can always find work."

He pulled into her driveway, sighing in relief as he noted the dark windows in the houses on either side. "Well, let's do this."

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Roy Lee watched in awe as his aunt rampaged through the house. If he had thought his escape had been well-planned, watching Eileen was like watching the Normandy invasion.

The first thing she did was haul two packed suitcases out of the closet in the guest bedroom and dump them at his feet. "Take these. I've re-packed every week for the past seven years, waiting for this chance."

No sooner had he stowed those into the rear of the car then she was ready with three filled duffel bags, packed to the brim with more clothes, shoes, and scarily, a gun and ammunition. She tore through the house like a tornado, steely eyes examining and discarding in moments. A rack of DVDs was swept into yet another carry-all, then she charged into the bedroom. "Come on," she said, voice throbbing with some unnamable emotion. Once inside, she closed the door with a bang and began to strip.

"Aunt Eileen," he said, hesitantly. "You're very pretty, but we have to go!"

"Oh, shut up," she said, breasts bouncing as she opened the closet door. "I'm not going to fuck you in my own house. Not when I'm running away from home." She pulled a last pair of jeans out of the closet, a final t-shirt out of the bureau. She left her work clothes in a pile on the floor. "Let the fat, stupid bastard pick up my things for once."

"Now," she said, eyes glittering with hate. "I want you to jack off on the bed."

"Huh?"

Eileen smiled like a rosebush in the summer breeze; sweet, lovely, and full of thorns. "That fat fuck is going to come home tonight. When he goes to sleep, I want him to lay in your cum."

Roy Lee felt vaguely disgusted, but also aroused. His aunt's beautiful, swaying breasts entranced him, and he couldn't keep his eyes off the shaved flesh of her pussy, the moisture on her swollen lips glinting at him like dewdrops on new-mown grass at dawn. He pulled down his pants, his eager cock already hard. As Eileen pulled down the sheets and the thin blanket, he grasped his dick in his hand and stroked swiftly, pointing it at the mattress.

And nothing happened.

After a while, nothing continued to happen.

He closed his eyes, willing his climax, but it stayed aggravatingly distant. He looked at his aunt as she raised her eyebrows.

"Something wrong?"

"Not the best way to encourage a guy, Aunt Eileen," he said, teeth gritted. She gave a soft laugh and walked around behind him. He gave a soft hiss as he felt the warm flesh of her breasts press into his back. He imagined he could feel the dimples of her nipples on his skin, hot and eager.

"Let me," she breathed, and pulled his hand gently away from his cock. One hand softly stroking the skin of his waist and side, she took up his throbbing shaft with the other, slowly fisting it in her hand.

The sensation of her hand on his phallus was overwhelming. In a matter of moments, Roy Lee could feel cum flowing up his rod. His thighs began to tremble and his hips to twitch, pushing against a non-existent partner.

With a gasp, he spurted his cum high into the air. In white, ropy bursts, it splattered on the bed, staining the bedsheet with his seed. Murmuring her approval, Eileen stroked his shaft harder, urging more and more of his jizz out of his pulsing cock.

"Good boy. Good boy," she said softly, kissing the point of his shoulder, as another globule of semen shot out of his manhood. "Such a good boy," she continued, rubbing her chest against his side.

He closed his eyes, panting harshly, as the last shudders of his orgasm rippled through his body. Eileen let him go and stepped out of the bedroom. She returned in seconds, wiping her hands clean on a towel.

"Here," she grinned, handing it to him. "Clean up." While he gingerly dabbed at his sensitive shaft, she pulled the bedsheet and blanket back up, hiding evidence of their mischief. They quickly dressed. As they left the room, she hung the towel back up in the bathroom.

"Maybe he'll be wiping his face with your jizz on his face tomorrow morning," she said with a mirthless smile. She stopped and looked around the front room. Recognizing the same mood which had affected him earlier in the evening, he kept quiet while she made her goodbyes. Finally, she nodded to herself, pulled two autograph albums from the entertainment center and cradled them in her arms as Roy Lee lifted the duffel bags.

"Is there anything else?"

"Just unhappy memories. And they can stay here."

Just before they drove off, she threw her keys onto the roof of the house.

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This is crazy.

Roy Lee had always cared for his aunt, and in the back of his mind knew she was a very attractive woman. In fact, if pressed, he would admit to harboring some not-very-nephewlike feelings for her.

But to throw all his plans out the window and to take Eileen along with him?

Crazy.

But what else could he do? Once she told him how she was being abused by Bobby Ray (and he had heard more than enough stories about his uncle to believe her), he didn't see as how he had any choice but to help.

And don't lie to yourself. When you saw her walking around with her clothes off, you wanted to reach up and clamp onto her breasts and not let go until the second coming.

Second coming. Well, I already had my first coming.

He snickered sourly as he pulled up to the crossroads north of town. At his side, Eileen looked at him worriedly.

"Are you okay, baby?"

"Sure," he said. "Just talking to myself." He looked up and down the highway, the enormity of what he was embarking on finally

beginning to register. His hands clenched on the steering wheel and he began to shake. Shuddering, he bent his head, blindly putting the car in park and hitting the hazards.

"Baby?"

"Which way?" he said softly.

"What?"

"Which way do you want to go? I didn't have any plans. Not really. Just to get the hell out of Deer Creek." He made a vague gesture at the road. "Now I've got an entire fucking country to choose from. And I've got to keep you safe.

"So, which way do you want to go?"

"Well," Eileen asked, smiling, "where do the roads go?"

There is only one road, he was tempted to quote. It is like a great river: Its springs are at every doorstep, and every path is its tributary. He pointed to his left. "US seventy-two. Barton, the Mississippi state line, eventually Corinth." To the right. "US seventy-two combines with state highway one fifty-seven. They split a few miles down the road. Seventy-two will take you to Decatur and Huntsville. One fifty-seven to Moulton." He jerked his head behind, towards Deer Creek. "Going south will take us to Russellville, Hamilton, then a whole lot of nothin' until we get to Tuscaloosa."

He nodded his head forward, eyes warily watching for cars from behind in the rear-view mirror. "North, we hit Muscle Shoals and Florence, then cross into Tennessee."

Eileen bit her lip. "I want to get out of Alabama as soon as I can. Which way is the nearest interstate?"

He nodded to the right. "Interstate sixty-five is just east of Decatur. We can be there in an hour, and into Tennessee in less than two."

She nodded, eyes bright. "Any objections to getting out of the confederacy? Seeing how those damn Yankees do things?"

He switched on his right-turn blinker and put the car back in gear.

"None at all."

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An hour later, he topped off the gas tank in Decatur. Eileen cocked an eyebrow as he pulled the bank envelope with its stack of hundred-dollar bills from the storage compartment between the front seats.

"You must have been sweating, having that in the car all day."

"God, you can't even imagine," he agreed. "I went out to the parking lot so many times to check on the car Mr. Stebbin thought I had some sort of drug deal going down. Do you need anything from inside?"

"Just a bottle of water, baby." She frowned and turned to the back seat, rummaging in one of the duffels. He blinked, admiring the way her breasts pressed against the cloth of her shirt, then turned and went back to the pumps.

You're not going to take advantage of her. She offered, but she was scared and desperate. The blow job was just to get you to agree to take her.

Oh? What about that crazy thing at her house, then? Seems to me that helping you jack it is a pretty strong signal that she finds you attractive.

Right. The sarcasm in his inner voice was thick enough to cut. All she wanted to do was to take some revenge on Uncle Bobby. A little gross...OK, a lot gross, but understandable.

The pump clicked off. He squeezed off an extra fifty cents, then hung it up. He quickly walked into the station, trying not to draw attention. He visited the restroom, picked up a bottle of water for his aunt, and a soda and some trail mix for himself. You're not going to do anything. You're not going to suggest anything. If she makes an offer, you make clear it isn't necessary. You find a decent-sized town where you can blend in, find a good job, and start living your life. End of story.

His newly formed sense of virtue lasted all the way until he got back in the car. Eileen had bound her hair up in a pony-tail and put on a University of Alabama baseball hat. With the t-shirt and her blue jeans accentuating the slim curves of her hips and legs and her lush breasts, she looked like a sorority girl out on a road trip, rather than a woman running away from a violent husband.

She smiled at him as he handed her the water. "You look good," he said as he pulled out of the service station and back onto the highway.

She rested a warm hand on his thigh, ignoring his nervous twitch. "Thank you, baby. You look good, too." She leaned over and gave him a soft kiss on his cheek. "I think you got the best of both worlds. Your daddy's looks and your momma's brains."

He crossed the Tennessee River on the Bee Line Highway, then navigated onto the on-ramp for I-65. They both sighed in relief as the nose of the car finally pointed north.

"How far to the state line?" Eileen asked nervously.

"Thirty-five miles," he replied. He slowly increased his speed until they had reached a cop-safe seventy-two miles an hour.

"So. Is this rustbucket of yours in good shape?"

"It better be," he said with a lopsided smile. "I had Dante down at the body shop give it a full tune-up last weekend. So. Tell me about them."

"Who?"

"Daddy. Momma. You, even. What happened?"

She took a deep breath, then let it out. "Hell, why not? Tell the truth and shame the devil.

"Your momma wasn't a bad person, Roy Lee. She just couldn't live with your daddy no more."

"Hell, I couldn't live with my daddy either," he said. "Don't think I blame her for that."

Eileen nodded. "Well, the first thing that happened is that he lost his job down at the mill. You must have been about, what, thirteen?" Roy Lee nodded. "And then he couldn't find another one. It takes a lot out of a man, when he can't provide for his family.

"He'd always been bad with money, from what Jillian told me. Living from paycheck to paycheck. Opening up credit card accounts he couldn't afford. Taking you guys on vacations he couldn't pay for. Living for today and forgetting about tomorrow.

"He was always that way. Even when they were teenagers, just starting to get to know each other. He always acted first, without thinking.

"Now, part of that is just growing up in the south. It's part of that good-old-boy culture. But by the time most men are thirty or so they grow out of it. Your daddy never did. The debts got worse and worse. The money ran out, the house was falling apart around them, and he just didn't seem to care.

"Then he commenced to drinking, and that was the last straw. Jilly loved your daddy. But she couldn't live with him no more.

"She showed up on my doorstep one night in May. She had a suitcase packed and she was crying. She told me that she couldn't deal with it any longer. It was hurting her too bad."

Roy Lee sat up straight, eyes on fire. "Did he?"

Eileen shook her head. "No, he never raised a hand to her, as far as I know. But there are other ways of breaking a person, Roy Lee. Your daddy broke your momma through sheer neglect."

Silence filled the car as it sped through the dark, tires humming. To the right, they passed a sign welcoming them to Tennessee. Eileen leaned back, a hidden tenseness easing out of her body.

"She begged some money from me, and she bought a bus ticket out of town. She wanted to take you with her," she continued, eyes soft.

"But with your daddy you at least had a roof over your head. She was jumping out into the unknown. She didn't want to risk your safety."

"Where is she, Eileen?"

For a moment he thought she was going to refuse to answer. Or tell a lie.

"The bus ticket got her to Des Moines..."

"Iowa?"

Eileen nodded. "But she didn't much like it there. Too big. So one day, she took out a map of the United States and just stabbed her finger down. It landed on a little town in Montana. That's where your momma is, honey. Promise, Montana"

Roy Lee shook his head. "Montana. Good God. I never would have guessed that. Never in a thousand years. I would have guessed North Carolina, maybe. Charlotte. Well, I suppose it's as good a place to start a new life as any." He pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and dialed the phone at home.

"What are you doing?" Eileen asked, her eyes alarmed. Was this all a trick? Is he going to tell Dale? Oh, God, Jilly, forgive me...

"Well, since you decided to run off with me, I've got to tell Daddy that I've left. Shhh," he warned her as the voice mail picked up.

"Hello, Daddy," he said. He swallowed, trying to find the right words. "This is really hard. I didn't drive up to Lexington to meet some friends. I'm leaving home. Leaving Deer Creek. I'm not coming back.

"I'm sorry. I love you, but I can't take care of you anymore. You're gonna have to look after yourself now.

"You're sick, Daddy. You need to get some help and sober up. Don't call this number. I'm going to change it in a few minutes.

"I love you, Daddy. God bless.

"Goodbye."

When he hung up, his face was streaked with tears. Eileen touched his cheek softly with her palm.

"That might be the bravest thing I've ever seen anyone do, Roy Lee."

He nodded his thanks and handed her the phone. "Here. There's a toll-free number programmed into my contacts. Can you put the phone on speaker so I don't wreck the dang car? I need to call my cell phone company and change the number so no one back home can call me." He cocked an eye at her. "You should do the same thing."

Eileen nodded absently as she dialed the number. In a few minutes, Roy Lee had changed his number to a 406 area code. As he leaned back in his seat, he seemed to finally relax. The last tie that bound him to Alabama was cut.

All that was left was the future.

He looked over at Eileen, staring at her phone. "Are you going to change your number, too?"

She swore softly, then turned to face him. "I can't. Bobby Ray owns the account. He is the only one who can change the number. I'll have to ditch this phone and buy a new one tomorrow." She stared out the window at the darkness as Roy Lee passed a semi. "How long do you think it will take to get there?"

"God only knows," he replied. "I'll have to look at a map, but I bet it's close to two thousand miles. That'll take us three or four days at least."

He yawned and looked at the clock on the dash. "And we're not going much farther tonight. I haven't had supper, and I know you haven't either.

"We're not too far from Pulaski. What say we turn off there, grab a bite, find ourselves a hotel, and make some plans?"

*****

The Bear-Foot Inn looked like a decent place to stay. Two stories, it sat off the interstate, just inside the city limits, conveniently close to the diner where they had eaten a late meal.

"Can I help you?" the bored, skinny clerk asked. He eyed them questioningly.

Roy Lee supposed they were a strange sight. The one thing he had not planned for was his lack of luggage. Now he held a cardboard box awkwardly in his arms as Eileen trailed behind him, a suitcase in one hand, trying to keep a straight face.

"Two rooms, please."

"One room," said Eileen, her voice firm.

He turned to face her. "Aunt Eileen, you don't have to..."

"Don't be stupid, boy. You're not going to pay for two rooms all the way to Montana. You can't afford to waste money that way." She looked at the clerk. "One room."

"Single or double beds?"

Roy Lee glared at him. "She's my aunt. Double beds."

The clerk shrugged. "Didn't mean no offense. Lots of guys show up with women here, tell me she's their auntie. Or their cousin. Or daughter. Don't make no difference to me." He paused, considering. "Of course, not many of the women are as good-looking as her." He smiled, revealing bad teeth, "One night'll be sixty-four oh-seven."

Roy Lee laid out four twenties. The clerk looked at him nervously. "We usually ask folks to pay by credit card."

He lost patience with the stupid, smirking idiot. Flipping over one of the bills, he pointed at the fine print. "Legal tender for all debts, public and private. Make change or we'll find someplace else to stay."

"There's a Best Western right across the road," Eileen pointed out helpfully.

Grumbling, the clerk made change. "Still, I'll need a card to charge you for incidentals if you use them." As Roy Lee turned, murder in his eye, he held up his hands. "Listen, man. It's company policy. You don't want me to lose my job, do you?"

Eileen stepped forward. "Calm down, baby." She smiled at the clerk. "You don't put anything on the card unless we actually buy some porn off the television or raid the mini-bar, right?"

"No ma'am."

She handed him her MasterCard. "Here you go, honey," she said, smiling lazily. She patted his hand as she took the card back. "You've been very helpful. Y'all have a good night now, y' hear?"

****

Roy Lee kicked the door shut behind him and dropped the box to the floor. "Stupid, grunting, white-trash moron," he snarled under his breath. He took off his jacket, dropping it over a chair, and sat on one of the beds. Looking at Eileen, he saw that she was red-faced and shaking. Dropping down beside him, she hunched over her middle, arms clasped around her belly, squeaking sounds coming from her mouth.

Alarmed, he put his arm around her shoulder. "Aunt Eileen! Are you all right?"

Taking a deep breath, she straightened up, then collapsed in hysterical laughter, flopping down on her back. Holding her stomach, she rocked back and forth, her eyes leaking tears.

"Oh, sweet Jesus, that was funny! Your face when he asked if we wanted a single bed! I thought you were going to jump over the counter and choke him to death!"

He snorted, then grinned, then snickered. The giggles slowly mounted, and before he knew it, he was laughing, too, laughing until his belly ached and he fell back on the bed beside her. As soon as one

would taper off, they would catch each others' eyes and that would set them off again.

"And then you read the money to him. I expected you were going to go on with e pluribus unum, then maybe quote the Constitution or something."

That triggered even more laughter, and he rolled back and forth, enjoying the feel of her warm shoulder against his. He finally managed to gather himself and smiled at her, propped up on one elbow.

"I'm glad you're here, Aunt Eileen. If you hadn't come with me, I'd probably still be parked at that crossroads outside town, having a panic attack."

"You're welcome, baby." She laid her hand on his cheek, and lifted her head, brushing his lips with hers. He reached with his arm, meaning to give her a quick hug, and was startled when his hand found the warm skin of her belly, in the gap where her t-shirt had pulled away from her jeans.

Pull away, his mind commanded him. Pull away now. But her skin was soft, and warm, and her lips were firm and sweet on his. Instead, he spread his fingers and gently rubbed his hand across the smooth flesh of her stomach, smiling as his sexy aunt moaned into his mouth.

Eileen cradled Roy Lee's cheek in her hand, taking pleasure in the slightly raspy feel of his stubble against her palm. Below, her

stomach churned in lust as the heat of his hand sank through her skin, warming her belly and her feminine core.

Suddenly, her clothes felt too tight, the loose fit of her t-shirt a restraint across her breasts, the worn denim of her jeans shackles that should be removed. Her hand moved from his cheek to the back of his neck, pulling his face closer to hers, and her lips opened, her tongue snaking out of her mouth to enter his. His hand moved from her belly to her hip, and she moved with him, rolling onto her side until her chest touched his, their bodies molded together from head to toe.

She smiled into his eyes and shivered as his hand moved under her shirt to stroke her back, her nipples tingling, tightening, until they were firm and erect. She grasped the hem and pulled it up until her tan bosom was exposed, her dark areolae pebbled with desire.

So wrong, she thought to herself. This is so wrong. If Jilly could see us now she'd have a heart attack. Seducing your nephew to get out of town, Eileen? What sort of god-fearing woman does that?

But it feels so right. As soon as I felt how gentle he was, back at the salon, I knew I had to have him. And I will. Tonight.

"I saw you looking at me earlier, baby," she crooned. She lifted her breasts in her palms as if they were an offering. "Do you like my titties? Do you want to play with them?"

"Aunt Eileen..." He stuttered, fumbling for words. "I can't!"

"You can. I want you to. I want you, Roy Lee." She leaned forward and kissed him again, tasting him with a quick flick of her tongue on his lips. "We're not aunt and nephew tonight. We're Eileen Harris and Roy Lee McCoy; two lonely people who need help, and are helping each other."

He closed his eyes. "God help me," she heard him mutter. He sat up in the bed, and for one heartbroken instant she thought he was going to deny her and leave. But then his strong arms came around her and she felt herself being lifted into his lap. With a happy squeak she settled down, her legs wrapping around his waist. Lifting her arms, she pulled the t-shirt off, throwing it onto the other bed without a second glance.

Disbelieving, Roy Lee bent his head, his lips dropping kisses on the slopes of Eileen's breasts. Slowly her head fell back, and her back arched like a bow until she had to brace her arms on the mattress to keep from falling over. Her tits pointed skyward, the nipples jutting forward arrogantly, until Roy Lee took one within his hot, loving mouth.

At once, Eileen's legs tightened around his waist, and her zipper-clad crotch ground, almost painfully hard, into his straining cock. He moaned around the flesh of her breast as he suckled her, his tongue wrapping around the taut nub of her nipple. One arm twined around her back to support her, and the other came up to cup her other breast in his long, clever fingers, gently kneading the firm flesh. He switched, and Eileen panted as his fingers slid over the saliva-soaked skin of her mounds, teasing her.

She fumbled at her waistband, trying to undo the button which sealed her jeans. "Get them off. Get them off," she whimpered, until with an audible snap the button was freed and she was able to lower the zipper. Roy Lee tugged at the waistband, but was only able to lower it a few inches, as her wide-spread legs, still entwined about his waist, held her jeans tight around her thighs.

But her rear was exposed, and she shuddered as his loving hands cradled her cheeks, the fingers creeping down to brush against the lips of her sex. As he touched her wetness for the first time, she nestled her body to his, her lips dropping fiery kisses in the hollow of his neck.

He teased her for a moment, then withdrew, pausing until she raised her head to look at him.

"What?" she demanded.

He ran a hand up her chest, up her neck, until the tips of his fingers reached her lips. Understanding his intentions, she opened her mouth so he could wet his digits with her saliva. As his fingers entered her mouth, she looked him in the eyes, her own wicked with the knowledge of how much she aroused him. Her tongue swirled around his fingers, reminding him of the way it had teased his cock in the salon earlier that evening, and he had to close his eyes against the force of his need.

Taking his hand from her mouth, her let it trail down her body until it hung, poised, at the gates of her sex.

"All bare," he whispered. "Why?"

"Because Donny hated it," she replied. "He said it made me look like a tramp. As if he was one to talk! As if I didn't know about the times he was gone for 'conferences' in Memphis or Birmingham and came back reeking of some other woman!" Her eyes welled with tears, still capable of being hurt by a man she had once thought she loved.

"Shhhhhh," he said. "He's gone and I'm here." He let his fingers glide against her opening, smiling as he felt her slick wetness under his touch. Parting her folds, he eased his index finger into her cleft, letting his thumb rest on her mons as he slowly sank into her.

"Oohhh," Eileen moaned, letting her head sag back in pleasure. She was grateful for the hand supporting her back. Otherwise, she may have fallen back onto the mattress and let Roy Lee have his wicked way with her. She sighed in rapture as his finger probed her opening, heat pooling in her belly and at the juncture of her thighs. It was only with difficulty that she kept her inner muscles relaxed, rather than clamping on his oh-so-welcome invasion.

Looking up, she saw his brows pinch in a pensive frown.

"Something wrong?" she said quietly, her thighs trembling.

He dropped his head to her collarbone, decorating her skin with kisses. "Not wrong. But you're kind of...tight. Even with only one finger. If we make love..."

"When we make love, I think you mean," she said firmly.

"When we make love, I don't want to hurt you." He shrugged, even as his finger continued its exploration of her depths. "I think I'm going to have to do more than this to get you ready."

Eileen raised her eyebrows, feigning ignorance. "How?"

To her amusement, Roy Lee blushed scarlet. He ducked his head, hiding his eyes. "Maybe I should kiss you. Down there," he said softly. "Would that be all right?"

In response, she pulled away from him. Before he could even think of rejection, she had toed her sneakers off, then hooked her fingers in the waistband of her jeans, pulling them down her legs and off in one graceful motion. She then laid back, her head propped with pillows, her legs spread wide.

"Come on then, baby," she crooned. "Eat me.

"But take your damned clothes off first," she continued. "Good Lord. What does a woman have to do around here to get a boy naked?"

He snorted laughter, then pulled off his worn work shoes. His denim shirt followed, then his jeans. Standing at the foot of the bed, he submitted himself to her inspection.

His beauty made her heart ache. All tan skin and long, strappy muscle and golden-brown hair, he looked like a man out of her teenage fantasies, before marriage and the harsh reality of her husband's temper had crushed her dreams.

"How...how do we do this?" she asked, her voice wavering.

Roy Lee looked at her, his face disbelieving. "He never did this for you?"

She shook her head, face full of pain. "No. I don't want to talk about it," she continued, as he opened his mouth. "Just...help me, Roy Lee."

He nodded, but his face told her that Bobby would have a reckoning to deal with if they ever met again. "First, get comfortable," he said.

Eileen wiggled into the comforter, ignoring the musty smell. "I'm plenty comfortable," she said, hands cupping her breasts, fingers stroking her nipples. He grinned.

"I can tell. Now, spread your legs. I am going to need to lie in between them."

She lifted her knees, then let her legs sag outward, exposing her sex to his view. Laying on the bed, he slowly crept toward her. He turned his head to kiss the sensitive skin of her thighs, and she felt sweat break out on her legs and belly as her passion rose.

"I am going to kiss you there," he said softly, with a nod of his head at her pussy. "Let me know what feels good. And let me know what doesn't. This is all about you."

With that final word, he bent his head to her nether lips, his hands cradling her hips, and gently kissed her, his tongue, slow and gentle and loving, reaching out to taste her musky dew.

At first, Eileen didn't know how to react. The sensations he woke in her were too amazing for her to determine what was good, and what was fucking incredible. She groaned as she felt the rough pad of his tongue sweep up the folds of her labia, and sagged back on her pillows, her legs coming around until she could rest her feet on the firm muscles of his back. Her head lolled back, and one hand kneaded the firm flesh of her breast, fingers tickling the nipple, while the other sank down her chest until she could press the heel of her hand into the swell of her mons.

"Baby. Oh, God, baby. That is so good. So good," she moaned. Suddenly, his tongue found a bit of flesh that was even more sensitive, and her hips jerked upward, her pubic bone catching Roy Lee a smart blow on his nose. He looked up.

"Bad?"

"Oh, no, baby," Eileen sighed. "Nice. That was very nice. Do you think you could do that again?"

His eyes crinkled as he smiled, even though his lips were hidden, and his questing tongue caressed her clitoris a second time. A startled cheep of surprise emerged from her mouth, and she felt his lips curl in a proud smile as he continued to pleasure her.

She sank her hands into the thick wealth of his hair, and had to remind herself of his actions earlier that day, of how he had won her heart with his soft touch. Rolling her head back, she forced herself not to yank on his scalp, but used her hands to guide him, pulling him towards her innermost core.

"More, baby, more, please. That is so good," she breathed, her hips slowly rolling towards his mouth. She paused for a moment, blushing as a wicked thought crossed her mind. "Baby?"

"Hmmmm?"

"Do you think you could use your fingers and your tongue? At the same time?"

Roy Lee lifted his head, smiling for her. "I don't know," he drawled slowly. "You know how men are, Aunt Eileen. Most of us can barely walk and chew gum at the same time."

She giggled. "Shut up. And do what I say, or no nookie for you, you horny little pervert."

"Pots and kettles, Aunt Eileen. Pots and kettles."

He lay back down on the bed, legs hanging over the edge, his cock a burning brand against his belly. Bracing himself on one arm, he eased a finger into her tight cleft and bent his head to her lips once more.

Wet heat enveloped his probing digit, and after a moment's thought, he added a second finger. She was a little bit looser now, able to take more of him inside her, and he had to bite back a shiver of longing. He wanted nothing more than to pull his hand away from her and mount her, but her obvious inexperience with receiving any sort of gratification from a man demanded that he be as slow and careful as possible. He bent his head, his clever tongue seeking out her bud once more, and he thanked Julie Lindstrom for teaching him how to give oral sex.

We may have broken up two years ago, he thought. But I'm in her debt now.

Her hands crept shyly down as he sucked her clit between his lips, his tongue flicking over the sensitive nub. Her fingers spread her lips for him, easing his access, and he smiled as she became more accustomed to what he was doing.

Slowly, the rhythm of her movements changed. Looking up her body, he could see that her skin was flushed, her berry-sized nipples turgid with arousal. Her hands moved away from her labia and up to her mons, pressing down on the soft swell of flesh above her pubis. Her breath came deeper, drawing more and more air into her lungs.

"Roy? Roy Lee? Oh God, baby. Oh, God. I think. I think. I think I'm going to cum soon." Her eyes were closed, and he could feel her toes clenching as she kneaded the flesh of his back with her feet.

In response, he kept his motions firm and steady. There would be no rush, no urgent hurry to force her to orgasm. We have all night. No. Screw that. We have all the time in the world. His mouth joined his fingers at her entrance, lips and tongue joining together to give her the joy which had been denied her for too long.

He felt it at the same time as she did. As he moved back to her clit, he heard her gasp in wonder, then her thighs squeezed together, trapping his head between them at the same time her canal closed on his fingers with surprising force. The muscles of her stomach rippled like a lake in a strong breeze, the patterns of her climax easy to see.

"I'm cumming, baby. I'm cumming!" Eileen keened, the last word trailing off into a high-pitched wail of pleasure. As she shook, he continued to pump his fingers in and out of her spasming passage, trying to prolong her rapture. As her tremors subsided, her hand came down and clutched his wrist with surprising strength.

"No more, baby. No more. I'm too...Oh, God, it's just too much right now. I need a second."

"A second what?"

A hand reached down to swat his shoulder. "No one likes a smart ass. Except for me. Come on up here, lover."

Roy Lee crawled up until they lay side by side again, and she pillowed her head on his chest, her hand curled possessively around his cock. Her eyes were soft and shining with love as she cuddled close to him.

"That was...incredible." she murmured. Her thumb played idly over the head of his prick, smearing his juice over the mushroom-shaped tip.

"I'm glad you liked it," he smiled, kissing the top of her head. He laid a hand on her thigh, and let it travel upwards until he could cup her delightful rear in his palm. She gave a deep sigh and snuggled in closer, her hand still softly stroking.

Slowly, her hand stilled. Frowning, he shifted until he could see her face.

"Aunt Eileen?"

He was answered by a soft snore.

Roy Lee settled his head back into the pillow, his sleeping aunt twined about him.

"Well, shit," he whispered.

*****

Waking came slowly to Eileen the next morning. Rather than the tense alertness which for years had characterized her first moments of awareness, she felt wonderfully comfortable and relaxed. Stretching languorously in the bed, she smiled, indolent as a napping cat.

In a cascade, the memories of the previous day came flowing in.

A dreary Friday afternoon, no different from a hundred others since she had married Bobby Ray. Roy Lee's visit, and the revelation that he was leaving town. The spur-of-the-moment request that he let her come with him. Her desperate attempt to seduce him. Packing. Leaving. Driving. A wonderful session of oral sex.

Falling asleep.

Oh, CRAP!

She bolted upright in the bed.

Dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, Roy Lee sat at the small desk, a Rand McNally atlas spread in front of him. He seemed to be making notes on a pad of paper.

He must have heard her stirring, because he turned to her with a lopsided smile. "Good morning."

Blushing as red as a beet, Eileen looked down at her lap. "I'm sorry."

"Well, you should be," he scolded with a grin. "What the hell were you thinking? You get a man all worked up, make him give you a first-rate orgasm, and then fall asleep? Shame on you, Aunt Eileen. I thought better of you than that."

"Stop it!" she begged, her cheeks flaming. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. I just felt so good. So safe, and warm, and loved..." She trailed off. "For the first time in years I didn't feel afraid in bed."

His face solemn, Roy Lee sat on the bed and gave her a hug. She returned it fiercely, letting the bedclothes fall down around her so her naked breasts pressed against his chest.

"I'll be here for you," he said, kissing her cheek. "As long as you need me.

"But what say you get cleaned up and we grab some breakfast? We've got a long way to go and all the time in the world to get there."

*****

The Waffle Hut served the sort of food that made cardiologists rich and their wives drive Mercedes.

Eileen watched with a sort of horrified fascination as Roy Lee methodically plowed through a breakfast of waffles, hash browns, bacon, and sausage.

Catching her glance, he grinned. "If you eat ten of these, they kick in a free triple bypass for free," he said.

She laughed and picked up her own fork, cutting off a piece of her ham omelet. "So what are our plans today?" she asked.

"Well, first of all, we need to find me some luggage," he said. "I'm not going to drive across the country, hauling cardboard boxes in and out of the car every time we stop for the night. And you need to get a cell, right?"

She nodded. "I should have got my own years ago, not depended on Bobby." She looked out the window at the brilliant Saturday morning. "But we shouldn't go to a store for the luggage. Too expensive." With a wave, she beckoned the waitress over. In a few minutes, she had the location of the nearest cell phone outlet and a thrift store. She raised her eyebrows at Roy Lee's surprised expression.

"If you want to find out what is going on in a town, baby, just go to the nearest diner. They know everyone and everything, because everyone comes through sooner or later." Eileen looked at her hands, resting in her lap. "And after that, I have one more stop to make."

*****

Eileen helped Roy Lee pick out three pieces of used but sturdy black luggage at the thrift store before going to the cell phone outlet and buying a new phone, getting the best data plan she could afford.

"This is going to be my phone and computer and e-mail for the foreseeable future," she said to him. "No reason not to get the best." She looked at the clerk, who was filling out the paperwork. "What else do you need?" she asked.

"Home and billing address?"

For the first time, she hesitated. "I'm moving, and I don't know what my new address is going to be," she said.

"We really do need a current address," the young woman said politely.

"But I don't..." Her old phone rang, making them all jump. She looked at the display and her eyes narrowed.

"Bobby Ray?" Roy Lee asked. She nodded, biting her lip.

"Here," he said, taking it from her and putting it on the store counter. He answered it and put it on speaker, nodding to Eileen.

"Hello?" she said.

"You fucking bitch! Where the fuck are you, you fucking cunt? When I get my hands on you you're going to wish you'd never been born!!"

Eileen's face went white, but she answered, her voice merry and mocking. "Hi, honey! I'm in Birmingham right now, getting a new phone. If I'm lucky, this is the last time I'll ever hear your voice, you disgusting pig.

"I've found a lover," she said, darting a glance at Roy Lee, and he fought to keep from laughing out loud. "I haven't screwed him yet, but he is already way better in the sack than you ever were."

If anything, the screaming through the phone became even more unhinged. "You God-damn motherless whore! Who is he? Who the fuck is he? I'll kill you bo-"

Eileen disconnected the call and met the clerk's gaze steadily. "That was my husband, who I am running away from. Now," she said, iron in her voice. "Are you going to hook me up with a new phone, or am I going to leave and find someone who will?"

Twenty minutes later they walked out of the store, a newly activated phone with a Montana area code in hand, with all of the rebates the furious clerk could put on there.

"I'll make sure to change the address as soon as I have a permanent residence," Eileen assured her.

"Don't worry about it, honey," the clerk said. "We women have got to look out for each other. Just be safe, okay?"

*****

They repacked the car, able to get most of Roy Lee's clothes in the new luggage, throwing the cardboard boxes into a dumpster behind the hotel. As they checked out, Eileen managed to sweet-talk the clerk (a different one) into giving them some empty trash bags for dirty laundry. All in all, it was a much better-organized Dodge which hit the highway shortly before eleven in the morning.

"So," she said, thumbing through the atlas as he pulled back onto the interstate. "How are we getting to Promise, Montana?"

"Well, there's good news and bad news," he replied, cracking his window. The day promised to be much warmer than the one before, the weather forecast calling for highs in the middle seventies. "The bad news is it's damn near two thousand miles from here to there. And it ain't exactly a straight line.

"My plan is to get us to Kansas City tonight. We'll take 65 north to Nashville. Once we get there, we'll hop on Interstate 24 to around Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Then we'll get on something they call the Breathitt Parkway to just north of Evansville, Indiana."

"Indiana? Are you sure you're going the right way?"

Roy Lee grimaced. "The problem is that there just isn't any easy way to get from Nashville to St. Louis. We could take 24 further west, but then we'd have to dick around on Interstate 57 or 55.

"The good news is that once we hit Evansville, we're in good shape. We can take 64 across to St. Louis, then I-70 to KC. And then we have to make a choice."

He helped her flip the atlas to the page for Montana. He pointed at the western part of the state. "Promise is there. Not too far from Interstate 15, which runs all the way from California to Canada.

"Kansas City is an interstate hub. One of the biggest in the United States. We can take one of three routes across the western US.

"We can stay on 70. That takes us across Kansas, Colorado, and Utah, and we jump onto 15 south of Salt Lake City.

"Or we can go north and hit Interstate 80 at Council Bluffs, Iowa. That'll take us across Nebraska, Wyoming, and we hit 15 north of Salt Lake City."

"And what's behind door number three?" she asked, lips curving in an admiring smile.

"We take I-29 all the way up to Sioux Falls, South Dakota," he answered, pulling around a tractor-trailer. "That takes us across South Dakota, northern Wyoming, and Montana. We'll jump onto 15 at Butte and take it south to Promise."

"And what's your opinion? Unless you're unlike every other man I've ever known, you're going to want to drive the whole way yourself."

"Well, it is my car," her nephew said, eyes twinkling.

"Of course."

"To be honest, the northern routes scare the crap out of me. It's getting on towards November, and this car isn't equipped for winter driving. I've hardly ever driven in the snow. I don't want to start practicing now, with you and all our stuff in the car. Especially if we're driving through the mountains.

"So I'm thinking the southern route is best. We can stop in KC tonight. Then Denver the next night. Then Salt Lake City or maybe Pocatello, Idaho. Then Promise."

"And your momma," Eileen said softly.

"And my momma," he repeated. "Do you know how to find her?" he asked.

She shook her head. "She would send me a postcard at the salon a few times a year, always postmarked Promise. But she never gave me her home address. Just a few lines to let me know she was OK."

"Well," he sighed. "It's not a very big town. It can't be that hard to find her."

She nodded and lifted her purse into her lap. Digging out her wallet, she started going through it methodically, removing everything that could connect her with Bobby Ray. In a few moments she had a handful of plastic in her hand, credit cards and debit cards and the detritus of seventeen years of a mostly loveless marriage. Pulling a pair of scissors out of her purse, she cut the cards into pieces, then wrapped them in paper napkins from the glove compartment, ready to throw them away at the next rest stop.

"Scissors?" Roy Lee asked.

"You would not believe the places where people have asked me to look at their hair," she replied. "It just got easier to start carrying them around."

"So," he said quietly. "You and Bobby Ray."

Eileen sighed. "It was a mistake. The whole Goddamned thing. And by the time I was smart enough to know it, it was too late to get out.

"Your daddy and Bobby were best friends in high school. And when your daddy started sniffing around after your momma, he brought Bobby along with him sometimes.

"I was just twelve years old and Jillian was seventeen when they started dating. Lord, Roy Lee, I worshiped the ground she walked

on. My beautiful big sister, going out with the handsome young football stud. It could not have been any more cliched. They got married when I was a freshman in high school, and I was the maid of honor. Bobby was the best man.

"Afterward, he went into the army. He had watched too many of those action movies in high school, and he was going to beat the commies all by himself. But by the time he joined up, all the commies were gone, and places like East Germany and Poland were our friends, for the love of God.

"So instead of saving the world from Russia, he got sent to Yugoslavia when it started to fall apart, back in the mid-nineties. Do you remember anything about that?"

Roy Lee shook his head. "I would only have been two or three years old."

She hissed in frustration. "Not personally. But from school, baby." She flipped a hand, dismissing the subject.

"He came back home on leave, when he'd been in for about six months. I was sixteen, sophomore in high school, and just starting to fill out," she said, cupping her breasts for emphasis. "He came over to visit your momma and daddy when I was there one night.

"You were still just a baby, and I kept you to myself for most of the evening," she said, with a reminiscent smile. "Your daddy and Bobby

sat around the table and drank beer all night, bullshitting about high school. But I could feel Bobby watching me.

"And when it was time for me to go back home, he walked me to his car and gave me his military address and asked me to write to him. And then he kissed me.

"Well, I was a stupid little idiot, and I thought the whole thing was romantic. Private Harris in his snazzy uniform, asking me to wait for him, for when he got out of the army.

"So I waited. All through high school. I went on a few dates, but I made sure the boys kept their hands to themselves. And I wrote to him, and he wrote back. And then he got sent to Kosovo when Yugoslavia started to fall apart.

"He saw some terrible things there, Roy Lee," she said, her voice soft. "I think...I think he must have done some terrible things. There were three different religions and about a dozen different ethnic groups, all fighting each other when the government collapsed. Old hatreds die hard."

"You don't need to tell me that," Roy Lee said as he negotiated the tangle of roads leading around Nashville. He turned onto the exit ramp for Interstate 24. "Some people back home are still fighting the Civil War, and that's been over for a century and a half."

"Exactly," she said, pleased with his insight. "Well, just imagine what some of the boys back home might do if they knew there wouldn't be any consequences.

"That's what Kosovo was like. Bobby talked to me about it once or twice, when he first came home. Before we stopped talking to each other. So much hate there was nothing anyone could do but try to stay alive.

"Then he came home my senior year. At the homecoming game, for God's sweet sake. I was part of the homecoming court, and we were standing there on the fifty-yard line at halftime, and the announcer said that they had a surprise for me.

"And Bobby Ray Harris came out in his dress uniform, bright and shiny, and opened a box and asked me to marry him there in front of the whole damn town. And I said yes.

"Worst decision of my entire life. I didn't know him. He didn't know me. All I knew was the idea of him, like my life was some silly-ass romance book.

"But Momma was dead and Daddy was sick, and I was scared and I thought I was in love. So I said yes.

"By the time we were done with our honeymoon, I thought I had made a mistake. After a year, I was sure of it. He was short-tempered and mean and bad in bed, and he never listened to anything I had to say.

"He got hired on at the police department, and once he had made deputy sheriff he started acting like some tin-pot dictator at home.

"I remember the first time he hit me," she said, fists clenching in her lap. "I'd had a bad day at the salon, and dinner was late. He came into the kitchen, and when I told him it would be another thirty minutes, he slapped me right across the face." Her hand went up to her left cheek in memory. "And then he stood over me as I cried on the floor, screaming at me to get up.

"Well, I said I'd go to the police, and he just laughed. I am the police, he said."

"You tried to get away," Roy Lee said quietly. It wasn't a question.

Eileen nodded. "Twice. I guess three times is the charm," she said with a lopsided smile. "He paid off the police in towns around Deer Creek. As soon as they saw my car they pulled me over, took me in, and called Bobby. I never had a chance.

"After the second time, I learned not to try anymore. Until God took pity on me and sent you my way last night, baby," she said.

Roy Lee sat silent as the white stripes of the highway flashed past. He had always respected Eileen as his aunt, but a vast upwelling of sympathy and pity overtook him as he heard her sad story.

"I'm sorry," he said. "If I had known..."

"If you had known, Roy Lee, what could you have possibly done?" Eileen said grimly. She rubbed the spot on her finger where her wedding ring used to lie. The clerk at the pawn shop had offered her two hundred dollars, but she had bargained him up to six. With that added to the money she had cleaned out of her business account earlier in the day, she felt less of a burden on her nephew.

"All you could have done would be to get hurt, too." She sighed, leaning back in her seat, her eyes on the softly rolling hills of central Tennessee, but her mind miles and years away.

*****

As their trip continued through the afternoon, Roy Lee found that Eileen was a different person from the one he had thought he had known. As they drove and talked, she showed him a side of her he had never seen. One that, perhaps, she had not shown to anyone for years, for fear of her husband and the pain he could give her. Her bright, brittle cheer, shallow as a pan of water, was gone. It its place was a wiser, sadder, deeper woman; one who had been hurt, but who now had room to grow as well. Roy Lee thought the change looked very good on her.

They ate lunch at a barbeque place in Clarksville, and crossed into Kentucky in the afternoon, the purring Dodge smoothly merging onto the Honorable Edward T. Breathitt Pennyrile Parkway.

"So an hour on this?" Eileen asked. Roy Lee nodded.

"Not even that much. We'll hop onto US 41 right before we cross the Ohio River and into Indiana. We'll take that up to Interstate 64 and turn west. That'll take us across southern Indiana and southern Illinois to St. Louis. Then 70 across Missouri to KC."

"Sounds good, baby. If you need to take a break, I can drive."

"It's not a break I want," he said, eyes glinting. "It's you." He put his hand on the smooth flesh of her thigh, where her skirt had ridden up.

"Roy Lee McCoy! Shame on you! Feeling up your aunt in your car! You should be ashamed of yourself." In defiance of her scolding words, she moved sensuously under his touch, spreading her legs in wanton abandon.

"I'm sorry, Aunt Eileen." His words were contrite, but his voice was low, husky, and full of desire. "But the woman I wanted to sleep with last night fell asleep before we could make love, and I'm so horny right now, especially seeing your legs and your wonderful chest."

"And what did you do after she fell asleep last night, baby?" she inquired as his loving fingers crept higher on her leg, approaching her moist cleft. "I think I saw a charge on the credit card when we checked out this morning." She turned in the seat, leaning towards him, lips dotting kisses along his jawline, her hand unerringly

finding his erect cock. "Did you watch a naughty movie? Watch some hot slut take a big, hard dick and pretend you were fucking me?"

"No," he groaned.

"No? Really?" she asked, surprise plain in her voice.

"I meant to," Roy Lee said softly. His hands clenched around the steering wheel as her hand stroked him through his jeans. "But when the movie came on, the girl wasn't nearly as beautiful as you are."

He turned his head in time to catch a searing kiss on his lips, and was barely able to tear himself away and look back at the road. "I turned the lights down and watched you. Imagined what we might do tonight, do together, if you were happy with...with what I did for you last night, and wanted to do it again."

His hand reached the junction of her thighs, and he hissed in disappointment as his fingers found a barrier of damp cotton.

"I watched you, Aunt Eileen, while I masturbated." At the word, Eileen bit her lip, the rising heat in her belly redoubling. "Watched your gorgeous legs and your bare pussy. Watched your beautiful breasts and your gentle face. Watched and stroked myself until I came in a wad of tissue.

"And then I did it again. And again. Until I was finally tired enough to go to sleep."

Eileen moaned at the thought of her hot nephew, sitting in a chair, pumping his thick cock until he burst, eying her sleeping form. She shifted in her seat, lifting her hips until she could slide her soaked panties down her legs to the floor. Roy Lee's hand eagerly dove towards her aching sex, but she pulled his hand away.

"No way, buddy. Two hands on the wheel." She smiled to take some of the sting out of the words. Unbuckling the seat belt, she pulled her shirt off, exposing her jiggling breasts to his view. She cupped one in her hand, thumb rubbing the erect nipple.

"Do you know when I decided I would sleep with you, baby?" she asked, reaching over to undo his jeans. "Raise up," she whispered, then pulled them down to his knees.

"Can you still drive?" she asked. He tested briefly, then nodded.

"It was when I made my offer yesterday at the salon," she continued, her voice far-off, not believing so much had occurred in less than a day. "I pulled your pants down and kissed your lovely cock."

"I remember," he said. "I thought I was losing my mind. Or you were," he finished with a rueful grin.

"And you were so gentle," she said, in tones of wonder.

"I went to my marriage bed a virgin, Roy Lee. My girlfriends told me sex was fantastic. Your momma told me that Dale was a pretty good lover, when he was sober.

"But Bobby was mean. He never thought of me," Eileen said, her eyes glimmering with unshed tears, even as her hand cradled his phallus, slowly pumping. "When he wanted a blow job, he would push me to my knees and unzip his pants, like he was going to take a leak in my mouth. And when he was ready, he would grab my hair and fuck my mouth like it was a hole in a wall.

"He wasn't as big as you," she continued. "Not even close. But it hurt. By the time he came, my throat would be raw and my lips and mouth bruised. And he made me swallow, every time, even if I didn't want to. The one time I tried to spit it out he punched me in the gut so hard I thought I was going to puke.

"But you, baby. You were so soft and kind and caring. Well, maybe not that soft," she said with a wicked giggle as he snorted laughter. "But you let me set the pace. God, it was wonderful.

"Which is why I feel I can do this for you."

Bowing her head, she blew a stream of air across his cock, then slowly licked the throbbing head, spreading his pre-come around the rose-colored tip of his penis. Fighting every instinct, Roy Lee kept his hands on the wheel and let her pleasure him.

Her mouth was hot, so hot, her clever tongue sweeping around his shaft as she sank low, then tickling his slit as she rose up, her lips circling his crown. As she worked on him, her saliva dripped unnoticed down the length of his shaft, soaking the wiry brush of sandy hair at his groin.

"Oh, god, that's good," he groaned, leaning back in his seat to give her as much room as possible. "It's too bad the back seat is full of luggage," he whispered. "Or I would stop by the side of the road and take you right now, and to hell with whoever might see us."

Eileen moaned her approval of his naughty thoughts, an image flashing in her mind's eye of them together, wrapped so tightly around each other it was difficult to tell where one body ended and the other began. He trembled as the vibration of her mouth sounded against his sensitive skin, and she did it again, grinning around his cock as he twitched in pleasure.

Her back began to hurt from her awkward angle and shifting, she found a better position, one leg on the floor, the other on the seat. Happily, that allowed her to use her free hand to dip into her folds, and her arousal redoubled as her dancing fingers slid into her cleft, mimicking his pumping thrusts from the previous night. She closed her eyes, and when she felt his hand drop across her back, gliding from her neck to her ass, and back again, she did nothing but lean into the warm strength of his touch.

"Oh, baby, I love you so much," she whispered, removing her head from his cock so she could let him know how she felt.

"I love you too," Roy Lee replied. He darted a glance downwards to where she knelt, skin gleaming in the afternoon sun, and his eyes were so full of happiness she thought she would burst.

She dropped her head to his shaft again, her strokes quicker now, wanting to prove her love for him, and to make him prove his desire for her with his orgasm. Bracing an elbow on the center storage area, she pumped him with her hand while her head rose and fell, lips and tongue eager for his seed. She burbled happily around the slick skin of his cock as she felt his hand leave her back and settle on the bouncing flesh of her tit, one finger delicately stroking her pebble-hard nipple.

Roy Lee felt his climax approach. With an effort that wrenched his mind, he forced his hand away from his aunt's heaving breast and clamped down on the wheel. Unbidden, his hips began to rise, his cock pushing into Eileen's eager mouth. Her cries grew frantic, and she pulled away enough for her hand to fly up and down the length of his rod as the first mighty spasm ripped through him, sending a spurt of his seed directly into her open mouth.

"I'm cumming, Eileen! Oh God, I'm cumming so hard! Cumming for you!" Barely able to see straight, Roy Lee held the car on the road by sheer strength of will while his cock pulsed, sending streams of his cum into Eileen's mouth, which had now descended to his head, her voice moaning ecstatically as she lapped at his pulsing sex.

As quickly as it had started, his orgasm ended, the last twitches of his muscles sending shudders of pleasure through his body. Her head in his lap, Eileen cleaned his softening phallus with long, slow licks of her tongue, eventually rising up to reveal it, pink and gleaming softly, flaccid against his thigh.

He raised his eyebrows at her as she settled back in her seat. She buckled back in, not bothering to put her shirt back on. "I thought you didn't like to swallow."

She shrugged, which did entrancing things to her breasts. "I didn't like to swallow him." She leaned over and kissed him on the lips, somewhat surprised when he didn't pull away. "I loved swallowing you, baby."

*****

To the happy surprise of a dad in a minivan, driving his family home after a tour of Civil War battlefields, they did the same thing again two hours later, just east of St. Louis.

*****

"Did you know," Eileen said quietly as they drove through the sunset into central Missouri, "That a woman's sex drive increases as she ages? And that her sexual peak is generally between ages thirty-five and forty-five?" She was slowly skimming through a web page on her cell phone with one hand, the other being occupied with her aching pussy. Her feet were on the dashboard, and her skirt, the only piece of clothing which had stayed on her body through the long, passion-soaked afternoon, was bunched at her hips. The orange light of the sinking sun painted her body with a warm glow, once that matched the craving inside her for her nephew's body.

Not long now, she sighed to herself.

"I think I had heard that somewhere," Roy Lee, replied, his voice sounding strangled in his ears.

"And also," Eileen continued with a sly glance from under her lids, "the more aroused a woman is, the better prepared her body is to welcome a man inside her." Her index finger slowly slid between her seeping folds, the scent of her musk surrounding them both. She shuddered as she eased two of her fingers deep into her canal, the pad of her thumb pressing against her clit. Beside her, Roy Lee shifted uncomfortably, his fingers adjusting his prick inside his jeans, and she could see how he tried to ease the discomfort his steel-hard phallus was causing him.

"What's the matter, baby?" she asked innocently, her voice at odds with her smoldering gaze. "Is your cock all hard again? Do you want Auntie Eileen to help you out?"

"No," he said. "If you blow me one more time I'm going to have a hard time getting it up when we get to the hotel. And there is no way I'm not going to bed with you tonight."

She faked a pout, but inside her she sang.

Tonight!

*****

They didn't make it to the bed. They barely made it through the door..

The remainder of the drive had been torture, as Eileen whispered to Roy Lee all the things she wanted him to do with her. If the desk clerk at the hotel had noticed the way they could barely keep their hands off each other, she was at least polite enough not to mention it.

The door had hardly closed behind them when Roy Lee turned with a growl, grabbing Eileen by her thighs and hoisting her into his arms, her back against the door. Instantly, her arms curled around his neck, her hot mouth descending on his, but she flinched away as his denim-clad cock rubbed against her groin.

"No, baby, no," she whimpered into his ear. Still braced against the door, she brought her feet around and pushed his thighs away from her damp folds. "I'm too sensitive down there. Take off your pants, baby, please."

For a moment, she thought he would ignore her. But slowly, sanity returned to his eyes and he backed up just enough for his hands to drop to the buttons of his jeans. Her eyes watched him hungrily as she wrapped her legs around his stomach, leaving his hands free.

Staggering slightly, he kicked his shoes off, then stepped out of his jeans. With skill that surprised even him, he managed to pull his socks off by standing on a loose fold of cloth and lifting his leg, then repeating it for the other foot.

When at last his lower body was free, he grinned into her eyes as she lowered herself to him, his throbbing phallus nestling into the wet folds of her sex.

"Better?"

"Oh, baby, so much better," she moaned, the burning pulse of his cock goading her own desire. She murmured her approval as his hands cupped the sweet curves of her buttocks, and drew his head to hers for another soul-searing kiss, tongues playing roughly with each other, her teeth nipping at his lower lip.

Roy Lee fought against his basest instincts. The urge was there. To plunge into her and rut like a beast, caring nothing for her desire or pleasure. Instead, still holding her in his arms, he stepped away from the door and backed up until he reached the bed, flopping backward so when they landed her weight was on top of him, hers the choice as to what action they would take next.

If he had any doubt of her desire for him, it was lost in that moment. Face alight with joy, she knelt above him and pulled off her shirt. Her skirt and shoes quickly followed until she was naked as a jaybird, from her sandy brown hair to her pink toenails.

"Well," Eileen said with a throaty chuckle. "Looks like I win. I'm naked first."

"Barely," he smiled.

"Lift up," she commanded, and helped him pull off his own shirt.

"Oh, baby," she said, looking at him, her eyes soft. "You're beautiful."

"So are you."

She murmured her approval, and bent to kiss him again, his hands finding her breasts, his thumbs on the tips of her nipples. As he squeezed her beautiful orbs, her hips slowly churned, the fluid of her arousal coating his cock with her essence. A lewd squelching sound came from where their bodies joined, and she giggled into his ear at the audible proof of their lust.

Suddenly, his cock twitched, and his head was poised at the entrance to her tunnel. Eyes wide, she looked at him.

"Did you do that?" she asked, her body still, the small muscles of her thighs trembling as his seeping crown, pulse beating hotly, throbbed against her aching cleft.

"Don't look at me," Roy Lee gasped, fighting his every impulse, trying not to thrust his hips upwards and at last breach her gates. "Damn thing has a mind of its own. Can't take it anywhere."

She moved slightly, watching in fascination as his rod jumped like a bass on a hook. "That has to be...inconvenient...sometimes."

"You got that right," he agreed, face red. "Sometimes I get morning wood in the late afternoon."

She cocked a confused eyebrow at him, then giggled softly and resumed her slow, torturous stroking of his rod. "Poor boy. I should really help you out."

She paused at the top of a stroke and sat up, her eyes fixed on his. With a slight cant of her hips, she opened to him, taking his magnificent length inside her in one slow, smooth act, until her lips were flush with his groin, their bodies fused together.

From both their mouths came an ecstatic groan, and Roy Lee's arms came hard around the small of her back as they finally joined.

"No foreplay?" he whispered, his voice teasing in her ear.

"What the hell do you think we've been doing the last six or seven hours?" she retorted, rising up on her elbows so she could look into his beloved face. She shut her eyes against the feelings of rapture as his cock rubbed her inner walls, filling her mind with delight. "If we do much more foreplay I'll have a fucking stroke, I'm so damn horny for you."

In answer, he bent his head, taking her burning nipple into his mouth. A bolt of pleasure lanced from her breast to her belly and she panted into his ear, her own tongue reaching out to trace the whorl of his earlobe. She felt him moan happily, the vibration making her nipple tighten even more.

The combination of his skilled mouth, his warm, loving hands, and his amazing cock drove her wild. With happiness that was almost tinged with regret, she felt her orgasm approaching. Not fair, a tiny, selfish part of her mind pouted. I need more time!

Hush, she told it. You have all the time in the world. Time enough for love, at least. She raised her head and looked into her nephew's eyes. Understanding her immediately, he smiled at her.

"Me, too," he said. Indeed, she could feel his cock thicken as she drove her cleft down on him, filling her more and more tightly as his climax drew near.

With a hoarse shout, his hands clutched her hips, and she felt the spreading warmth in her belly as he spent himself inside her, his seed spewing deep into her core. At almost the same instant, her muscles quaked as her womb clutched his throbbing rod, and her back arched in rapture, sending her over the edge into orgiastic bliss.

Panting, she collapsed on his chest, their sweat mingling.

"God..." she started.

"Damn," he finished.

*****

They made love again before they went to sleep, curled in each other's arms.

Twice.

*****

And then again the next morning, before they left the hotel.

And in Denver, reaching the "mile-high club", as Roy Lee playfully put it.

And in a moment of horny insanity, on a conveniently straight section of Interstate 70, Eileen bouncing in his lap as he drove down the highway, eyes wide and terrified.

And the morning before they left Pocatello, only a few hours away from Promise.

If Eileen had not known better, she would have guessed that Roy Lee was nervous about meeting his mother.

Fortunately, she knew her nephew, and realized that he was fucking petrified.

She reached out her hand and clasped his as they stood outside the post office of Promise, Montana. Population: Six thousand, eight

hundred and seventy-two. Elevation: Five thousand and forty-seven feet. Above them, a sky of robin's-egg blue stretched to the distant western mountains.

She zipped up her heavy jacket, wondering if Jillian had considered the climate before moving here from Des Moines. The morning air was chillier than any she had experienced except for the dead of winter in Deer Creek.

"Are you ready?" she asked.

He gave a jerky nod. "Let's go."

The post office was small, basically one long room, with a low counter dividing it in half. A middle-aged man sat in a chair, thumbing through a magazine. He nodded at them and climbed slowly to his feet.

"Can I help you folks?" he asked.

Roy Lee felt Eileen squeeze his hand. Squaring his shoulders, he nodded. "My name is Roy Lee McCoy," he said, watching as the man's eyebrows shot skyward, hearing his southern drawl. He nodded towards Eileen. "This is my aunt, Eileen Harris. We're looking for my mother, her sister. Jillian McCoy. She moved here about seven years ago. I was hoping you could tell us where she lives."

The man leaned back, considering. "If she is your mother, why don't you know where she lives?"

Roy Lee nodded, accepting the man's point. "She ran away from my daddy when I was fourteen. She didn't want him to find out where she went. My uncle, her husband," he continued, nodding again at Eileen, "isn't the best of men. He might have tried to drag her back to Alabama."

"Alabama, eh? Is that where you folks are from?"

Roy Lee nodded.

"Well, I think you made one heck of a long trip for nothing, son. I don't know anyone named Jillian McCoy. Not here in Promise, at least. Are you sure you have the right town?"

Roy Lee glanced at Eileen. "Well, pretty sure. Are you certain no one by that name lives here?"

The clerk smiled. "I've lived here all my life. Man and boy. Sorry, kid. I don't know a Jillian McCoy."

Roy Lee's face was grim with disappointment, but he allowed Eileen to guide him out the door.

"Well, what now?" he asked bitterly, shooting a resentful glance back inside the post office. "Dried up old coot," he muttered.

Eileen looked up the street, and grinned. Taking Roy Lee's hand, she tugged him forward.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Remember that Waffle Hut back in Tennessee? Where the waitress helped us find a pawn shop, a thrift shop, and a cell phone outlet?

"If anyone in town knows where your momma is, this is the place to start."

*****

The diner was mostly empty. A big man in his early forties occupied one booth along the far wall, but seemed to be the only other customer at this mid-morning hour. As Eileen and Roy Lee sat down, an older woman approached them, an order pad already appearing in one hand. She was tall and lanky, and looked like she had been serving coffee to tired ranchers for decades.

"How can I help you?" she asked, a professional smile on her face.

Eileen looked at him, and he nodded. She had let him take the lead at the post office. He was letting her take the lead here.

"Good morning," she said, and smiled as she received the expected reaction.

"Good lord, you're not from around here, are you, honey?"

She shook her head with a smile. "I'm Eileen Harris, and this is my nephew, Roy Lee McCoy. We're up from Alabama."

The waitress nodded. "I'm Georgia. What brings you here?"

"Well, breakfast, to start out with," Eileen smiled. Georgia snorted laughter.

"Right you are. Anything to drink to start?"

"You don't happen to have any hot chocolate, do you?" Roy Lee asked wistfully.

"We sure do, honey," Georgia said, pencil flying over her pad. "You, miss?"

"Large orange juice, please."

"Be right up," Georgia said, and walked back to the counter, only pausing to stop by the man in the other booth. Not wanting to seem like she was spying, Eileen looked away, but stretched her ears. The only word she could make out though, was Alabama. Looking up, she caught sight of sharp gray eyes in an intelligent face.

Glancing to the side, she saw her nephew frowning at her. "Aren't you going to ask her, Aunt Eileen?" Roy Lee asked.

"Slowly, baby," she said, reaching for his hand. He tensed, then relaxed. "These people don't know us. If they know Jillian, they're not going to volunteer information. So let's take it slow, make sure they know we're decent people before we give them the third degree."

Twenty minutes later, Roy Lee was plowing through a stack of pancakes, while Eileen ate a bowl of honey-sweetened oatmeal and a dish of mixed fruit. Georgia drifted by and paused at their table.

"Is everything okay, folks?"

Roy Lee grunted enthusiastically, not even bothering to swallow, while Eileen flashed Georgia a blinding smile. "Everything is wonderful. You folks do a good job."

Georgia nodded. "In a town this small, if you start slacking off, people find out in a hurry," she said. "So, what brings you to Promise, if I can ask? We don't get many tourists from Alabama, especially this time of year."

"We're looking for my sister," Eileen said bluntly. Roy Lee choked and reached for his glass of water. "She ran away from her husband about nine years back and settled in Promise about six or seven years ago. This here's her son," she said, nodding at him.

"Hmmm," Georgia said, her face guarded. "This sister have a name?"

"Jillian Mae McCoy."

Georgia shook her head. "I don't know anyone named Jillian McCoy."

Eileen hung her head, but Roy Lee had caught the faint stress Georgia had placed on his mother's last name. He looked up. "And what about Jillian Coulter?" he asked, using his mother's maiden name.

"Jillian Coulter," Georgia mused. "Now that is a name I do know," she said softly. She nodded sharply, seeming to reach a decision. "You folks stay here," she said. "I'll be back in a minute."

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Two minutes later and eight miles away, a cell phone rang. A small woman, her ash-blond hair damp with sweat, set down the bawling calf which she had just inoculated and plucked her phone from her pocket with a filthy, mud-smeared hand.

"Hello?"

Thirty seconds later, her partner had to pick the phone out of the muck as she bolted for her truck.

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Eileen and Roy Lee sat uneasily in the booth. Georgia had refused to answer any more questions, and it was only by threatening him with bloody mayhem that Eileen kept her lover from pestering the waitress.

He took a final sip of water, the ice cubes rattling in the glass as he set it back down on the table. He raised his head as he heard the door of the diner open.

A woman stood in the doorway, her eyes huge in her hungry face. He slowly slipped out of the booth as she walked toward him. He knew her. He had seen her in every possible light, in every possible mood.

"Momma?" he asked, his voice soft and wondering.

"Hello, Roy Lee," she answered, voice quavering with tears. "My, how you've grown," she finished, with a laugh that was half a sob.

"MOMMA!" he shouted, delirious, and spun her in a circle, her feet flailing helplessly as he picked her up. When he set her down they were both crying, and he hugged her, his face buried in her shoulder, unashamed.

Sheriff Delzecki stood up and placed his arm around Georgia's shoulder as they watched the joyful reunion. The sheriff frowned as the younger woman stood, joining the young man and his mother, and was greeted with equally happy cries.

"Good call, Georgia," he said quietly.

"I thought so."

"So what's the deal with the boy and Jillian's sister?" he asked.

"Those two? Oh, they're head over heels in love with each other," she said easily.

The sheriff sighed and put on his coat. "Well, I've got enough to do without wondering who's sleeping with who," he said, a small smile playing around his lips. He tipped a finger to his forehead in a salute. "Morning, Georgia."

"Morning, sheriff," she replied as he walked out the door. She smiled as the reunited family sat down in the booth exactly as she expected, with Roy Lee's mother sitting opposite her son and her sister.

"Hello, Jillian," she said with a smile, opening her pad. "What'll it be?"

Chapter 2

"So, Roy Lee, exactly what the hell are you doing here, anyway?" his mother asked. Across the table from her, his Aunt Eileen smiled and covered her mouth with her hand.

So far, the long-anticipated reunion with his mother could not have started better, as far as Roy Lee McCoy was concerned. After a four-day drive to Promise, Montana, with his Aunt Eileen (who had somehow become his lover during the trip) they had encountered a minimum of difficulty in reuniting with Roy Lee's mother Jillian, who was also Eileen's sister. But the happy glow had faded from Jillian's eyes, and she was looking him with a much more wary expression. Roy Lee's stomach tightened. Was she nervous that her alcoholic husband, his father, was waiting in the wings? Or maybe it was Aunt Eileen's abusive husband she was afraid of?

Roy Lee hesitated before he answered, then shrugged his shoulders. "Depends on your point of view, I guess. Either I'm running away from Deer Creek, or I'm running towards you.

"I couldn't take it anymore, Momma," he said. Georgia, the waitress at the diner where they were meeting, slid a mug of coffee in front of Jillian. She gave her an absent nod and concentrated on her son, who she had not seen in nearly ten years. "Daddy just got worse and worse after you left. He couldn't hold a job, and after a while he stopped even pretending to look for one. The house was falling to pieces. When I got a job with old Mr. Stebbin at the junkyard to help with the bills after I graduated high school, Daddy started charging me rent."

"He what?" Jillian's voice was outraged.

Roy Lee nodded. "By the end, I was paying half the utilities, too. And for the groceries."

Jillian turned her shocked face to her sister. Eileen spread her hands. "What can I say, Jilly? After you left, Dale just climbed into the bottle. I don't know if he'll ever climb out."

"I was afraid if I waited any longer, I'd be taking care of him for the rest of my life. So I decided to leave. I saved twenty thousand dollars," Roy Lee said with considerable pride. "It took me three years. I could have left earlier, but I wanted a safety net in case I had a hard time finding a job. Last Friday I picked up my last check and packed up when Daddy left for the football game against Moulton."

"Football," muttered Jillian in a disgusted voice. "Thank God you didn't get mixed up with that. Or did you? Please tell me you didn't get your brains turned to mush." She narrowed her eyes, as if she could look through Roy Lee's skull and see concussions, brain damage and encroaching dementia.

Her son looked good, actually. Taller than his father, but with a calm, low-key air which reminded her of her own father, back before he died of a stroke when she was only twenty-two, and Eileen was just seventeen and still in high school. His light brown hair was the same shade as her sister's, and his light blue eyes stood out in his tanned, clean-shaven face. His arms were long and gave him a gangly look, but his shoulders were starting to broaden as he matured. His thin,

clever hands toyed idly with his water glass as he withstood her scrutiny.

He shook his head, smiling as he answered her. "Nope. I think that was the last straw as far as Daddy was concerned. When I went out for track rather than football. He was convinced I was gay. Which I'm not," he added hastily.

"It wouldn't make you a bad person if you were," said Eileen with a wicked glint in her eye, which made Roy Lee blush.

"Pssh," Jillian said. "I could tell you weren't gay when you were ten. You had an eye for the girls even then. So you waited till Dale went to the ballgame. And then?" she prompted.

"I loaded everything I wanted to take with me into the back of my car." He nodded at the Dodge sitting in front of the diner. It was, Jillian noted with some amusement, riding more than a little low. "I had no idea where I was going to go. I was thinking about a decent-sized city where I'd be hard to find, in case Daddy took it into his head to come look for me. Charlotte, St. Louis, Memphis, Louisville. Someplace like that. I was pretty sure I could find work at a body shop or a car dealership. But I decided to stop by Aunt Eileen's hair salon to let her know I was leaving, so she could tell Daddy if he ever got around to wondering where I went. And then..." He trailed off.

Eileen took up the thread of the conversation. "I convinced him to take me with him," she said, leaving out the fact part of the 'convincing' had consisted of a blow-job in the salon itself. "Bobby Ray...the way he treated me...it was unbearable, Jilly." She looked

down at her hands, her voice thick with self-disgust. "I should never have married him. By the end, I was damn near a prisoner in my own home. When Roy Lee told me he was leaving, it was like a miracle straight from God. I would have done anything to get out of town by then." At her side, Roy Lee started, and gave her a quick look. Thankfully, his mother didn't catch it.

"I think Aunt Eileen set an all-time Alabama record packing," he said cheerfully, trying to disguise the unpleasant thought which had occurred to him. "We were in and out in twenty minutes. Once we got on the road, she told me where you were living. Wild horses couldn't have kept me away after I found that out."

"I guess not," Jillian said, impressed. "You drove something like two thousand miles in three and a half days. And it didn't take you long to find me, once you were here in town."

"That was all Aunt Eileen," Roy Lee said modestly. "I struck out at the post office, but she had the idea of asking after you here at the diner."

"I come here a lot," Jillian said with a smile. As if in confirmation, Georgia came by and placed a plate of scrambled eggs, hash browns, and sausage in front of her.

"But what about you, Jilly?" Eileen asked. She reached across the table to grip her sister's hand. "All I've had from you for the past nine years are postcards. What happened? What do you do for a living? Have you found yourself another man?"

Eileen hadn't seen her sister for nearly a decade. Fearful of what her husband might do if he found out where she was, terrified of her brother-in-law, Jillian had all but disappeared from her life. Every few months, Eileen would do a search for her on the internet, and come up empty. No Facebook page, no twitter account, no e-mail address. As far as the outside world was concerned, Jillian Coulter McCoy might as well not exist.

But she sat across from her now, and all the old memories came flooding back. Small, yes. But she had always been the small one. Eileen had passed her in height when she was only fourteen. Her ash-blond hair, a gift from their mother, fell in gentle waves past her shoulders. Her face was triangular, with wide-set blue eyes and a narrow, pointed chin which gave her an adorable pixie-like quality. Even dressed in heavy clothes and with her face red from the outside chill, she made Eileen feel like a Clydesdale standing next to a racehorse.

I've got bigger boobs, though, thought Eileen, with some satisfaction. Maybe not better, she continued as she eyed her sister's high, firm bust. But definitely bigger. She shifted in her seat, welcoming the press of Roy Lee's knee and leg against her own. Warmth pooled in her belly, and she wondered how long it would be until they had time alone to make love again.

Good Lord, girl, she reprimanded herself. You just screwed this morning. You don't need to fuck all the time, you know!

But I'm horny. Ever since I took up with Roy Lee, I've been horny for him all the time. And it feels awesome. I'm making up for damn near twenty years of celibacy in a loveless marriage. And I don't care.

Jillian took a bite of hash browns, her eyes screwing up in pleasure. "Nine years," she mused, breaking Eileen's reverie. "It doesn't seem that long. And then I look at my boy here, all grown up, and it seems like it's been a lifetime.

"I'm sorry I left you, Roy Lee," she said carefully, trying to soften the bluntness of her words. "But I'm not sorry I left. I hope you're smart enough to understand the difference."

He nodded. "I think I do."

"Well, then," she continued. "I lived in Des Moines for a while. It was a nice town, but still too big for a country girl from Deer Creek. So one day, I was in my little apartment, so homesick I thought I was going to die, and I decided to leave. I picked up my old road atlas, closed my eyes, flipped through the pages, and stabbed my finger down. Totally at random. And it came down on Promise, Montana.

"And I thought, why not? It was small enough to not be a big town, but big enough for me to blend in. I thought it over for a couple of days, did a little research, and packed up and left when my lease was up.

"It was harder than I hoped, but not as tough as I was afraid it would be. I got here in the spring." She sighed. "I hope you both stay here long enough to see it. Spring is a gorgeous time in Montana. I still can't believe how beautiful it gets here. The mountains and the valleys bursting into color, and the streams full of snow-melt..." She trailed off, her eyes far away.

"Anyway, I picked up some temp work right away. And the people are...how can I describe them?" She frowned as she thought, searching for the right words. Behind her, the front door opened and closed. Leather-faced ranchers and their farmhands began to fill the diner for lunch. Several of them nodded greetings at Jillian, and she responded with friendly smiles, greeting many by name.

"Promise is a special place," she said at last. "I can't say it any better than that. People look out for each other here. And it isn't the always-looking-over-your-shoulder sort of thing we all grew up with back home. No one's watching you to see if you're sinning. You don't have the God-damned Southern Baptist Convention camped out on the front lawn if someone suspects you're gay, or an atheist, or if you're having an affair. They're making sure you're all right and seeing if you need any help.

"I think a lot of it comes from where we are. We live close to the edge here, and it's real easy to die if you ain't careful. Blizzards, floods, wind. Montana can kill you quick. So we all watch out for each other.

"I'm not saying it's perfect. We've had troubles here. In this very building, even. Heck, just last winter a man beat up his daughter, then crashed his truck and killed himself, not six blocks away. But the town rallied together and took care of the girl. She's happy and healthy and looking to get married soon.

"So when I showed up they helped me out. I didn't have any real skills. But I was willing to work. That counts for a lot. Some of these old ranchers are real set in their ways, and wouldn't dream of hiring a woman to help with the stock. But some are more open-minded.

They don't care what you got between your legs as long as you got something between your ears. So I got along all right.

"And a...a friend of mine recommended that I get some real training. He lent me the money. And now I'm a certified veterinary assistant. In fact, when Georgia called, I was outside town inoculating a batch of calves..." Her voice trailed off as she became aware of a familiar presence nearby, looking on with mild amusement. A horrified look entered her eyes. "Oh, shit."

A dark-skinned, medium-sized man was standing near the counter. His black hair was sprinkled with gray, and Roy Lee could not help noticing he smelled faintly like a barnyard.

He grinned at Jillian, the expression making the crow's-feet crinkle cheerfully at the edges of his eyes. "Forget something, chica?" He leaned forward and set a mud-covered cell phone on the edge of the table.

"Paco! I'm so sorry!" Blushing, Jillian hung her head, her ash-blond hair falling around her face.

"Indeed, you should be," he said, his smile taking the sting out of his words. "Leaving me with half the calves, running away who knows where? Lucky for you I saw your truck outside. Still, it gave poor little Tamarin a turn when she saw you tearing down the driveway. I had to promise to come find you and see if you were all right." He turned an inquiring eye to Roy Lee and Eileen.

"Paco, I'd like you to meet my son, Roy Lee McCoy, and my sister, Eileen Harris. Roy Lee, Eileen, this is my boss and good friend, Paco Gutierrez. He's the man I was telling you about. He helped me get on my feet when I got here and helped me get my veterinary assistant certification." Jillian moved to the side, making room for Paco to slide in beside her.

Eileen eyed the newcomer. He was dressed like Jilly, in a denim jacket over a heavy flannel shirt over a t-shirt. He wore heavy jeans and boots, both liberally splattered with mud and manure. She would have guessed his age at a well-preserved fifty. With a woman's intuition, she could tell immediately that theirs was no ordinary employer-employee relationship.

"So," she said, her voice lightly teasing. "Just how good a friend is he, Jilly?"

Jilly smiled, her hand covering Paco's. Her small fingers caressed his dirt-stained knuckles. "We were together for a while. Several months, in fact. I was working on one of the ranches south of town. Enough to get by, but not enough to feel comfortable. Paco convinced me if I wanted to stay out here and have some long-term security, I should go for my certificate. He lent me the money, I got certified, and he hired me as his assistant. And then he broke up with me."

Paco winced. "You don't have to make it sound so cold, Jilly," he protested. "We both agreed it was for the best. Can't dip your pen in the company ink," he explained to Eileen, who nodded.

"I understand," she said. "So do you do mostly large-animal work?"

Jillian shook her head. "Just the opposite, really. Most of the ranchers here look after their own stock for ordinary things. We only get called out in an emergency. Most of our work is in town. Dogs and cats and other pets. But Tamarin is a special case. She's the girl who I was telling you about a little bit ago. Her father piled up his truck and got his fool self killed. She's got a boyfriend-"

"More like a manfriend," put in Paco. "Brody's damn near twice her age."

"You hush," Jillian scolded. "But he's still learning the farm life. So we went out to help inoculate the calves today. She has a small dairy herd and is looking to expand if things work out.

"Which means Paco and I have to get back out there and finish up." She drank the last of her coffee and set the mug down firmly. Paco slid out of the booth, and she followed, shoving her phone into a jacket pocket. "Where are you two staying?"

Roy Lee looked at Eileen. "We just got into town a couple of hours ago," he said. "We haven't gotten a hotel room. We haven't really made any plans, to be honest. We just wanted to find you."

She smiled. "I thought so." She pulled out a key ring. "Here," she said, handing them a set of house keys. "You all can stay at my place until you get yourselves settled. No reason to pay for a hotel. We have a couple of decent ones out by the interstate, but they sell you the same room day after day, and that'll eat up your cash right quick. I've got

a spare bedroom where you can sleep, Eileen, and I suppose Roy Lee can sleep on the couch.

"Make yourselves at home. I should be back sometime around five-thirty, unless we have an emergency call." She gave them directions to her house, Eileen writing them down on a napkin. Then she stuck some bills under her plate to pay for her meal and left the diner, Paco following. She waved cheerfully at them as she climbed into her truck, and they returned the gesture.

"Ready to go?" Eileen asked. She pulled one of Roy Lee's hands off the table and placed it on her inner thigh, enjoying the heat as it soaked through her slacks. She squeezed her legs together, trapping his hand, and shuddered at the sheer pleasure of his touch.

"In more ways than one," he grinned at her.

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His mother's house was a one-story ranch, not too far from the small business district. The front yard, though already brown with frost this far north, was neatly trimmed. Two small maple trees, a few red leaves still bravely clinging to their branches, flanked the driveway. As they climbed out of the car, an elderly woman, dressed in purple slacks and a black sweater, walked out of the house next door and stood looking at them from her porch.

"Can I help you folks out with anything?" she asked, as Roy Lee popped the trunk and began pulling their luggage out. Although her

tone was politely inquisitive, there was a thread of suspicion in her words.

"Hi!" Eileen said brightly, walking over to greet the stranger. "I'm Eileen Harris. That there is Roy Lee McCoy," she continued, nodding at him. "He's Jillian's son, come up from Alabama to see his momma. We're going to be staying with her for a few days, maybe longer, while we get on our feet. He hasn't seen her since she ran away from his daddy, nearly ten years gone by. We just met her down at the diner, and she gave us the keys so we could unpack while she is out doing her veterinary work." She held the key-ring out as evidence.

The woman's face softened, and she smiled at Eileen. Her seamed face was a cheerful net of wrinkles. "Well, he's got the look of her, all right," she said, giving Roy Lee a keen glance as he wandered up to the porch. "Good for her. She's often told me about her boy. I'm Geraldine Templeton, and we've been neighbors for nearly four years now.

"I was just making sure you was all-right folks. Not many people would be crazy enough to try to rob a house in broad daylight, but it's happened before." She shivered in the chilly breeze. "I'm just going to go back inside now. But if you need anything, come on by."

"Old busybody," Roy Lee grumbled as they unlocked the front door and hauled the first few suitcases into the house.

"She was looking out for a neighbor and a friend, Roy Lee," Eileen countered. "What was she supposed to think? Two strangers in a car with Alabama plates show up and make themselves at home. Ain't

that just a little suspicious? Your momma has probably shared a bit of her history with Geraldine over there, and asked her to keep an eye on the place, in case your Daddy or Bobby Ray ever show up here."

Despite himself, Roy Lee shivered at the thought of Eileen's brutal, sadistic husband. His own father was a harmless drunk, but Bobby Ray Harris was a deputy sheriff, and had far too much power for someone with his temperament. The slowly fading bruises on Eileen's arms and shoulders were a testament to his hair-trigger volatility.

"Well, this is a nice little place," Eileen said approvingly. She set one of his suitcases, picked up at a thrift store a few days ago, down in the living room, and surveyed her surroundings.

Roy Lee had to agree. The house was low-set and rambling, but had a simple charm. The front room held an entertainment center, piled with DVDs, and an interesting set of mismatched furniture which nonetheless managed to please the eye. Brightly covered afghans were draped over the backs of the couch and the recliner. Photographs of the surrounding mountains were hung on the walls, giving the room an outdoors feel.

Following his aunt, he walked into a sparsely-furnished dining room, which held little more than a table and chairs and a bookcase stuffed with novels. To the right was the kitchen, and through it he could see a hallway.

"So where are the bedrooms?" Eileen said, one of her duffel bags slung over her shoulder. Roy Lee followed through the dim hallway. Two doors opened on their left, and one, further down, on the right.

"I think we found them," he grinned. He twisted the doorknob and shouldered the door open, hauling in two of Eileen's suitcases. He backed out just as quickly, his face flaming.

"Not this one," he muttered, trying to keep his aunt from seeing what he had glimpsed on the bedside table.

"What's wrong, baby?" she asked, seeing his red face.

"Nothing. Let's go."

Eileen looked inside, and began to giggle. She walked across the polished hardwood floor and picked up the vibrator, waving it at him.

"What's the matter, baby? Haven't you ever seen one of these before?"

"Of course I have," he replied, stung by her tone. "But I didn't expect to see it..."

"See it in your mother's bedroom?" She finished his thought for him. "Jillian isn't that much older than I am, Roy Lee. And God knows what you have done to me the past few days. Is it that surprising to know she enjoys sex, and likes to get herself off?"

He turned away and walked down the hall. The second door on the left proved to be the guest bedroom, slightly musty with disuse. He set his aunt's luggage down on the floor and turned to see her standing in the doorway, her arms crossed. The duffel was on the floor at her feet.

"I asked you a question, baby."

"She's my mother, Eileen!"

"And I'm your aunt," she said softly. She walked to him until their bodies were touching. "It hasn't stopped you from seeing me as a woman, has it? Why should your mother be different?

"Oh, stop it," she continued, as he opened his mouth in protest. "No one is saying you should go to bed with Jilly. Especially not me. I'm just a little bit selfish right now." She dropped her hand down between their bodies so she could gently rub his crotch. To her delight, he began to harden under her touch almost immediately. "But just remember. We're guests here. Your momma has needs, too. She's been living alone. She might have a boyfriend, or she might not. But whatever she is, she is also a woman.

"And a woman needs sex," she finished, pulling off her t-shirt, revealing her silk bra, "Like I do. Right now.

"So shut up and kiss me."

"Shouldn't we finish unpacking first?"

"No," she said, as she untucked his shirt and pulled it up to expose his chest. He raised his arms, helping her pull it off. Her lips nibbled his nipples, making his stomach muscles jump. "Because if we unpack first, we might not have time to fuck before Jilly gets home. But if we fuck now, who cares if we don't finish unpacking?"

"Not me," he breathed. He let his hands drift over her back, then unhooked her bra. She shrugged her shoulders and let the straps fall away, exposing her lovely chest. Roy Lee's breath caught in his throat. As many times as he had seen Eileen's breasts over the past few days, he never grew tired of the sight. Paler than the skin of her face, almost milk-white, they defied both her age and gravity, sitting high and proud, capped with coral-pink nipples.

He bent his knees until his face was level with her chest, and nuzzled her beautiful orbs with his lips and cheeks. Eileen sighed and pulled his head closer, until his lips had latched onto her nipple, and he was sucking urgently. Under his tongue, her flesh tautened, forming a thick bud. His tongue slowly flicked over it, grazing her sensitive skin even as she moaned into his ear.

As soon as one nipple was hard and firm, he switched to her other breast. It was a constant source of wonder to him; the power he had over this gorgeous woman. That with the smallest, lightest touches, he could make her nipples hard, her pussy wet, even make her shudder in orgasm. His cock grew, straining at his jeans, and he reached around her back to grab her ass, pulling her in tighter to him. She raised up on her toes so she could grind her crotch against his hardening pole.

Eileen pulled her arms away from him and shoved him backwards until he was sprawled on the bed. He grinned up at her and kicked off his shoes. As she tugged on the cuffs of his jeans, he unbuttoned his fly, so she could pull them off and toss them negligently across the room. In moments, she had slipped out of her own hip-hugging slacks. To Roy Lee's happy surprise, she wore nothing underneath, and her shaven pussy lips smiled at him as she crawled onto the bed.

"God, I'm so horny," she moaned into his mouth. She fished his cock out of his boxers and sat on it, rubbing urgently. "I couldn't stop thinking about you at the diner. How your momma would react if she knew we were lovers. It made me feel so dirty." She cradled his head in her hands, her nails pricking his scalp. He hefted her large breasts in his hands and squeezed, making her groan.

"Right there, baby, yeah. You make me feel so good," she said, as he followed her instructions.

"So what you said at the diner, to Momma, about doing anything to get out of Deer Creek," he said tentatively, "Was that true?"

Her eyes focused on him, sharp as lasers. "Of course it was. I told you that back at the salon, right before I shoved your pants down and started sucking your wonderful cock," she said. "Oh," she continued, catching the hurt look in his eye. "You idiot," she said, her voice exasperated. "Do you think I'm with you just because of that?

"If all I needed was a way out of town, I would have left you as soon as we crossed the state line. After nearly twenty years with Bobby

Ray, there's no way I'm ever having sex again with a man I don't want.

"Which means I want you, Roy Lee. I love you. You're a good-looking man and a great lover. But the most important thing," she continued, as her nether lips stroked his rock-hard cock, making them both moan, "is that you're a good man. You care for people. You help them out. You treat me right.

"And once I've divorced that pig I've been married to, we're going to have a serious talk about our future."

Roy Lee's mind reeled, shaken to its foundations. Marriage? Was his aunt seriously considering marriage to him?

Be careful what you wish for, the old joke ran through his brain. You might get it. A few minutes ago he had been worried he was only a means to an end for his aunt. That she had been using him, and as soon as she was safe, the glorious sessions of lovemaking which they shared would end as quickly as flicking off a switch. That he would be abandoned, their short love affair a topic which would never be spoken of again. A reminder of past shame.

Now, though...

He put the thoughts out of his mind and concentrated on her. The declaration of love had made him even hornier, if such a thing was possible, and he buried his face in her breasts, pulling Eileen down on top of him. He switched back and forth from one to the other. He

licked, he squeezed, he sucked, he nibbled, until she was gasping. Her face reddened and she pulled his hair until he raised his face and she devoured his mouth in a series of tongue-wet kisses which drove him to the brink. His hips pushed up into her, the wet heat of her pussy driving him wild.

As if she anticipated his imminent eruption, the movement of her groin slowed, her lips softly stroking his cock, wet with her inner moisture. His boxers, still somehow in place around his hips, were damp with sweat and other fluids. Her hands reached down to fondle his balls, but was foiled by the clinging cloth. She quickly raised up and pulled off the offending garment, pausing only to hold it to her face, her nose buried in the cloth.

"Oh," she said, her eyes gleaming when she dropped it to the floor. "You smell so good, Roy Lee. Like a horny young man. With an awesome cock to please me with." Her hand cupped his scrotum, her clever fingers rolling his balls in their sac.

She dropped her head to his ear, her hot breath making him shiver. "They feel full, Roy Lee. Big and full of cum. Are they?" She nipped his earlobe. Her folds ground down on the muscles of his quivering thigh.

"Yes," he whispered. His voice shook with longing.

She kissed his mouth again, her sharp little teeth nibbling at his lips. "Then come and get it," she murmured. She lay down on her back, her hand still slowly jacking his shaft. Her thumb ran around his cock-head, smearing his pre-cum around the bulbous, throbbing tip.

She spread her legs and arched her back, making the cones of her breasts jut upwards. The nipples were twin peaks, wet with his saliva, gleaming in the dim light. "Come and take me, lover."

He rolled over, until his hips were inside the welcoming angle of her thighs. His hands stroked her legs, her flanks, even as he kissed the quivering curves of her taut belly. Raising up, he scooted forward until his shaft was brushing her moist petals. Braced on his arms, he hung above her, his strong chest just barely grazing her quivering breasts. He kissed her cheeks, her nose, her mouth, teasing her with his rock-hard cock, until her legs wrapped around his ass and she begged him to enter her.

"Please, Roy Lee. Please. I need your cock inside me. I need it so bad." She writhed under him, trying to capture his shaft within her silken valley, even as he maneuvered to keep himself clear. He grinned at her as she growled in frustration.

"Rotten kid," she muttered, and reached down to grab his cock. "You're not going anywhere now, are you?" she said sweetly, as he shook his head. "Come here," she ordered. Pulling at his throbbing base, she opened the gates of her sex to him. As his head breached her opening, all trace of resistance faded, and he buried himself in her to the hilt.

Oh, God! Roy Lee groaned in rapture. As many times as they made love, the feeling of her vagina around him never ceased to amaze him. Hot as a furnace, slippery-smooth with desire, he wanted nothing more than to experience the wonderful sensation forever. He stroked slowly, falling into an easy rhythm, watching his sexy aunt's face between short, intense bursts of kissing. Her hips slowly

pumped up at him, catching his beat, and he watched as her skin flushed, darkening from pale white to a delicate pink, centered in her face and breasts.

"You are so beautiful," he breathed. He kissed her lips, his tongue darting into her mouth to taste her. "I love you so much."

"I love you, too, baby," Eileen replied, her eyes shining with joy. Her thighs lifted and squeezed, her legs wrapping around him until he could feel her heels digging into the small of his back. She pulled him down, until they were all but molded together. Face to face, chest to chest, groin to groin. He gasped as her fingers trailed over his neck, then pulled him down in a passionate kiss.

Suddenly, her hips stuttered upwards, catching and lifting him high over her, almost violent in its fierce force.

"Oh, God, baby," she murmured around his lips. "I'm gonna cum. It's going to be...gonna be a big one. Fill me up. Fuck me hard and fill me up with your cum," she grated between clenched teeth. She tore her lips away from him and keened in his ear, caught up in the throes of her impending orgasm. Roy Lee ducked his head into the crook of her neck and obeyed her frantic commands. He sawed his cock in and out of Eileen's hot cleft, his groin mashing down on her swollen lips and the mound of her pubis. Her fingers clutched at his shoulders, and he felt the slick muscles of her vagina tighten around his pounding tool.

"Here we go, baby. Here we go. Cumming. Cumming. Cumminnngg!!" she shrieked, and her hips twisted and bucked

under him. He found himself caught in an unbreakable grip as her muscles milked his molten length, and he shouted aloud as he reached his own climax, filling his aunt's waiting channel with burst after burst of his spurting seed.

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"Wow," Eileen said. "That was a good one." She considered for a moment, snuggling deeper into his arms. "It's better when you can scream. I didn't have to hold back. This time I wasn't worried someone calling hotel security because we were too loud.

"Mmmmm," she sighed, wiggling her bottom into his groin. They were laying spoon-fashion on her bed. She smiled secretly to herself as she felt him stiffen again, his cock growing against her thigh. His arms held her close to him, and his hands were idly playing with her breasts. She closed her eyes as his thumb grazed her sensitive nipple.

I never thought it could be like this, she thought to herself. Now I know I never want anything else. This lovely man in my arms. In my bed. To have. To hold. To be the father of my children?

And why not? There aren't a half-dozen people in this town who know the truth. If we're careful no one else will ever know.

Except Jilly, her traitorous brain pointed out. You'll have a hard time keeping her quiet if she finds out you're fucking her son.

Her eye caught a movement by the door.

"Oh, aren't you the most beautiful thing in the world!"

Roy Lee sat up groggily as Eileen jumped out of the bed. "Thanks, I guess," he said, confused.

"Not you," she said. She turned around, her hands full of a wriggling pile of fur. "Look who came by to say hello."

A tabby cat blinked at him suspiciously from her arms. Striped in bands of black, brown, and dark orange, its green eyes were wide and intelligent. Eileen cradled it, murmuring a string of nonsense-words as she stroked its thick coat. In response, it slitted its eyes and rubbed its head against her chest. The soft rumble of its purr filled the room.

"She's a cutie, isn't she?" said Roy Lee, sitting up on the bed. He extended a finger to the cat, a long-legged adolescent, not quite full-grown. After a moment's consideration, she bumped it with her pink nose, her eyes squinching shut in a cat-smile. He trailed his fingers through the tawny fur. Finding the collar, he peered at the tag. "Fraidy Cat. Is that your name, little lady?"

"Freddy?" asked Eileen. "And how do you know she's a girl?"

"I don't. She just looks like one. And her name's Fraidy Cat. Like what you call the guy who won't go off the high dive at the pool."

"Hmmm," she replied, rubbing her cheek against the soft fur. Fraidy purred ecstatically and kneaded her chest with her paws. "Well, I'm afraid we're going to have to unpack before Jilly gets home. Even she would be suspicious if she got back and we hadn't done anything at all."

Roy Lee groaned, but whether it was at the pun or at the work was anyone's guess.

*****

Two hours later they were as settled as they could be. Eileen had unpacked her clothes and put them away in the closet and bureau in the guest bedroom. Roy Lee, without the advantage of a room of his own, had done his best with the space available. Piles of jeans and t-shirts were stacked neatly behind the couch, and he had put his boxes of books in an out-of-the-way corner. At the least, he thought, the luggage was out of the car and inside the house.

Eileen opened the refrigerator and frowned. "You're going grocery shopping," she announced. "There isn't anything here but leftovers and frozen dinners. If Jilly's going to put us up, the least we can do is fill up her pantry and cook her a few decent meals. There's a Safeway not too far from where we came off the interstate. I'll put together a list for you."

She pulled a page off a notepad she found lying on the kitchen table. After a few minutes of scribbling, she handed it to him. His eyes widened as he took in the list of items.

"We can afford it," she said in answer to his look. "And you'll thank me for it later tonight. When was the last time you had a good, home-cooked meal?"

Roy Lee furrowed his forehead as he pulled on his jacket. "Two-thousand fourteen?" he guessed.

She swatted him. "What? What about Thanksgiving and Christmas, when you and your daddy would come over to my house?"

Roy Lee grinned as he opened the door. "You said home-cooked. Your house wasn't my home."

He managed to close the door behind him just before a well-aimed oven mitt thumped into the window.

*****

Jillian arrived home just after five-thirty. She parked her second-hand truck behind Roy Lee's Dodge and stepped out, stretching her aching back. Christ, but inoculating calves was a pain in the ass. The scrambling, scared animals were too big to lift, but too small to sit on. She and Paco had spent a miserable, chilly afternoon catching, tagging, dosing, and releasing the animals, and all she wanted was a hot shower, a hot meal, and a warm bed, in that order.

She entered the house and immediately knew things had changed in her life. Instead of the familiar silence which had been her guest for years, a murmur of voices greeted her as she walked through the

family room. One was low and warm, the other high, clear, and laughing.

She pulled off her denim jacket and hung it up, then walked into the kitchen. A wonderful aroma surrounded her, and she had to swallow quickly, lest she embarrass herself by drooling down the front of her shirt. Eileen and Roy Lee were standing by the stove. He was clumsily turning something over in a pan, while she gave cheerful instructions. Other pots burbled merrily away, and she thought something was cooking in the oven as well.

Her son must have glimpsed her from the corner of his eye, because he turned around, a pair of tongs still gripped in his hand.

"Hi, Momma," he said, gathering her into a hug. Behind him, Eileen wrinkled her nose.

"Jillian Mae McCoy," she said, her voice so like their mother's she nearly laughed. "What do you think you're doing, tramping in here all muddy and dirty? You go clean up right now, or you won't be getting any dessert."

Jilly raised her eyebrows. "There must be some mistake," she said to the room at large. "Someone seems to not understand whose house this is. If I want to sit around in jeans and boots that are covered with mud and cow shit, it's my own business. Not that I would," she said hastily. No use giving her son ideas. "But I could, is the point I'm trying to make." She craned her neck around, glimpsing what was on the stove. "Oh, Eileen," she said, her voice full of wistful memory. "Is that..."

"Stuffed pork chops," confirmed Eileen. "We've also got green beans with onions, cheesy mashed potatoes, and biscuits in the oven." She eyed the stovetop consideringly. "You've got maybe thirty minutes before everything is ready. Get yourself cleaned up and we'll have ourselves a good talk while we eat."

"Stuffed pork chops," Jilly said in a quavering voice. She turned and ran out of the kitchen. From down the hall they could hear the door to the bathroom slam shut.

*****

"Momma? Are you all right?" Roy Lee's voice was muffled by the door.

She sniffled, wiping her eyes in the crook of her elbow, then opened the door a crack. Her son's concerned face looked in at her.

"Aunt Eileen sent me down here," he said. "Are you okay?"

"Yes," she said, and immediately gave her statement the lie by bursting into tears again.

"Hey!" he said, startled by her outburst. He pushed open the door and pulled her into his arms. "What's wrong, Momma? Are you mad about something? Are you angry we came looking for you?"

The idiotic question only made her cry harder. She wrapped her arms around his waist and dug her face into his chest and bawled like a baby, years of pent-up emotion escaping in a storm of tears.

"Sshhhh, it's all right," her son's voice soothed her. Gentle hands ran up and down her back, stroking softly. The rumble of his voice, deep in his chest, vibrated against her cheek, reminding her of Fraidy Cat's purr.

When the flood tapered to a halt at last, he looked down at her, his eyes serious. "Better now?"

When she nodded, he pulled a washcloth off a hanger and wet it in the sink with warm water. His hands soft, he blotted away the evidence of her tears, lingering on her face.

He really is good looking, she thought with some amazement. There was a little of his father in him, besides his height, but the hell-raising wildness of Dale McCoy had vanished in his son, who had been forced to shoulder a man's responsibility before he was out of his teens. Even in a town where you couldn't throw a rock without hitting a lean, muscular farmhand, Roy Lee stood out from the crowd. Jilly looked at his biceps and remembered the feel of his strong arms around her, the way his lean hips had fit so well into the flat curve of her stomach. Blinking, she stepped back, suddenly very conscious of his physical presence in the small room. His blue eyes locked with hers, and a slow, long-forgotten tingle began to manifest in the pit of her belly.

"The smell brought it all back, you know?" she said, pulling her mind away from the unthinkable. No. I am not getting turned on by my son. It's all the crazy emotions from the past few hours. Him and

Eileen showing up practically on my doorstep. Who wouldn't be going a little bit crazy right about now?

"It was one of my favorite meals when I was a little girl," she continued, finding an escape in reminiscence. "Stuffed pork chops and cheesy potatoes and biscuits. I used to ask for it on my birthday. That's the way it worked when me and your aunt were kids. We got to choose our birthday meal. Smelling it in the kitchen, and seeing your aunt there with you..." She trailed off. "I guess you never really get over feeling homesick. I missed your grandmother so fierce just then I thought my heart would break. She died when you were just a baby."

"Emphysema, right?"

She nodded. "She was always sickly. Even when we were children. She was just a little bit of a woman, even smaller than me. But when she was healthy, she would fly around the house like a bird, happy and singing. She knew the most songs of anyone I ever knew. Country, rock and roll, gospel songs and bluegrass, she would sing all day long.

"And Lord, could she cook. She made the best pies and cookies I ever tasted. I would come home after school and the smell of her baking would fill the entire house. I would do anything, Roy Lee, literally anything in the world, just to open the back door of our old house on Church Street and see my mother one more time."

She sniffled again and wrung the washcloth out in the sink.

"Thanks for looking in on me, honey. You tell your Aunt Eileen that your momma needed a good cry, but she'll be out for dinner in a little bit. Now shoo! I need to get cleaned up."

Roy Lee nodded and opened the door. Before he could exit, he found himself caught in a fierce embrace. His mother pulled his face down and kissed his cheek. "I'm happy you're here, Roy Lee," she whispered. "Never doubt that for a second."

His throat tight, he nodded and slipped away.

*****

In the hallway, Roy Lee had to adjust his cock in his jeans, which had grown to terrifying proportions.

Thank God she didn't notice, he thought, vastly relieved, as he heard the shower in the bathroom start. When Eileen had sent him to check on his mother, he never thought the result would be a hysterically weeping female clinging to him. Neither did he count on his own body's enthusiastic reaction. But when he found himself with a double armful of delightfully attractive woman, the result was as inevitable as the sunrise.

Maybe she noticed, and just didn't want to embarrass me, he thought hopefully. She's been married, and had at least one other lover, by her own admission. She knows men can't always control our floppy bits.

And she had felt so good in his arms. At the memory, his cock pounded in his jeans, aching for release.

She was just a few feet away, probably naked, soaping up under the spray...

No. Go to Hell. Go directly to Hell. Do not pass Go. Do not collect two hundred dollars. God might let you slide with Aunt Eileen, even though I doubt it. But if you think about going to bed with your mother, there ain't a hope in the world. Some lines you just don't cross.

No matter how hot your momma is. He groaned as he remembered her body pressed against his. So different from Eileen's. The swell of her breasts, the slim, muscular curves, so different from Eileen's lush bounty...

He walked back into the kitchen and kissed his aunt on the neck.

"Mmmm," she said, wriggling sensuously under his touch. "Is your momma all right?"

"She is now," he reported. "She told me to tell you she just needed a good cry. She's taking a shower and will be out in a little bit. I think everything just kind of snuck up and hit her all at once."

Eileen nodded and turned over the pork chops. "Yeah, that'll happen." She moved to the side. "Pull that pie out of the oven, will you?"

*****

Jillian eyed her sister as they sat around the dinner table. She had said grace, and Roy Lee had filled their plates. "You brought the book, didn't you?"

"Well, of course I did," Eileen replied. "What was I supposed to do?"

"Exactly that." She cut off a piece of her pork chop and bit down. The wonderful taste filled her mouth and she had to stifle a groan of delight.

"Excuse me?" Roy Lee sounded baffled. "What book are we talking about?"

"Your grandmother's recipe book, that we used when we were making the pork chops and the potatoes and everything else," said Eileen. Jillian, her mouth full of cheesy potatoes, grunted her agreement. "It's been handed down through seven generations of women in our family. All the way back to Shannon O'Meara, who came over from County Cork in the famine of 1848. That book has recipes that are nearly two hundred years old. Real southern cooking. Not commercialized crap people like Paula Deen flog on television." She walked into the kitchen and brought back the leather-bound book. Old, creased, dog-eared and tattered, with tabs serving as bookmarks sticking out every which way, it looked as old as Eileen claimed. She ran her hands over it lovingly.

"I left it with your aunt when I ran off," Jillian explained, her mouth finally clear. "I couldn't take it with me, and I'd be damned if I was going to leave it in the house with Dale. As far as I knew, he would use it to mop up dog piss."

Roy Lee, who had been a witness to his father's sad disintegration, nodded glum agreement.

"All I had was two suitcases when I left. It was either the book or underwear. Of course," she said with a crooked smile, "if I had known how bad some of the food in Iowa was, I might have left the underwear.

"The oldest girl in the family gets it, and hands it down to her oldest daughter. Your grandmother Kate had it from your great-grandmother Dora. It came to me and should have gone to my oldest girl. But I gave up on Dale and ran off, so I passed it along to Eileen. I still thought she and Bobby Ray might have a child or two."

"Waste of time," Eileen snorted. "That sad pile of puke might have a kid, but after I found out what he was really like, it was never going to be one of mine. I made sure of that."

"So I'm right glad you brought it with you."

"Are you kidding me?" Eileen said, incensed. "I would've left barefoot rather than leave that book behind."

Jillian nodded. "So, what are your plans?" she asked her son. Her eyes were sharp.

Roy Lee took a drink of milk. "To be honest, Momma, I didn't make much in the way of plans," he said slowly, his gaze fixed on his plate. "I just wanted to find you. The way you left...I never even had the chance to say goodbye.

"I was never totally sure. I always wondered, just a little. Did you leave because of Daddy? Or because of me?" He looked up and years of old hurt were in his eyes.

"Oh," Jillian gasped. The pain in his glance stabbed at her heart. She reached out and gripped his hand. "It wasn't your fault, honey. Never think that. I couldn't watch your father fall apart any longer. He had been a good man once. And it killed me to see what was happening to him. It takes a lot of things to make a marriage work. Most of all, it takes respect. And I couldn't live with a man I didn't respect any more.

"So when I made up my mind to leave, I knew I had to go far away. Bobby Ray...there's a mean streak in him a mile wide. And he and Dale were tight. I had to make sure I went somewhere he couldn't find me. If I had stayed in Deer Creek he would've made my life a misery."

Roy Lee nodded, his eyes bright with unshed tears. "I'm glad it wasn't me," he said. His voice was raspy with emotion.

"So," he said, clearing his throat. "Plans. I don't have any. All I wanted was to get away from home and find you. I've done both, a lot quicker than I thought I would. So now I've got to figure out what to do with the rest of my life.

He sighed, fiddling with his fork. "I've been trapped for so long, now I'm free I don't exactly know how to handle it." Across the table, Eileen nodded in startled understanding. "I've got money enough to last for a good long while, though. This looks like a nice-enough town. If you can handle your long-lost son hanging around, I might see if I can settle down here.

"I'll need to find work. But I've got some skills. After four years working for Old Man Stebbin, I don't think there's much about cars I don't know."

Jillian nodded. "We have a couple of car dealerships in town that do repair work. And a body shop or two. You can start out by looking there. Don't be afraid to mention my name. Most people in town know me. And if all else fails, you can always do what I did, and hire out as a farmhand. It don't pay much, but it'll keep body and soul together. And you're welcome to stay here as long as you need.

"Elly? What about you?"

Her sister shrugged. "A good hairdresser can always find work, Sis. I didn't bring my tools with me from home, but I'll bet you I can find some part-time work, at least, by the end of the week. These young girls, they go to cosmetology school because it sounds glamorous.

Then they find out that it's real work and they have to be on their feet all day, and they quit."

Jillian pursed her lips. "You're right. It's been a revolving door at my salon for years. There's only two women who have stuck around, and they're both getting a little long in the tooth. I'll write down their address and you can drop by tomorrow."

*****

"You're going to have to disappear, you know," Jillian said. "If you mean to stay here with me, that is. You, Roy Lee. And especially you, Eileen."

Supper was over, and they were sitting together in the family room. The television was on, but Jillian had muted it. The atmosphere was...odd...Eileen thought. The three of them were still getting used to each other, and making changes to what they had long perceived as "normal." Jillian had lived alone for the past four years. Roy Lee had dealt with a bitter drunk, beaten and broken by life. And Eileen had walked on eggshells for nearly two decades, dealing with the volcanic temper and ready fists of an abusive husband. She settled back into the couch, knots of tension, years in the making, slowly loosening in her back.

"What do you mean, Momma?" Roy Lee asked.

"I mean you're going to have to pretend the Roy Lee McCoy who lived in Deer Creek, Alabama, never existed," she replied, fixing him

with a firm gaze. She walked to her laptop and turned it on. Using her wi-fi password, she connected to the internet.

"Facebook, for example," she said. "Delete your account. Your father and Bobby Ray might be looking for you. If you change your location information on your home page, they'll know where you live.

"E-mail, too. Delete whatever account you have, and set up a new one. Don't even look at your old account. You'll be tempted to respond to anyone who sends you an e-mail, and that's a temptation you don't need. Throw away your old phone-"

"I changed my number when I left home."

"Good. Now erase your contacts. You don't need to drag anyone back home into your troubles." She sighed and raked her hands through her hair. "What else?" she muttered. She looked at Eileen. "What about you? What did you bring here?"

"My phone is brand new, bought three days ago. I promised to provide the wireless company a new home address when I got one. Other than that, all I have is luggage. I'll delete my social media accounts, just like you said." Her eyes grew wide. "Oh, shit. The car!"

"The car?" Roy Lee asked. He grimaced as the thought penetrated. "Right. Alabama plates in Montana. That's going to be conspicuous."

"You're going to have to sell it, honey," Jillian said softly.

Roy Lee sighed and rubbed his eyes. "It's for the best, I suppose. It isn't really equipped to deal with a winter up here anyway. Well, maybe I'll kill two birds with one stone and trade it in when I go looking for a job tomorrow." Distracted, his eye fell on the fieldstone fireplace tucked into a corner. He walked over to it, then fell to his hands and knees. He peered up the chimney. "Hey, does this thing actually work?"

Jillian laughed softly. "Of course it does, southern boy. Do you think I have that rack of firewood beside it just for show? It's a comfort on cold winter nights. Nothing like snuggling under a blanket with a glass of wine, a good book, and a warm fire." She tried to keep her eyes off the taut curves of her son's ass. She bit her lip, wondering what it would feel like under her hands. God, I could just peel his jeans off right now. I wonder if he's got a nice cock...

She blinked, and noticed Eileen's gaze on her. Her sister cocked an eyebrow, a corner of her mouth quirking up. She looked away ashamed, even as a flush mounted in her chest, warming her face. Did she notice? Or was she looking at Roy Lee, too? A flash of jealousy surged through her. He's mine!

"Like tonight?"

With difficulty, Eileen tore her thoughts away from her son's sweet rear end. "Tonight? You think tonight is cold? Heck, it's barely going to get below freezing. Wait two months. Then you'll know what cold is like.

"Which reminds me. Do you two have any sort of winter gear?"

Eileen laughed out loud and gestured to herself. She wore a light knit sweater over a t-shirt and a tight pair of blue jeans, which emphasized her lush curves. "Jilly, you've been away from Alabama too long. This is my winter gear."

"Roy Lee?"

"Nope. Sorry, Momma."

"Then we're going to have to outfit you both with the necessities. Heavy socks. Boots. Sweaters. Coats. Gloves. Hats. All the rest. I'll take you to a place I know tomorrow night."

Roy Lee stood. "More money down the drain," he sighed. "At the rate I'm going, I better find a job pretty quick." He eyed the shotgun mounted over the fireplace. "Momma, do you actually use that thing?"

"I have, once or twice, on varmints. We get some wild critters that don't mind trying to get a free meal out of the trash cans. Possums and raccoons and such. We get coyotes in town, sometimes. The wolves usually stay away, thank goodness. I generally just try to scare them off. I don't much like disposing of the remains."

"It's not loaded, is it?"

"What sort of idiot do you think I am? No, it's not loaded," Jillian said in a voice of aggravated patience. "I've got the shells locked in the desk over there.

"Okay. Last item. Eileen, I expect you're going to be looking for a divorce?"

"Damn straight," her sister said.

"Good. I'll put you in touch with the lawyer I used, back when I divorced Dale. She'll draw up the papers and hire someone to serve him..." She trailed off as she noticed their open-mouthed expressions. "What are you two staring at?"

"You...divorced...Daddy?" her son asked.

"Of course I did. Nearly eight years ago. As soon as I could scrape up the money. Not long after I moved out here. He didn't even bother to contest it. I've been a free woman for years. And God, didn't it feel good."

"He never told me," Roy Lee said softly. He turned to his aunt. "Did he ever tell you, or Uncle Bobby?"

"If he did, I never found out." Eileen's lips were pressed flat. "God-damned coward. Couldn't even tell his own boy his wife divorced him. That's why the man at the post office couldn't tell us about you, I suppose," she said to Jillian. "We asked after Jillian McCoy. But you're Jillian Coulter again.

"All right, Jilly," she continued. "I'll see your lawyer. I just hope she gives family discounts. I'm not exactly flush with cash at the moment."

"I think after you tell her your story, you might be surprised. Especially with me and Roy Lee to back you up."

Jillian rose to her feet. "Well, that's enough planning for one night. I need to get ready for tomorrow. Me and Paco have a couple of dogs to neuter first thing in the morning. And I think the two of you have enough to do to keep you occupied for a few days.

"I'll get some blankets for you, Roy Lee, so you can make yourself up a bed on the couch. I'll put out some towels as well, so you can shower now, or in the morning."

Eileen rose as well. "I can't thank you enough for taking us in, Jilly."

Jilly smiled and hugged her sister. "You're my blood, Eileen. I couldn't turn you away any more than I could cut off my own hands.

"Besides, I needed the company."

*****

The next few days were a frantic blur. Eileen and Roy Lee both worked to weave themselves into the fabric of Promise. They had

arrived on a Tuesday morning. By Wednesday afternoon, Eileen had found a part-time job at the salon Jillian used on her infrequent trips to get her hair cut or styled. The job, it was understood, had the potential to become full-time if things worked out.

"Told you so," Eileen said to them both that evening. Her voice was more than a little smug.

Roy Lee had struck out at both of the car dealerships in his search for a job, but had used Thursday in a long and ultimately successful quest for a car to replace his old Dodge. Somewhat to his surprise, he was now the owner of a used Ford sedan, dark gray in color. Unsure of his decision, he had drafted his mother to look over the car on her lunch break, and it had received her stamp of approval.

"It's not a flashy car, Roy Lee, but it's reliable. And you'll appreciate the all-wheel drive when the weather gets nasty. Plus," she said with a grin, "there isn't any better way to get in good with the locals than to buy an American-made car. If you were driving around in an import, you might get some fishy looks."

After he had completed the paperwork and put on the new plates, he had driven Eileen to the lawyer's office, where they had met with Jillian, who had come over as soon as she got off work. To their surprise and relief, Madeline Honeker was willing to stay after quitting time to discuss Eileen's case. Even more gratifyingly, she showed no inclination to dismiss Eileen's injuries or fears, especially when she had Roy Lee and Jillian as witnesses to Bobby Ray's abuse.

"I know things like that happen. Trust me. In this business, you lose your illusions quickly."

She questioned Eileen about whether she wanted alimony or any common property. Eileen shook her head. "All I want is out. There ain't nothing left in that house I want. And I'll be damned if I take a dime from Bobby Ray Harris."

Madeline nodded soberly. She had the preliminary papers drawn up in record time, and told them Bobby Ray would be served by the middle of the following week.

"I have to file them in the courthouse up in Dillon, first. But that should only take a day or two. I'll hire a process server in Alabama and have your husband served at work. Less chance of a temper tantrum there."

Eileen nodded, her lips pressed tightly together. "All right. But warn them, do you hear me? He's violent and he'll have a gun on him. He says it's for the job, but I swear he loves that thing more than he does his own family."

Madeline rolled her eyes. "One of those, huh? I swear, some men think a gun is an extension of their pecker. It makes them feel big, even when they are small." She smirked as Eileen and Jillian laughed, and Roy Lee blushed scarlet.

*****

"I'll tell you what, son," said the big, beefy man behind the desk the next day. "If you had come in six months ago, I'd have given you a handshake, a pat on the back, and wished you good luck in finding a job. But you have good timing. This is the busy season for us. Most everyone has finished bringing in their crops, so they are getting their trucks serviced before the real bad weather hits."

"Crops?" said Roy Lee, surprised. "I thought most of it was ranching, out here."

The man leaned back and put his feet up. The nameplate on the desk identified him as Ashley J. Williams, owner of Williams' Towing and Body Repair. His nodded, his dark eyes shrewd in a red face topped by black hair going gray at the temples. "Most of it is, not all. We have dairy farmers. And sheep. This used to be a big wool shipping point, years ago. But we have dirt farmers, too. Wheat, mostly. But there's beans, as well. And sugar beets. Basically, anything that doesn't take a whole lot of water. We get a lot of snow in the winter, but we're dry in the summer."

Ashley glanced over the application, finished with the agricultural lecture. "What about your previous employer? Can I give him a call for a recommendation?"

"Well, you can, sir. But I doubt he's going to tell you anything good about me. I didn't give him much notice when I quit."

That was an understatement. The last e-mail Roy Lee had sent before he closed out his old account had been a letter of resignation to Rollie

Stebbin. He didn't think a call was going to do much good. The old ingrate was probably foaming at the mouth right about now.

"Hmmm. Well, you're honest, at least. And you impressed Jason when he showed you around this morning. He watched when you helped put the alternator in that old Sunbird. He says you're good with your hands."

"My girlfriend used to say so."

The big man grinned wide. "Funny. What about snow, southern boy? You ever do any driving in it?"

"No, sir," said Roy Lee, determined to stay polite. "But I hear it's cold and white."

Ashley laughed. "You've done your research, then. Ever drive a tow truck? Know how to handle one?"

"A few times at my old job. It was supposed to be a used car and repair place, but more than half of it was a junkyard. I've brought in cars that were too busted up to drive."

"Well, kid," Ashley said as he stood up. "Considering that it's the busy time of year and I'm short-handed and desperate and you're exactly what I'm looking for, I guess I have no choice but to give you a chance. You start at sixteen-fifty an hour. Three months' probation, then you go up to eighteen. You work eight to five, Monday through Friday, one hour for lunch. You can pick up overtime on the

weekends if you want and if we have jobs that need doing. If you want to, I can have you certified on the tow truck and the wrecker, any time you get feeling ambitious. When can you start?"

"Monday?"

"Sounds good. And kid?"

"Yeah?"

"Call me Ash."

"Yes, sir. Ash."

"Groovy."

*****

Saturday morning. 8 AM.

"Get up, Roy Lee."

"Go 'way."

Jillian grinned, tugging at the thick quilt which encased her son from head to toe. "Come on, kiddo, get up. I'm taking you and Eileen shopping today, remember?"

"It's too early," Roy Lee whined, and snuggled deeper into the embrace of the couch. "Come back tomorrow."

"Suit yourself," Jillian said, and walked away. Roy Lee closed his eyes. For a minute, he thought his cunning plan had succeeded. But just as he was drifting back to sleep, the quilt was pulled down and an ice-cold can of soda was pressed between his shoulder blades.

"Ack!" he screamed. His body seemed to defy gravity. He rose, flopping spasmodically, above the couch, then crashed on his side on the floor. He looked blearily over the edge of the quilt, still wrapped around him.

"You're a bad mommy," he said accusingly.

His mother and Eileen, meanwhile, were in a state of near hysteria. Jillian was bent over, her arms clutched around her stomach, as peals of laughter escaped from her mouth. Eileen was in little better shape, chuckling in muffled snorts.

"Come on, Sis," she said. "Let's unwrap this burrito." They walked over and pulled the quilt away, leaving him sitting on the floor in a t-shirt and flannel sleep shorts.

He leaned back against the couch and wrapped his arms around himself. They were pebbled with gooseflesh. "Damn! It's cold this morning!"

"Six above outside," agreed Jillian. "And the wind-chill is eleven below. Which is why we're going to the store today. I know you two have been run off your feet the last few days, and we haven't had time to go. But you're going to need proper clothes when winter hits."

"All right," he grumbled. He picked up a pair of jeans, boxers, and a clean t-shirt. "Do I have time to take a shower?"

"Sure, honey. I'll have breakfast ready when you're done."

Roy Lee stumbled off towards the bathroom. As he did, Jillian's eyes followed him avidly.

That might be the best case of morning wood I've ever seen, she thought. Good thing he didn't fall on his cock. He might have drilled a hole in my nice wood floor. She bit her lip, trying to drive away the surge of lust. It's a good thing Eileen was here with me. I would have given him a good-morning kiss. Or more.

She blinked, and realized her sister was looking at her. Had Eileen noticed the hunger in her eyes?

"Young men," Eileen said. "They are something, aren't they?"

Jillian nodded, unsure whether her sister was alluding to how they had gotten Roy Lee up, or how he looked when he was up.

Oh, he was up, all right...

"Roy Lee is..." Eileen paused, searching for words.

Fantastic in bed. A great fuck. Magnificently endowed. My lover.

"...a good man," she finished weakly. "And a good-looking young man," she continued. "We're going to have to find someone for him."

"He won't have a hard time of it up here," Jillian said, amused, as she led Eileen into the kitchen. She started fixing breakfast. "I don't know what it is in the air, but the girls hereabouts ain't exactly shy about letting men know how they feel. If Roy Lee doesn't watch himself, some sweet young thing is going to trip him and beat him to the ground."

"With her legs wide open, as well," Eileen guessed.

"Of course," Jillian replied with a smile. She pulled a pack of bacon out of the refrigerator and started setting slices on the griddle. As she spoke, Eileen heated water for oatmeal. "They all have round heels, that's for sure. And it runs both ways. You wouldn't believe some of the offers I had when I first moved into town. Or some of the rumors I've heard. The folks around here certainly get themselves up to some mischief, that's for sure."

"Small towns," Eileen said with a shrug. "And long winters. People have to make a lot of their own entertainment. And what's more fun than sex?"

"Not much," Jilly sighed. With her son and sister in the house, she was beginning to feel her lack of a sex life more and more strongly. What had been something she could live with had become a vast, empty ache in the last few days. Indeed, she had been giving her vibrator a nightly workout before she went to bed. And also in the mornings. But even the lingering effects of her recent orgasm had a hard time competing with the overwhelming virility of her son.

No. I am stronger than this. No matter how sweet it might be. She shuddered in frustrated longing.

"No one in your life right now?" Her sister's voice was soft and sympathetic.

Jillian shook her head. "Not since me and Paco broke up. No," she said, catching Eileen's horrified look. "It's not like I haven't had sex. Like I said, menfolk around here ain't shy. All you got to do is go up to someone and let him know you're interested. You'll be able to haul home a man who's randy, ready and willing.

"But I want more than a quick fuck these days, Elly. Christ, I turn forty-two next month. I want love, not just a roll in the hay. And that isn't as easy to find."

"I know," her sister answered. Her expression lightened. "But Promise doesn't have any idea what it's in for. The Coulter women are in town."

"Damn right."

*****

The bitter wind off the Ruby Range knifed through Eileen's thin jacket as they walked across the parking lot towards Hendrick's Farm, Home & Ranch Supply. She tucked her chin into her chest and stuck her hands into her pockets in a vain attempt to keep warm. A quick flurry of snow wove sinuously across the blacktop. She shivered, and pulled her borrowed stocking cap further down over her ears, which were rapidly growing numb. Beside her, Roy Lee looked almost as miserable as she was. Jillian, on the other hand, looked positively cheerful, her cheeks red and rosy in the cold.

What am I doing up here? she thought, abruptly so homesick her eyes teared. Or maybe it was the frigid air. Two thousand miles from home. Sleeping with my nephew. Living in a borrowed room with my sister. How the hell did this happen?

The front doors loomed in front of her, cutting off her dreary thoughts. She stepped into the brightly lit and blessedly warm store, and her eyes widened.

"Good God," she said to Jillian in surprise. "This place is huge."

The immense space proved the truth of her words. The building would have put any cut-rate superstore back home to shame. Signs on chains hung from the high ceiling, reading "Tools," "Plumbing," "Lumber," "Men's Clothes," "Women's Clothes," and more. The floor was brushed concrete, but clean. Roy Lee looked around, his nose taking in the faint scents of leather, wood, cloth, and metal.

"It has to be," Jillian said, responding to his aunt. "They supply the town, the outlying farms, and a lot of the other small towns around here, like Glendale and Puma. I've seen people come from as far away as Butte to shop here. If they don't have what we need, they can order it for us.

"So, who should we do first?"

"Was that an offer, Jilly?" Eileen husked in a raspy voice. She strutted over to her sister, her hips swaying. She folded her in her arms, her voice teasing. "Yes, do me," she giggled.

"God, you're the worst," Jillian laughed, pushing her sister away. She tried to hide her burning face, and the way her blood had heated at her sister's touch. You need to get laid, girl, her mind told her. If your own sister is turning you on, it's about time you drag someone home and do the naked pretzel.

Uh-huh. With my son and sister in the house? GREAT idea.

"Might as well get Aunt Eileen out of the way," Roy Lee interrupted her twisting thoughts. "I'll take a look around some of the winter wear and meet you in women's clothing."

"Sounds like a plan. Come on, Elly." Jillian grabbed her sister by the hand and led her away.

Roy Lee watched the two women saunter away. The sight of their sexy asses, encased in worn denim, made him erect in no time. Triggered by his aunt's teasing, his mind brought up an image of the two of them naked. He had to hold himself back from running after them and squeezing their delectable rear ends in his hands.

Gritting his teeth, he adjusted himself in his pants and quickly turned away.

And in the process, knocked over the woman who had been about to walk past him. His broad chest caught her shoulder, and she stumbled and fell on her back, her arms instinctively wrapping around the baby who was riding in a carrier on her chest.

"Oh, God. I'm so sorry!" The baby's crying complaint was shrill in his ears. He hurried over and offered her a hand up, but she stayed on the floor, her hands trying to soothe her child. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," she said, her eyes warily amused. "And so is little Alan here. Aren't you, honey?" she said to the dark-haired bundle on her chest. Indeed, the baby's crying had quickly tapered off. He blinked and offered his mother a gum-toothed grin.

"I'm sorry," Roy Lee repeated. "I wasn't looking where I was going." This time, the woman took his hand. He helped her to her feet, his eyes widening in appreciation. She was a very attractive woman in her mid-thirties. Her chocolate-brown hair curled down her back, and her body, even hidden by thick clothes and the bundle of her child, was beautifully curved.

Christ, are all the women here this attractive?

"You aren't from around here, are you?"

He smiled. "My accent gives me away again. No, I'm from Alabama. I just moved up here this week. My name's Roy Lee McCoy. I'm living with my mother, Jillian McC...no, dang it. Jillian Coulter."

"Jilly?" the lady smiled. "I know her. She's a wonderful person. And good with animals. I brought my dog in to get his shots a few months ago. By the time we were done, I thought Smokey wanted to stay with her, rather than go home with me." She held out her hand. "I'm Rebecca Steinworth. I'm a doctor at the hospital, but I also have a private practice here in town." She ran an appraising eye over his body. "Feel free to make an appointment for a physical any time." Her tongue reached out and briefly ran over her lips.

"Thanks," he said. He glanced around. "I better go. I need to do some shopping, and to meet my mother. Sorry again."

"That's okay," she said, her eyes sparkling. She watched him hurry away.

So Jilly's boy finally showed up. Good looking young man, too. She shifted, the warmth of her son against her breasts intensifying her urges. With Marty away, her sex drive was without an outlet. I hope he makes an appointment soon.

*****

Jillian and Eileen had filled up a shopping cart with winter clothes, and Eileen was trying on jackets when Roy Lee finally appeared. He was dragging not only a cart that held a thick winter parka, a leather jacket, gloves, a scarf, and a stocking hat, but also had a flat-bed dolly with a huge box on it. He was also, for some reason, wearing a Stetson on his head.

"Look," he grinned. "I'm a cowboy. Howdy howdy howdy!"

"You're a goofball," Jillian said mildly. "Take that silly thing off and let me see what you have here."

She was forced to admit he had made some good choices. The winter wear was all high-quality and durable. The leather jacket was quilted, with a removable lining which made it ideal for spring and fall. The parka... "You should take this back and get one that's a little bit bigger, honey. This is too tight on you."

"It fits perfectly," he protested.

"That's the problem. You want it to be a little loose. That way warm air is trapped between your body and the coat. If it's too tight, that layer is gone, and you'll get cold quicker.

"Now, let's get you some jeans and other things. Eileen, are you done?"

"I think so," her sister said. She spun in place, modeling a cropped jacket lined with wool that emphasized her trim waist and large breasts. "What do you think?"

"It looks great," Roy Lee said, as Jilly nodded her agreement. He cocked a sardonic eye at his mother. "But what about buying a little bit large? That thing is so tight it might as well be spray-pained on her."

"Don't be silly," Eileen said, rubbing her cheek into the collar. "Oh, that feels good. This is for looking good, not for everyday wear. I've got another heavy jacket and a winter coat under all that somewhere." She waved a hand at her cart, which was nearly overflowing. She reluctantly unzipped the jacket and pulled on the one she had worn into the store, following Roy Lee and Jillian.

Loaded up like an old-time wagon train, they hauled their carts into the men's clothing section. "Okay, honey, what size are you?" Jillian asked, as she headed over to a rack of jeans.

"I don't need any jeans, Momma. The ones I have are just fine."

"Bullcrap," she said. She eyed the faded blue jeans he was wearing. "How old are those? And where did you get them from?"

"These? Maybe...three years old."

"And did you buy them new, or from the Salvation Army store in Moulton, because you were pinching pennies and taking care of your daddy?" She let her hand slide down his leg, fingering the worn cloth. Her fingers tingled with a vicarious thrill as she stroked her son's leg. "These are so thin I can practically see through them. Which means if you're wearing them outside in a storm, they'll be soaked through in no time. And then the wind will hit. You'll have frostbite in minutes.

"Maybe I have to say this again. And to you, too, Elly. This country is dangerous. If you give it a chance, it'll kill you. So don't give it a chance. Don't be stupid. Be smart. And being smart means not wearing thin-ass jeans that I could poke my finger through. Save these for the summer.

"So I'm asking you again, Roy Lee. What size do you wear?"

He sighed and decided to surrender graciously. "Thirty-two waist, thirty-six inseam, Momma."

"Good God," she said absently, flipping through a pile of clothes. "I knew you were all leg, but a thirty-six inseam? No wonder you went

out for track." She pushed a bundle into his arms. "Go try those on, and come on back here so I can take a look."

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An hour later, Roy Lee's cart was as full as Eileen's. He had six new pairs of jeans, a pair of winter boots, heavy new work shoes, flannel shirts, t-shirts, sweatshirts, heavy work socks, and a University of Montana hoodie. Getting into the spirit, he had also bought fleece-lined slippers and a bright red bathrobe for himself, as well as some flannel sleep pants.

"Those will be perfect for those long winter nights by the fire," he said to his mother.

Jilly swallowed through a dry throat. Her desire for her son had continued to climb through the morning, exacerbated by his constant trips in and out of the changing room, often-half-dressed.

"That sounds nice, honey," she managed.

They swapped out the winter coat for a slightly larger one, then headed towards the check-out counter. The cashier's eyes widened as she took in their cavalcade.

"Hello, Jilly," she said. "Good God, what is all this?"

"Some friends of mine who have moved up here, Abbie." she said. "They're staying with me for a spell. This here is Roy Lee," she said, nodding to her son, "and this is Eileen." They both nodded to her. Roy Lee was immediately struck by her curvy figure and bright blue eyes.

Down, boy, he thought. She can't be much more than seventeen. Eighteen, tops.

Abbie rang up Eileen's purchases first. Her face went pale, then grim, as the total rose into the hundreds of dollars. When the last purchase was bagged, she turned a strained face to Roy Lee, but was held up by Jillian's hand on her arm.

"This one is on me, Elly," she said, handing over a store credit card.

"Jillian, I can't take your charity."

"Then take my thanks, then," Jillian snapped, her temper flaring. "How long did you keep my secret? How many times did Bobby Ray use me as an excuse to beat you?

"If you don't like it, you can pay me back once you start working at the salon. But don't push me on this." She waggled the card impatiently at the cashier, who was watching with interest.

Eileen gave up, and helped Jillian load her bags into the cart. Roy Lee moved forward and started unloading his items for check-out.

"Cash or credit?" Abbie asked as the last item went under the scanner.

"Check?" he asked hopefully. He had just opened a checking account at the bank the day before.

Abbie frowned, making an adorable line between her eyebrows. "Since you're with Jilly, sure." Making sure she held his eye, she reached up and loosened a button on her shirt. She leaned forward, allowing him to see down her cleavage. He swallowed as his eyes caught the swells of her creamy breasts.

"I hope to see you here again," she said softly. "Real soon." Almost absently, she reached up and stroked his cheek. He blinked, realizing he could see her firm nipples tenting the cloth of her shirt.

"Back off, Abigail," a voice said harshly. Roy Lee's head whipped around. His mother stood only a few feet away, her hands on her hips, radiating anger.

"Oh! Is he with her? Or maybe with you, Jilly? I'm sorry. I didn't know he was taken. My father always says I should watch my roaming eyes." She rolled them expressively, giggling.

Jillian grunted noncommittally and loaded the bags into his cart. She waved a brusque good-bye and led him into the parking lot. Roy Lee looked over his shoulder one last time and found that Abbie was watching him. She waved.

He waved back, but made sure his mother couldn't see him.

*****

"So what was that all about, Momma?" he said, as they approached Jillian's truck. Eileen was already there, waiting impatiently.

"Do you want to be a father in nine months?" Jillian growled as she lowered the tailgate and started throwing in clothing bags. "Because if you go out with Abigail Dunlap, there's a good chance you will be. She's got a full dose of teenage hormones and no sense at all, and she's spread her legs for half the high school, if what I hear is true. The only reason she hasn't been knocked up yet is because she's looking for someone with some prospects. A new man in town with a good job would suit her just fine."

"All right," he grumbled, mollified, as they heaved the last package into the truckbed. "But what was all that about us being friends of yours, rather than relatives?"

His mother sighed as they climbed into the truck. "I'm getting tired of explaining it to everyone, to be honest, honey." Her voice fell into a sing-song tone. "This is my son, who I abandoned when he was thirteen. Yes, his father is a drunk. This is my sister, who I haven't seen in nine years because I was too much of a coward to stand up to her husband." Her voice changed back to normal. "It's like having eleven toes, Roy Lee. Sometimes you'd just rather keep your shoes on."

Despite himself, his lips curled upwards. "I can understand that."

The sense of serenity lasted all the way until they reached home. Just as they were pulling into the driveway, Jillian's phone rang. She glanced at the display and swore under her breath, walking away from the truck.

In five minutes she was back. "I have to go. A dog slipped its leash over on Railroad Street and got hit by a boy doing his drivers-ed lessons. The kid is crying, the dog's owner is hysterical, the driving instructor is scared she is going to get sued, and Paco needs another pair of hands." She watched as Roy Lee and Eileen hauled the box out of the truckbed. "Honey, I didn't ask before. What the heck is that?"

Her son grinned at her. "It's a surprise. Just wait. You'll like it."

She climbed back into the truck. "I'll probably be a couple of hours," she said, rolling down the window so they could hear her. "Maybe we can go out to eat when I get back." She drove off, giving them a last wave as she sped down the street.

Eileen looked at her nephew. There was no mistaking the hunger in his eyes.

"A couple of hours, huh?" she purred. "How about we get these bags inside? I've got an idea about how we can spend the time."

*****

"Lordy," Eileen sighed, once everything was piled in the living room. She kicked her shoes off, wriggling her toes on one of the braided rugs Roy Lee had scattered on the hardwood floor. "We're going to have to invest in a storage unit. Or find a bigger house."

"Or move out," Roy Lee suggested. "I've got a job and money in the bank. I could rent a place." He sighed. "God, that sounds like heaven. Someplace of my own. Where I wouldn't be a guest."

"Your momma doesn't mind putting you up, baby," Eileen protested.

"I know. But I still feel like I'm taking advantage of her. A man my age should be able to stand on his own two feet. I turn twenty-three in January, Eileen. I don't want to be sleeping on Momma's couch forever." He slipped behind her, his hands ducking under the hem of her shirt so he could cup her lovely breasts in his hands.

"Ahhhh..." she sighed comfortably, arching into his touch. Even through her cotton bra, worn today for practicality and warmth, her sensitive nipples peaked, firming as he massaged her tits. She shuffled her feet backwards until her rear was firmly planted against his groin. She wriggled sensually, delighting in the anguished groan she tore from his lips.

"God, you drive me crazy," he whispered, his breath hot in her ear. His hands drifted lower, unclasping her jeans. At the same time, she pulled off her shirt and popped the hooks on her bra. In moments the only thing she was wearing were socks and her panties.

Well, maybe just her socks, because her nephew seemed somewhat determined to strip her naked. Roy Lee pulled her underwear over her hips and kissed her rear end. "Have I ever told you how good you smell when you're horny?" he said softly. With gentle touches, he encouraged her to spread her legs.

"Wait," she whispered. In a few steps, she reached the couch. She braced her hands on one of the arms and toed a rug over to him. "This will make it easy on your knees. If you really want to do this here."

"Oh, yes," he breathed. His eyes fixed hungrily on the puffy lips of her pussy. He nuzzled in close, and drew his tongue up her slit, savoring the taste of her tangy dew. He knew, in his secret heart, that he would never grow tired of this. The taste of this sexy, obviously aroused woman was intoxicating. He closed his eyes, his hands stroking Eileen's thighs, concentrating on her pleasure. Closer, even closer now, his face buried in the comforting warmth of her flesh. His lips found her throbbing nodule, peeking out from under its hood, and fastened on it. Like the darting tongue of a hummingbird, he licked her most sensitive place.

Eileen twitched in pleasure. Reflexively, her hips humped back into her lover. Her breath hissed between her teeth, and she bowed her head over the arm of the sofa, concentrating on the delicious feelings Roy Lee woke in her. Him, her dizzy mind asserted. Only, ever, with him. No one else. Ever. Her hands reached for her own breasts. She kneaded them slowly, her fingers rolling her nipples, savoring the slow rise of heat in her face, her chest, her groin.

"God, baby, you eat me so good," she moaned. Her legs spread wider and wider, her nether lips parting for him. Her legs shook as her pleasure spiraled, threatening to dump her in an undignified heap on the floor. She felt a slow trickle of moisture on her inner thighs, and she could not tell whether it was her own secretions, or her nephew's saliva. His tongue lapped at her clit, and she reached down, her own hand coordinating with him. In moments her strumming fingers were playing her bud like a guitar string and she had collapsed over the arm of the sofa, her chest heaving.

"Wait." Even to her own ears, her voice sounded half strangled. Roy Lee backed away, and she turned in place. Her lips twitched as she saw his face. It was smeared with her juice, but his eyes were bright and alert. She hopped up on the arm of the sofa and spread her legs.

"This might be a little easier for you, wouldn't it?"

"It would, but...I don't want to stain the furniture. Here," he said, pulling an old t-shirt out of a pile of clothes. "Lift up."

She did, and he spread the shirt on the sofa. The worn cotton was soft on her ass. He stood for a long, slow kiss, then knelt down again. As his tongue parted her lips, she laid her hands on the crown of his head, lovingly stroking his light brown hair.

With long, skillful sweeps, his tongue stroked her. In moments, she was trembling on the edge of orgasm. She braced herself with one arm and used her free hand to pull and stretch her nipple, adding another flame to the fire of desire inside her. Her thighs clamped

around Roy Lee's head and her buttocks clenched rhythmically, slowly pumping her sex into his face.

"Baby," she gasped. "Almost there, baby. Almost there. Lick it. Lick it now!"

His tongue flickered over her clit, pushing her to new heights. With a neck-jerking spasm, she came, her breath harsh and panting in her ears. She squinched her eyes shut and gave in to sensation, even as her hips rolled her mound into Roy Lee's face over and over, forcing him to continue to work his oral magic on her sensitive lips.

As her breathing slowed, she looked down at him. She smiled at the shy pride showing on his face. "Wonderful man," she said softly, cupping his cheek. "Have I told you today how much I love you?"

"Today? No." He kissed her inner thighs, his tongue licking her skin.

"You give me so much," she sighed, squirming in renewed pleasure at his touch. "So much love. So much understanding. So much happiness. And you demand nothing back. Look at you. You've just made me cum. Awesomely, I might add. Any other man would be unbuckling his belt and shoving down his pants, getting ready to stick his cock in my face or in my pussy. You? You still have all your clothes on. You're so patient. It's incredible."

Roy Lee blushed. "Don't make me out to be some sort of superman, Aunt Eileen. I'm horny as hell for you."

"Yes, but you're polite about it. Tell me. If I had told you a few minutes ago I was tired and didn't want to screw, what would you have done?"

"Been disappointed, obviously. Then I would have taken a quick shower. Maybe masturbated while I was in there. I got pretty worked up this morning. Between you and the cashier and another lady I met at the store, I was raring to go. When Momma got called to the clinic I nearly fell on my knees and thanked God."

"Exactly," she said softly. "You let me make my own choices. Some other men...well, at least one other man would never have let me say no. You do." She stood and pulled him to his feet.

"I think it's time to reward you for your patience," she smiled. She gave the couch a quick glance, then shook her head. "But even I have limits. Not here." Holding his hand, she pulled him towards her bedroom.

*****

Jillian arrived home in a grumpy mood. The big emergency at the clinic had turned out to be a big fizzle. The injured dog, a remarkably well-behaved Doberman, had been more shaken up than actually hurt. Her time had been mostly spent calming down all the other players in the little melodrama, while Paco examined the dog.

X-rays had shown no obvious injury. Paco had decided to send the dog home with his owner, along with some well-deserved words

regarding proper leashing. The teenage boy had been pathetically grateful that he hadn't killed the poor animal, while the drivers-ed instructor had been equally happy she wasn't going to be on the sharp end of a lawsuit.

A happy outcome for all, but a waste of her Saturday afternoon, Jilly fumed, opening the front door. She hung up her jacket and kicked off her boots, then used the bathroom, thanking the designers of the house that it could be accessed from two sides; both from the family room and from the hallway that held the bedrooms. She washed her hands, eying the piles of bags from the store lying in the living room. Hadn't Eileen and Roy Lee got around to putting away their loot yet? And where the hell were they?

As she dried her hands, she became aware of a strange sound. Actually, more than one strange sound. The first was a rhythmic thumping, emanating from Eileen's bedroom. The others were more muted, but sounded like murmuring voices or panting gasps for breath.

Later, when she thought about what she saw that afternoon, she admitted to herself that she already knew what she was going to see. Knew, but wanted to see, regardless of the outcome.

On silent, sock-clad feet, she crept down the hallway, until she stood poised outside the door of the guest bedroom. It was only partially shut, allowing her a view of the room. Her eyes opened wide in shock.

Her sister lay on the bed, her chest pressed to the mattress, her ass high in the air, presented as a loving, willing target. Behind her, her son knelt, Eileen's hips held firmly in his hands. They were both completely naked, and they were making love. Roy Lee's impressive cock thrust in and out of Eileen's cleft. It was slick with her juice, gleaming in the cold afternoon sunlight which poured through the half-drawn curtains over the bed. His face was rapt, a small smile playing about his lips as he fucked his aunt.

If Jillian had any doubts about whether Eileen was a willing partner, they were immediately dispelled. Her sister's face was turned toward her, though her eyes were fortunately closed. Her mouth was stretched in a wide smile, and she moaned through her parted lips. "Oh, God, Roy Lee, that's awesome. A little bit faster, baby." Obligingly, her nephew sped his strokes, the pale flesh of his ass clenching as he drove his shaft into Eileen over and over again.

Jillian stood in the doorway, rigid with fury. A red haze seemed to drop across her vision. Her palms stung where her nails were driven into her skin, and the tendons on her wrists stood out like cords. She took a step back, hiding behind the doorjamb, until she was certain she could control herself. Then she turned around and slipped back through the bathroom to the front of the house.

Five minutes later, she was dressed to face the outdoors and was walking up the street.

*****

Jillian hunched against the stinging wind, but at least it served to cool her anger. Fists shoved deep into her coat pockets, her shoulders bowed, she walked blindly, hardly caring where she went, as long as it was away. Away from her house, where her life had fallen apart. Away from her son and her sister, who were lovers, in violation of every taboo. Her boot heels struck the sidewalk in time with her screaming thoughts.

How dare they? She raged in the silence of her mind. She turned a corner, heading towards the business district. How could they betray me like this? After all I've done for them?

Really, Jilly? A portion of her mind mocked her outrage. Exactly what have you done for them for the past ten years? Besides abandon them both because you were too much of a coward to stay and fight for them?

"I was scared," she whispered to the harsh late-autumn breeze.

And Elly wasn't scared, living with that monster of a husband? Roy Lee wasn't scared, when you left and forced him to take care of his father at the ripe old age of fourteen? No wonder they turned to each other. Two attractive people, thrown together by chance, on the road alone? The only surprising thing is that they waited until you were out of the house. I'm surprised they aren't sharing the same bedroom by now.

"It's wrong," she said. She crossed a street, ignoring the pick-up which had to swerve to avoid her. A horn beeped petulantly, and she had to restrain herself from giving the driver the finger.

Wrong? Right? Who cares? They're adults. Who are you to judge?

"It's my house."

They both have jobs, the voice purred. Pretty soon it'll be their house they're screwing in, not yours. Relax. They'll be out of your hair soon.

"Shut up," Jillian said. "Just shut up." She halted, and found herself in front of the diner. She decided she didn't want to be left alone with her treacherous thoughts any longer. Maybe she could distract her brain with food, and get it to stop talking. She shoved the door open and barged into the steamy, grease-scented interior. At this hour, there were only a few people about, lingering over their coffee. She chose a booth near the back, where she could be alone.

"What can I get for you, Jillian?" said a voice at her elbow. She started and looked up into Georgia's curious eyes.

"Christ, Georgia. How do you move so quiet? Are you sure you're not half-ninja?" Jillian faked a laugh.

The waitress smiled. "Years of practice, honey. You need a minute?"

"No," Jillian said, shaking her head. "Large coffee. And a slice of pie a la mode. A big slice."

"Pie today's blueberry. That okay?"

"Wonderful."

The coffee and pie came quickly, but as soon as it appeared, Jillian's appetite abandoned her. She sat in the booth, poking at the pie as the ice cream melted, her mind a thousand miles away.

Eventually, she became aware of her voice being called, and she glanced up.

"Becky," she said, managing a wavering smile. "How are you?"

"Not so bad, other than trying to avoid hypothermia," said the doctor. A stroller stood by her side, occupied by a dozing infant, swaddled in warm blankets. "Alan here was fussing and wouldn't fall asleep for his afternoon nap. So I decided to take him for a walk. He fell asleep, finally, but I needed to pop in here to thaw out. Do you mind if I sit down?"

"Not at all," Jillian said, politeness winning out over her desire to be alone. She watched enviously as Becky slipped into the seat opposite her and ordered hot chocolate from the ever-present Georgia.

What I wouldn't give for her body. How the hell does she have a figure like that just after having a baby? It took me nearly a year to lose the weight after Roy Lee was born!

"So how old is he now?" she asked.

"Four months," Becky said proudly.

Jillian leaned over and drew a finger softly over the fuzz of hair on Alan's head. "He's beautiful," she said. "Can I hold him?"

"I don't see why not." Becky undid the buckles which held the baby in the stroller. "Maybe if you have hold of him, I'll be able to have my cocoa in peace. I swear, I love the boy, but he has some sort of radar that makes him wake up as soon as I sit down for a drink or a meal. It's uncanny."

She lifted the baby carefully out of the stroller. Jilly took him with the ease of long practice, settling him comfortably into the crook of her left arm. Alan shifted, his mouth opening in a yawn and his little legs and feet stretching, then relaxed, cuddling in close to her breast.

"I know what you mean," Jilly said, her lips curling in reminiscence. "Roy Lee was the same way when he was born. He didn't let me have any time to myself for weeks. I swear, there were times when I would have done practically anything for three hours alone."

"Roy Lee," Becky mused, her lips curling up in a wicked smile. "I ran into him earlier today over at Hendrick's. He's a good-looking young man." She paused as Jillian's face closed down angrily.

"God damn it," she hissed, keeping her voice low, mindful of the people in the diner and the baby in her arms. "What the hell is it with the women in this town and my son? First there was that tramp

Abbie in the check-out line. Then my sister. Then y-" Suddenly she clapped her hand over her mouth, realizing too late what she had said. She stared guiltily at Becky.

Who was looking back, her lips slightly curled. An amused look was dancing in her eyes.

"So that's what has you so riled up," she said. She touched Jilly's hand where it lay clenched on the table. "You're so tense and angry it's a miracle you don't have steam coming out of your ears.

"So," she continued, her voice soft and sympathetic. "Your son and your sister, huh?"

"I can't talk about it," Jillian stammered. "I can't talk about it to anyone. No one will understand. What kind of person would they think I am, to allow it under my own roof?" She cast her eyes down in shame.

"Jilly," Becky said softly. "I'm a doctor. A doctor in a small town. Trust me. If anyone knows how to keep a secret, it's me." She stole a glance at her son, lying warm in comfortable in her friend's arms, and decided to take a chance.

"You've never asked me who Alan's father is."

Jillian's eyes shot up to meet Becky's. "It's not my business. I know you're not married. If you decide you're ready to have a baby, and you're not ready to be settle down with someone, who am I to stick my nose in where it's not welcome?"

Becky snorted softly. "Well, you're different than a lot of other people, Jillian." She lowered her voice and leaned over the table. "Alan's father is my nephew, Marty. We've been lovers for over a year. He's away at school, now. I don't know what we'll do when he graduates. We're still talking about it. But taking him as my lover is the best choice I ever made in my life. He loves me. And I know he'll never betray me. And I am proud he is the father of my child."

Throughout this incredible confession, Jillian's eyes had been growing wider and wider, until she thought they would fall plop out of her head and bounce on the table like a pair of ping-pong balls. "Are you crazy?" she whispered, trying not to attract attention. "Do you have any idea what people will do when they find out?" She stared at the baby in her arms. "And the risks, Becky! How could you be sure he wouldn't be...be..."

"A flipper baby?" Becky grinned and made flapping motions with her arms. Despite herself, Jillian smiled. "I'm a doctor, Jilly. Who would know better the dangers of inbreeding than me? Which are, I am happy to say, vastly exaggerated by people who are happy to condemn what Marty and I have found together. The risks they speak of are only marginally greater than what two random strangers would have.

"True," she continued, her voice dry and clinical, "if our children had kids with each other, and that continued, in a few generations there would probably be some risks. But even then, if we were genetically clean, there would be no possibility for latent recessives to fuck up our gene pool."

She shrugged. "I wasn't worried. I know our family history. Both mine and that of Marty's father. There has never been a hint of problems on that front.

"And as for society? To hell with them. We're not going to announce our relationship. But we can't hide it forever. And Promise has bigger problems than who I'm sleeping with. There are other secrets besides mine in this town. If people start pointing fingers, I have enough ammo to blow this town sky-high. And they know it." It was hard not to call the expression on her face a smirk.

Jillian rocked back in her seat, her eyes wide. To have her friend so casually confess to a relationship which she had been taught was sinful made her think that she might have to reconsider her beliefs.

"Tell me," Becky's gentle voice continued. "When you saw the two of them together...you did see them, right?"

Jillian nodded miserably.

"When you saw them, what was the first emotion to cross your mind? Were you sickened? Disgusted?"

"I was angry," she said in a small voice.

"Angry?" Becky raised dark brows. "Now that is interesting. Why were you angry? Is it possible the old green-eyed monster was making an appearance?"

Jillian blinked, totally confused. "Green-eyed monster?"

Becky grinned. "It's a quote. From Shakespeare. In one of his plays he called jealousy and envy the green-eyed monster. Othello, I think. Or The Merchant of Venice. It's been a while since my English Lit class in school.

"The point I'm trying to make, darling, is if you were angry, was it because of what Roy Lee was doing? Or was it because of who he was doing it with? In short, were you mad that he was making love to his aunt rather than you?"

She stood and lifted Alan out of Jillian's arms, ignoring her poleaxed look of amazement. "I need to go. And you need to think. But if you want to talk about it, you know where to find me." She placed the baby back in the stroller. He opened his eyes and gave a faint meep. She smiled fondly at him, and Jillian tried to come to the grips with the fact that the healthy, happy child was a product of an incestuous relationship.

Becky bent and hugged her. "One word of warning. Before you do anything, think about it. Make sure it's what you want. I didn't, but I got lucky. Other people haven't. I'll see you soon, okay?"

Pulling on her coat, she left the diner. Jillian sat back in the booth, her thoughts a tumult.

*****

The next four days were a tense misery for Jillian.

Somehow she was able to put on a cheerful face when she was with her sister and her son, and not descend into screaming rage. But her stomach was tied in knots whenever she was around them, and her appetite was non-existent. She had trouble sleeping, and dark circles formed beneath her eyes. Every look Eileen and Roy Lee exchanged, every word they spoke to each other, was now fraught with meaning in her envious mind. Only when she was alone did she get any respite, and those hours were dangerous as well. In her own room, with the door locked, she masturbated frantically, fantasizing about her son, those few seconds when Roy Lee's naked body was displayed before her in all its glory driving her lust.

The situation came to a head on Wednesday afternoon. Eileen stalked into the veterinary clinic, asked Paco to excuse himself, and trapped Jillian in an examination room.

"What's wrong, Jilly?" she asked bluntly.

She opened her mouth to deny there was any problem, but her sister overrode her feeble protest. "Don't bullshit me. I know you. And I know when something is wrong. You're acting the same way you did right after Dale lost his job at the mill. As if you could hold your family together through sheer willpower. You were wrong then, and if you don't let me help you, you'll be wrong this time, too. What's wrong?"

Jillian gave up the pretense. She let her head sag forward, the tension draining from her body. "I saw you and Roy Lee together," she said softly, mindful of the people outside. "Saturday afternoon. I came back from the clinic and saw the two of you making love."

"Oh," Eileen said. She looked at Jillian, her lips pursed in dismay. "Well, that's not how we imagined you finding out," she said carefully. "Although we really haven't discussed it much."

"Eileen, how..."

"How did it all happen?" Her sister finished her question. She smiled fondly. "In desperation, for my part. Roy Lee came into the salon the night we left. His daddy had told him he looked like a hippie, and to get a haircut. Roy Lee figured he could let me know he was leaving, and I could pass along the word once he was out of town. When I found out what he meant to do..." She shrugged, but there was no apology in her face. "I seduced him. I said the other night I would have done anything to get out of Deer Creek. And I meant it. I pulled down his pants right in the middle of the salon and starting sucking his cock." Her face grew dreamy with the memory. "Didn't get to finish him off, though. The fucking mailman came by and interrupted us.

"But that's where it all changed for me, Jilly. Roy Lee is an incredible lover. So patient and kind and gentle. It's like he gets off by watching me cum. I was half in love with him after our first night together. By the next day, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him."

"Oh," Jillian said woodenly. She stood up, but her legs were shaking. "Don't worry, Elly. Your secret is safe. I won't make a fuss. I hope the two of you will be happy together." Even as she spoke the words, her heart broke. She could feel it, a tearing pain in her chest.

"Oh, no you don't," Eileen said. She blocked the door, preventing her escape. Her normally cheerful face was serious as she peered down at her older sister. "Something is still eating at you. And I'm not leaving this room until you tell me. Out with it."

Jillian's face crumpled. She looked down at her feet, feeling tears course down her cheeks. "I'm envious. Can you believe it? My sister is screwing my son. And my biggest problem is the fact that I want to screw my son. I've been fantasizing about him for days. How he looked when I saw the two of you together. God, Eileen, what sort of mother am I?"

"A horny one?" Eileen said. Even through her despair, Jillian giggled. Her sister hugged her, her body warm and pliant against hers. She spoke quietly into her ear. "If you're horny for Roy Lee, I suppose I have to congratulate you for your good taste," she said quietly. "And I would be the biggest hypocrite in the world if I tried to steer you away."

Jillian stepped back, her face blank with disbelief. "What are you saying?"

"I'm saying your son finds you just as sexy as he does me," Eileen said. "You've been watching him. A blind woman could see it. I sure as hell have. Well, he's been watching you right back. And it ain't just

the look a boy gives his long-lost momma. It's the look a man gives a woman he'd like to see more of. A lot more.

"Your son thinks you're hot, Jilly. If we primed him right, he'd leap at a chance to go to bed with you."

"And you'd be okay with it?" Jillian tried to make her voice sarcastic, but instead it came out as a plaintive cry.

Eileen grinned. "Well, Jilly, right now I'm not getting near as much loving from your son as I would like. Because he's at work in the daytime, and you're home at night. And neither of us thought much of the idea of trying to screw in secret, with you on the other side of the bedroom wall.

"I'm thinking that if we share him, I'll be getting more action anyway. Because even if Roy Lee is splitting his cock between the two of us, we won't have to hide what's going on from each other."

"You could move into a place of your own," Jillian protested weakly.

"Listen to me, Sis." Eileen's voice was impatient. "I have no problem lying to the town about what's going on between the three of us. Hell," she said, her voice quietly savage, "I lied to Deer Creek for twenty years about what a great marriage I had.

"But I'm not going to lie to you. And I'm not going to pretend I'm not sleeping with your son, since you've found out. I want to help you.

Roy Lee's young, hot, and very enthusiastic. He'll be able to keep us satisfied for as long as we like.

"Let me help you, Jilly. Let me help you seduce your son."

*****

It had been the most crime-free week in the memory of Deer Creek.

The word had gone out, whispered in the seedy bars and the trailer parks, in the shabby apartment houses and the storefront churches.

Bobby Ray Harris' wife left him. Stay out of his way if you know what's good for you.

The criminal element, long used to laying low when Bobby Ray was on a mean streak, crawled into the woodwork and disappeared. Normal, law-abiding citizens took special care not to speed through Deer Creek's potholed streets, in fear of flashing lights in their rearview mirrors. Couples on the ragged edge of bitter breakups lowered their voices and made sure their vicious arguments stayed quiet, not wishing for Bobby Ray to come crashing through their front door, investigating a domestic disturbance call.

At the same time Jillian and Eileen were speaking in Promise, Eileen's unloved husband was crouched at his desk in Deer Creek, trying to convincingly falsify a report for an arrest which had resulted in a skull fracture.

A soft, diffident knock sounded at the door frame. Bobby Ray looked up, his fat, florid face settling into a scowl. Dale McCoy stood in the doorway, looking somewhat less seedy than usual. His hair was combed, he was wearing clean clothes. He had actually shaved.

Good Lord, Bobby Ray thought, sour humor cutting through his aggravation, is the drunk old fucker actually sober for a change? Dale's alcoholism had been s source of amusement for years. Bobby Ray hadn't shed a tear when Dale's stuck-up bitch of a wife left him and his pansy-ass son. The fewer influences on Eileen, the better. Jillian always had taken up for her sister. One time, in fact, she had actually goaded Dale into making roundabout inquiries about whether he had ever used his fists on Eileen.

Only when she deserves it, he had told his brother-in-law, watching him back down in quivering fear.

When he got back from work that night, he had blacked the cunt's eye.

That had been a good night. Bobby Ray sat back in his chair, a gleam of happy memory in his eyes. "What can I do for you, Dale? But make it quick, I'm a busy man."

Dale crept slowly into his office, his shaking hands clutched together. "I was...I was wondering if you could tell me how to file a missing person's report."

"See one of the officers up front, Dale. I don't get involved in that," he said dismissively. He blinked as his brain caught up with his ears. There could only be one person in town Dale would report missing. "Wait a second. Is Roy Lee gone?"

Dale nodded, nervous sweat shining on his balding head. "He left over a week ago. Told me he was going to visit some friends up north. In Kentucky. But he never came back. I thought he might have gotten a place of his own, here in town. But he didn't come by to visit." He sniffled, and a self-pitying tear crept down his broken-veined cheek. "So I went by his work, out at Rollie Stebbin's place. Rollie tells me he got an e-mail from Roy Lee last Tuesday night, telling him that he quit. He had moved away, and wasn't going to work for him no more.

"His room is all packed up. He took all his things. And today I found a voice mail on my phone. It was from Roy Lee. It said he was leaving Deer Creek and wasn't coming back."

Throughout this incredible confession Bobby Ray had felt the pieces falling into place. He thought back to that last conversation with Eileen. The contemptuous way she had dismissed him.

"I've found a lover. I haven't screwed him yet, but he's already way better in the sack than you ever were."

He surged to his feet. When he spoke his voice was low and hoarse with fury.

"Roy Lee left on the thirtieth? The Friday before last?"

"That's what I said," Dale said, shuffling backwards.

"And you're just telling me now, you stupid, drunk fuck!" he yelled. "That's the same night Eileen ran off!" His mind blazing in rage, he pinned Dale against the wall. A furious fist buried itself in Dale's midsection, leaving the man sobbing for breath on the floor. He followed it up by kicking him in the face. The sick wet crack of his breaking nose was music in his ears.

Bobby Ray was drawing his foot back for another vicious strike when he was interrupted.

"Excuse me," a clear voice said, cutting through the sweet fog of rage. Snarling, he turned his head around to be met by a small African-American woman in a dark uniform. She held a thick envelope in her hand and a clipboard was tucked under her arm.

"As much as I hate to get involved, I have a certified letter for Mr. Bobby Ray Harris," she said. Her expression didn't change, but she gave the subtle impression of finding Bobby as appetizing as a cockroach on a wedding cake.

He snatched the envelope out of her hands, pretending not to notice as the woman helped Dale to his feet. His brother-in-law staggered down the hallway, thin whines of pain escaping his mouth as he fled.

"What's in here?" Bobby Ray grunted, taking the envelope.

"It's a surprise," the woman said maliciously. She shoved the clipboard at him. "Sign here, please. I need confirmation of receipt."

Bobby Ray briefly considered smacking the uppity bitch around a little. But her uniform dissuaded him. She would surely report him to her bosses, and a lawsuit would be inconvenient. Bobby Ray had always found it better to victimize those who couldn't fight back. He scrawled his name where the woman's pointing finger directed him.

"Congratulations," she said. The smirk on her face was positively gleeful. "You've just been served. Enjoy your divorce."

"What?" he roared. He charged at the woman, his hands outstretched. She ducked around the doorframe and into the hall, and he chased her, screaming threats.

Until he was brought up short with a gun to his head. At that point he became very, very still.

"We were warned about you," the woman said. There was no laughter in her voice now, and her face was grim. She glanced at her companion, a large man with a buzz cut and ice-cold eyes that held no humor at all. "I'm sure you enjoy terrorizing people around this shithole town. But I'm a bonded courier. And Reggie here comes out with me when we are delivering a package to those who...might be less than pleased to receive it.

"So back off, you disgusting thug. Or he'll turn your head into a canoe."

Bobby Ray swallowed and raised his hands. The woman nodded, and Reggie lowered the pistol. She turned away and walked down the hall towards the reception area. Reggie backed away slowly, keeping his eyes locked on Bobby Ray until he, too, disappeared around the corner.

*****

Bobby Ray closed the door and sank into his chair, trembling with impotent anger. Absently, he opened the envelope, glancing over the paperwork.

And sat up, his eyes wide and staring.

Beaverhead County, Montana.

"That's where she is. Oh, you stupid fucking whore. I've got you now." A quick search on his computer got him the numbers for the post offices serving the few towns in Beaverhead County. He struck gold on his third call, as the post-office worker gave him the home address for Jillian Coulter.

His next call was to the Beaverhead County Sheriff's Department.

"This is Deputy Sheriff Bobby Ray Harris," he said to the bored-sounding clerk. "I'd like to speak with Sheriff Del...Deliz...."

"Delzecki, sir?"

"Yes. Right."

"One moment, sir."

A short pause, than a laconic voice picked up the line. "Delzecki speaking."

"Yes, Sheriff," Bobby Ray said, trying to keep his voice under control. "This is Deputy Sheriff Bobby Ray Harris, calling from Lawrence County, Alabama. We've just found out that a woman we have an interest in is living in Promise. It's a sensitive case, so I'll be coming out to pick her up personally. But I wanted to give you a heads-up. Don't want any crossed signals."

"Really? Who is this woman? And what is she wanted for?"

"Her name is Jillian Coulter, Sheriff. She was involved in a methamphetamine ring down in these parts. I'm sure I don't have to tell you how badly meth is affecting our communities," he said piously. "We busted the lab a few years ago, but she slipped away and relocated to Promise, we believe. We've got warrants out on her for money laundering, drug manufacturing, sales and distribution, the whole nine yards."

"Huh. Is she dangerous?"

Bobby Ray held back a snort of sarcastic laughter. "No. Not at all. We figure her to be the brains of the outfit. But we think she can lead us to some of the bigger fish. You know how it works."

"I surely do." The man's voice was dryly amused. "Do want us to take her in?"

"No!" Bobby Ray said quickly. If this idiot Delzecki arrested Jillian, she might tell him the truth about her unwelcome visitor from Alabama. The last thing he needed was for some cowboy lawman to gum up the works. "Just keep an eye on her. Make sure she doesn't leave town. I don't want someone local here tipping her off." He smirked. Nothing like a little cloak-and-dagger to keep the rubes occupied.

"All right then. When do you think you'll be out here?"

"Saturday, with any luck."

"Sounds good. We'll keep an eye on her. And an eye out for you."

"Thank you, Sheriff. Goodbye." Idiot. He grinned humorlessly and rummaged in his desk for his set of warrants. With the help of a judge who preferred his penchant for underage girls remain quiet, he had several filled out and available, in case of an emergency. A little creative editing had Jillian Coulter accused of some serious criminal activity.

"Oh, Jilly," he breathed. "You've been a naughty girl. Just wait until I get my hands on you. You'll lead me right to your whore sister and your aunt-fucking son. And then you'll all be so, so sorry."

He rose and jerked open the door of his office. "Wilkins!" he shouted.

A pale face peered around the corner. "Yes, sir?"

"I'm taking a few days off. Tell Sheriff Barstow he can reach me on my cell if there's an emergency. But there better not be one. Do you understand me, Wilkins?" he said menacingly.

"Yes, sir," he swallowed. "Taking a few days off. No emergencies. Yessir. When will you be back?"

Bobby Ray smiled unpleasantly. "Soon."

*****

"So how do you want to do this?"

Eileen and Jillian were alone in the house. It was Friday evening, and Jillian was trying to decide how to seduce her son. Roy Lee was still at his job at the body shop.

Jillian threw up her hands helplessly. "I don't know, Ellie. I've never seduced my son before. Hell, I'm not sure if I ever actually seduced anyone before. At the risk of sounding arrogant, it's not something I've ever had to work too hard at. Usually the boys were chasing after me, not the other way around."

"Oh, yes," Eileen replied, her lips curving in a smile. "I remember those days. Daddy kept claiming he was going to buy a mean old hound dog to scare the boys away. It started when you were about fifteen and didn't stop until the day you got married to Dale."

"So how did you seduce Roy Lee?" Jillian asked.

Eileen paused, considering. "It wasn't really a seduction. I mean, I did give him head in the salon..."

"You actually did that? I thought you were kidding." Jillian boggled.

"Hello, Jillian? Desperate to leave town and my wife-beating scumbag of a husband, remember? At that point, I would have let Roy Lee fuck me up the ass, as long as he had a small dick, lubed me up real nice, and gave me a ride out of town. Lucky for me, he only did the one. But it was the one that counted. And he doesn't have a small dick. It's nice," she said, her voice going dark and rich, like hot chocolate with whipped cream on top.

Jillian sighed and sat on her bed, pressing the heels of her hands into her eyes. "So you just pulled down his pants and gave him a blow-job in the salon?"

"More or less," her sister said, her eyes going hazy in happy memory. "But we were interrupted before we could finish. And then I helped him jack off on my bed when we were packing up and leaving my house. And then he gave me oral that night in the hotel. And I blew him in the car the next day. And then we finally made love that night."

"And exactly what did you do which led to this non-stop fuck-fest with the fruit of my loins, sister dear?"

"I just let him know I wanted him, I guess," Eileen said. "Roy Lee isn't very complicated. I'm not saying he's stupid," she continued. "No son of yours would ever be stupid. But he's simple. There's no point coming up with a clever plan to trick him into your bed. Oh, he'd figure it out eventually. But you'll save a lot of time and trouble by being direct.

"One thing, though. I want to be there."

"What?"

"Not in the room, you doofus. At least, not at first," she said with a lecherous grin. "There's time enough for three-ways and all sorts of interesting kink later. But I want to be there when he figures out what is going on. That way I can give my permission, and he won't be all hung up on guilt, thinking he's betrayed me somehow."

"All right," Jillian said. She closed her eyes for a minute, considering her options. "After supper, put a movie in the DVD player. I don't care what it is, as long as it will hold his attention. After that, follow my lead."

*****

"I'm home!" Roy Lee called. He stepped through the front door and kicked off his shoes.

"Evening, honey." Eileen hugged him, her arms lingering around his body. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see his mother watching them. He hurriedly disengaged from Eileen's embrace.

"You guys haven't started supper yet, have you?"

"No," said his mother. "Why?"

"Because tonight," he said, grinning and holding up a grocery bag, "I am going to cook for you." He led them through the house and out onto the small deck outside the kitchen. He flipped on the outside light, illuminating a gleaming new propane grill.

"I bought it at Hendrick's on Saturday," he said. "And I put it together last night when you were all in bed. So you two ladies can sit down and relax tonight. I'll take care of everything."

*****

"Men are useful," Eileen teased, as they gathered in the living room after supper.

The meal hadn't been fancy, but it had been good. Despite the frigid temperature outside, Roy Lee had grilled the steaks to perfection, and the side dishes of baked potatoes and seasoned asparagus made sure that everyone was comfortably full. Jillian was pleased to note that her son had limited himself to one beer while grilling the steaks, and one during the meal itself.

He was sipping a last one now, his sock feet propped up on the coffee table, as Eileen rummaged through Jillian's DVD collection. Different from his father, rather being hectically energized, the alcohol seemed to put him in a relaxed, mellow mood.

"Ah, there we go," Jillian said. The kindling had caught, and flickering orange flames leaped from the pile of firewood. The scent of burning maple seeped through the room. She took a sip from her wine glass, then set it down. "I'm going to change real quick. Don't start the movie without me."

"Hard to do it, since Aunt Eileen hasn't even found a movie she likes yet," Roy Lee smiled.

Jillian whacked him on the back of his head as she walked past. "Hush, you. Show some respect for your elders."

In her bedroom, she stared at her reflection, and wondered for the thousandth time if she was doing the right thing.

"Enough, Jilly," she whispered to the image in the mirror. "Shit or get off the pot. Seduce your son, or don't. But stop dithering. Choose." She closed her eyes, then opened them.

"He's my son," she said. "And I want him."

The wispy negligee was about three ounces of green fog, and it clung, gauzelike, to her hips and breasts as she walked into the living room. She strode slowly, maximizing her impact, smiling inwardly as Roy Lee's gaze caught her and his eyes widened. She posed in front of the fireplace, knowing full well the light from behind threw her silhouette into stark relief, outlining her legs, hips, and breasts. Her body warmed under his glance as he squirmed awkwardly. She knew instinctively how she was affecting him, and her cheeks warmed as she imagined his magnificent cock hardening in his pants, preparing itself for her.

She sat on the couch and nudged him into the corner with one hip, pulling one her afghans off the back of the couch at the same time. She draped it over both of them, then leaned over to pick up her glass of wine, making sure her son got a good long look at the swells of her breasts.

They're not as big as Elly's, but they do the job. And no one has ever complained about them. Well, Dale did.

Once.

"Did you find a movie, Elly?" she asked.

"Sure did," her sister replied, holding up the case. "How about 'Love, Actually'?" She slotted the movie into the DVD player and sat down on an easy chair.

Roy Lee made a face. "Bunch of pasty-faced English goobers. Why couldn't you pick a good movie? With explosions. Or at least a good car chase?"

Under the quilt, Jillian pinched his leg. "Hush. There's lots of good actors in this. Colin Firth, Hugh Grant..."

Her son snorted.

"Emma Thompson," put in Eileen.

"Alan Rickman," continued Jillian.

"All right, you got me," Roy Lee said. "Alan Rickman is awesome. Best bad guy ever."

They watched the movie quietly, sometimes trading comments or laughing. After a little while, Jillian squirmed uncomfortably.

"Goodness sake, Roy Lee, how am I supposed to sit here with those jeans of yours scratching me? Why don't you change into some of those sleep pants you got at the store? They're warmer and more comfortable."

Grumbling softly, her son got off the couch and padded around behind it to change. Unable to look without being completely obvious, Jillian glanced over to her sister, who was watching her nephew, laughter in her eyes.

Jillian caught Eileen's eyes. Hard? Her mouth formed the word silently.

Eileen waggled her eyebrows. Oh, yeah. She grinned, and made a gesture with her hands. No way. He's not that big. Is he?

In a few moments, Roy Lee rejoined her on the couch. His arm was held awkwardly over his crotch in a vain effort to disguise his arousal. Jillian pretended not to notice and restarted the movie. She snuggled closer to her son and took another sip of wine, enjoying the heat as it sank deep into her belly, then flowed out into her limbs. She felt heavy and molten, suffused with languor.

Under the cover of the afghan, she laid a hand on her son's thigh. It quivered under her touch, tense with strain. She snuggled in close to him, curling an arm around his waist and resting her face on his shoulder.

"Oh, this is so nice," she said softly, drawing his arm around her. She wiggled happily under his warm touch, pretending to ignore the way his muscles trembled.

"So," she said, giggling at the movie as an Englishman, exposed to American beer commercials, flew to Milwaukee to meet real American girls, "who do you think is the prettiest girl?"

"Her," he replied, nodding to the screen, where Lucia Moniz was frolicking in a muddy lake with Colin Firth. "That Portuguese girl. She looks a lot like you. Her hair's a bit darker, but the face is a lot like yours."

"Flatterer. She's ten years younger than I am."

"The movie was made over ten years ago. So she's probably around your age."

"Hmmm..." Jillian paused, considering. She finished her wine, then set the glass down on the coffee table. She was completely relaxed. There was no longer any doubt in her mind, and her soul was untroubled. She took a long breath, then turned to face her son. Moving unhurriedly, she set her hand firmly on Roy Lee's groin.

"So," she whispered. "Is this for lovely Aurelia on the screen, or is it for me?" She curled her hand around his rock-hard cock, slowly rubbing through the soft cloth of his sleep pants.

Roy Lee turned rigid, and it wasn't just the part of him Jillian was expertly stroking. He darted an anxious look at Eileen, who was watching them.

"Momma, what are you doing? Stop it!" he tried to keep his voice a quiet hiss, but with his aunt only a few feet away, it was a pointless exercise.

Jillian ignored him. She arched into her son's body, her weight pushing him unresisting into the cushions of the couch. With one arm she flung back the afghan. Despite the warm, fire-heated air of the living room, she shivered. Her body was on fire. She had never felt so aroused. The forbidden aura of her actions had lit a flame in her body that matched the flames in the fireplace. She loosened the belt of her negligee, letting it hang open, exposing her body to Roy Lee's view.

"I know what you and Eileen have been doing, baby," she said. Her voice only quavered a little. "I was pissed at first, but that was because I wanted what she had. How she got to enjoy your beautiful body while I couldn't. But I talked to her, and I'm not angry anymore." She looked down into his wide, staring eyes, and pushed her hand under his waistband. "We've decided to share you, if you're willing to make love to an old lady like me." Her small, cool hand curled around his raging erection.

"Roy Lee. Make love to me, please?"

His eyes were lock on hers. For an endless moment, he didn't respond, and she thought she had lost him. That his dear, sweet face

would fill with anger and disgust, and that he would leave her alone, never to return. Then his arms gently enfolded her and he drew her down and he kissed her with a passion that shook her to her very bones.

The duration of the kiss could not be measured in seconds, or in minutes. Not when it bound them inextricably together. It lasted lifetimes. Three of them. Jillian pushed her son down on the couch, her negligee shamelessly open, her panties clinging damply to her hips. Her entire body was burning with desire. She opened her mouth to him, and his tongue came out to play, licking her lips, exploring her mouth, thrusting deep inside her.

"God, that's so hot," came a whisper from her side. She looked up, startled, having forgotten about her sister. Eileen stood by their side. Her shirt and bra were gone, and the large mounds of her breasts were heaving and damp with sweat. She pinched her nipples, the denim-clad mound of her sex jerking forward as she pleasured herself.

"Take it off, Jilly," she moaned, and helped her sister remove the silky wisp of cloth that was draped around her. She dropped a kiss on her sister's shoulder as she folded the garment in her hands.

"God, you've got great titties," Eileen said. She watched as Roy Lee cupped them in his hands, his thumbs expertly stroking the erect nipples. "They don't sag at all."

"Oh, you're one to talk," Jillian sighed. She squeezed her thighs together, feeling the pulse beat between her legs. She could sense her

outer lips growing hot and fat as blood rushed to fill them. In her innermost core, moisture gathered, easing the way for Roy Lee's shaft. She fought the urge to strip his pants off and take him, now, hard and fast. "Your boobs are awesome, too. I've already been hearing talk in the office about you. The men around town have their eyes on you, Sis."

"Well, too bad for them. I'm a one-man woman."

"And so am I." She shuddered as Roy Lee's fingers traced a loving path down her spine. "Good thing for us it's the same man."

"Mmmm," Eileen agreed. She was rubbing her crotch urgently with her hand. With a whisper of cloth, she unzipped her pants, the heel of her hand pushing against her mons.

"Momma?" Her son's voice broke her reverie. She tore away from the sight of her sister frantically humping her own hand, and smiled gently down into Roy Lee's face.

"What is it, baby?" She kissed him again, her tongue licking his lips, savoring his taste.

"I think you and Aunt Eileen have...things...planned. Or you've been thinking about them, at least. But I don't...I want our first time to be alone. Just the two of us. Is that okay?"

Jillian was suddenly ashamed. It was bad enough she ambushed Roy Lee this way, without allowing him time to prepare or to think. She

was lucky he wanted her as badly as she wanted him. But to fuck him in front of her sister, exposing him to her voyeurism without his permission? That was unacceptable.

"I'm sorry, baby," she said apologetically. "I just got so worked up. It's been so long since I've had a man. I'm horny for you. I have been for days.

"But I'll never force you to do something you don't want. And neither will your aunt." She shot a hard look at Eileen.

"God, no," Eileen said, shuddering. "I'll be damned and burn in hell if I ever act like Bobby Ray." She stooped and planted a kiss on Roy Lee's cheek. "You two have a great time. You can take care of me soon, lover boy. I'll stay out here and finish the movie. But don't worry about being loud," she finished with an evil grin. "You know how much I like hearing you get off."

*****

In the dim light of her bedroom, Jillian hugged her son. She raised her head and spoke softly, her voice intent.

"I want to know, Roy Lee. Know for certain. Is this what you want? Because if it isn't, just say so. You can walk out the door and I'll never say another word."

He looked solemnly down at her, his lips quirked in the smallest of smiles. "Momma, most men my age would storm heaven to have a chance to be with you. And you're offering it to me on a plate.

"I love you. And I want to go to bed with you. I want to make you happy. You and Aunt Eileen both. So if you want a three-way relationship with me and your sister, I would be an idiot to say no."

He drew her close and kissed her thoroughly. "Lay down. I want to kiss you. Down there."

Jillian lay on the bed, the comforter soft and warm on her heated skin. She watched, her eyes half-lidded, as her son stripped in front of her. She smiled slowly, like a cat being served a bowl of cream, at his tall, slim body. The hair on his chest was a lighter shade than that of his head, almost gold in the soft light of the lamp. It curled sparingly around his nipples, nearly disappeared lower on his chest, then sprang out around his navel and continued down to the beautiful nest of his groin. His cock rose rampant from its golden bower - hard, full, with just the slightest hint of a curve, bending inwards towards his flat stomach. The tip was dark red and lightly smeared with the moisture of his arousal. Her mouth watered, wanting to discover its taste.

Roy Lee crawled onto the bed, the mattress sagging slightly under his weight. With a shudder, Jillian spread her legs, and watched as his head lowered, his mouth opened, his tongue came out, and he kissed her hot, swollen nether-lips. Her hips immediately jerked upward at the exquisite sensation. Whether it was instinct or skill, he knew the perfect places to touch her. She whimpered softly as he licked her, and she clutched the bedclothes in her wide-flung hands.

"Baby. Oh, baby, you are so good at this," she husked as his tongue dove deep within her throbbing pussy. Like a spear, it stabbed into her, then withdrew, leaving her empty and aching and wanting more. She slowly kneaded her breasts, savoring the slow-rising heat of passion. Roy Lee kissed her again, then set to his task in earnest, laving her vulva with a series of wet tongue-strokes which were sweet and gentle and full of passion and love.

Jilly closed her eyes and gasped. Her entire world closed down. The only thing her mind had room for was the feeling of his mouth on her pussy, his hands on her hips and ass and thighs, her hands on her breasts. Braced on his elbows, Roy Lee held her buttocks in his hands and lifted her rear effortlessly into the air. He squeezed her cheeks rhythmically, smiling as she writhed. Backing away from her molten core, he extended his tongue, letting it play over her red-hot bud.

Driven mad with joy, pleasure, and desire, Jillian whipped her head back and forth, her hair falling in sweaty strands into her eyes. She felt as if she were falling upwards, made weightless by his hands, his mouth, his body, his love. All at once the muscles in her belly contracted, clenched, then released in a shattering spasm of pleasure. Caught by surprise by the sudden violence of her orgasm, she could only lay in his arms and gasp. Her fists drummed on the mattress and a hoarse shout tore loose from her lips.

"Roy Lee! Oh, God, baby. I'm cumming. I'm cumming!!" she yelled. She gripped his head with her thighs, denying him escape from her loving grasp.

Slowly the aftershocks of her climax receded. Lying limp on the bed, she extended one trembling hand and stroked her son's cheek as he lay smiling up at her.

"Come on up here, baby."

He crawled up the bed until they were lying face to face. Grabbing a tissue off the nightstand, he wiped his lips, then kissed her. She returned it lazily, her entire body suffused with pleasure in the aftermath of her orgasm.

"Damn, Roy Lee. Where did you learn that?"

Her son smiled in memory. "When I was a senior in high school, I went out with a girl named Julie Lindstrom for about five months. Nice girl. I think you would have liked her. The one thing she taught me, which I swore I would never forget, was that if I treated every square inch of a woman like I wanted her to touch the head of my cock, I would never go wrong. That I should always be slow, careful, and gentle. And that if a woman wanted me to be stronger or rougher, she'd tell me."

"Smart girl," Jillian said. She eyed her son's dick, bobbing slightly, in time with his heartbeat. She leaned close to kiss him, then threw her leg up over his hip. She hooked it over and drew him close, smiling as his throbbing head brushed her still-sensitive lips. She rocked her hips, watching his face. Seeing the expression slowly fade and draw inward as she opened to his shaft.

With no fuss or fanfare, she took her son into her willing body. He moaned, his eyes slitting with pleasure, then clutched her close. His

hands held her rear, and they both gasped as he sank into her, drawing ever closer until they were joined as one.

"You feel different," Roy Lee said, then cursed his blathering mouth as his mother looked at him.

"Worse?" she asked, pain in her eyes. "Than Eileen?"

"No!" he replied hurriedly. "Not better, either, in case Aunt Eileen asks." His eyes glinted with mad humor. "Just...different. Smaller. Tighter." His eyes rolled back in pleasure as a ring of flesh tightened around the base of his organ.

"Well, we are two different people, Roy Lee," she said, rocking gently against him.

"I know," he said, blushing. "I'm an idiot. I'm sorry."

He bent his head and kissed her breast in apology. She arched toward him, yearning, and he caught her hidden desire, capturing a rigid nipple in his mouth and suckling gently, his tongue flickering over the taut bud.

"The other one," she said softly, but the angle was awkward for him. She watched him root around, his head digging deeper into the mattress, and started to giggle, which made her chest shake, which just made things worse.

Finally, she grabbed his rear as hard as she could, and rolled over onto her back, carrying him with her. She cradled his hips between her thighs, moaning deep in her throat as he slowly thrust into her, his weight on her groin pushing her down into the mattress.

"Better?" Jillian asked, as he finally managed to catch the offending nipple with his lips. He made an agreeing sound. "I swear," she said with a smile. "You just reminded me of when you were a baby. You'd wake up hungry and fussy. And sometimes you couldn't find my nipple to nurse. So your poor little mouth would wander all around my boob, like my nipple was playing hide and seek."

He snorted, trying to muffle his laughter. Letting go of her breast, he rose above her, braced on his arms. He kissed her, his lips tender on hers.

"I love you, Momma. I love you so much right now."

"I love you, too, Roy Lee. Are you going to come for your momma? Are you going to fill me full of your hot, sticky spunk? I can feel it," she said, as his her son's eyes glazed and his motions slowly quickened. "I can feel your cock inside me. I've wanted it there ever since I saw you in the diner. Wanted to hold you naked in my arms and feel you between my legs. Wanted to make you cum for me. Cum for me, Roy Lee," she said, feeling his cock thicken within her. His strokes swiftened, driving longer, faster, deeper into her. The rush of passion grew inside her once more, and at that moment she knew there was nothing in the world she wanted more than to reach orgasm with her son. "Cum for your Momma. Cum for me now. Now. Now!" she screamed, and she felt him empty into her, wave after wave of liquid heat spilling from his loins into hers, and the

thought of her son cumming inside her drove her over the edge into her second mind-shattering orgasm of the night.

*****

In the still hours of the night, Jilly lay beside her sleeping son and smiled. She ran her hands down her sides and cupped them over her stomach. The bone-deep lassitude following her orgasms was wearing off, but she was tired after a long day.

Over the past few days, she had wondered how she would feel after making love to her son, if she somehow got up the courage to do it. Would she feel guilty? Disgusted? Would the novelty wear off once the itch of incest had been scratched?

This will never wear off, she thought. He is my son and he is my lover, and I love him as I have never loved another man. She turned off the lamp, casting the room into shadow. She pulled the comforter over them both and rested her head on his chest, listening for the throb of his heartbeat under her cheek.

She closed her eyes, and had such a night's sleep as she had not had since she was a child.

*****

Bobby Ray McCoy was doing ninety miles an hour when he hit the exit ramp for Promise the next morning.

He had made the trip in two and a half days, rage driving him, surviving on a diet of gas-station coffee, drive-thru hamburgers, and hate. His bloodshot eyes flickered over the street signs as he barreled down Main Street, looking for the directions he had scribbled down before he left Alabama. He turned right, then left, then right again, and came to a screeching halt outside a low-slung house with a beat-up truck and a Ford sedan in the driveway.

He climbed out of the car, shivering as a bitter wind threw a squall of snow across the frost-bitten yard.

"Hello? Can I help you?"

He turned to see a dried-up old bitch on the porch next door, looking at him with a disapproving expression on her wrinkled face.

He drew his service revolver and pointed it at her.

"I'm making an arrest. Get your sorry old ass inside, skank, if you know what's good for you."

The old lady went pale, and Bobby Ray gloated in his black, scabby soul, enjoying the power he had to make people cringe and cower. She scuttled back inside. "I'm calling the police!" she shouted, before she slammed and locked the door behind her.

"Go ahead," he muttered. He laughed loudly. "Go ahead," he repeated, shouting to the suddenly quiet neighborhood. "Call the police! I dare you! They're already here!"

He crossed the yard and tried the door, hoping to find it locked, looking for an excuse to break it down. To his disappointment, the knob turned easily under his hand, letting him in.

"Honey! I'm home!" he yelled, his voice a cheerfully grotesque mockery. The soft murmur of happy voices was the only response. There was no shriek of terror, no scrabbling scurry to escape. He stalked through the house, searching for their source, determined to make them fear him.

He found them in the kitchen, eating a leisurely breakfast. His faggot nephew was wearing nothing but a pair of boxers, his broad chest and flat stomach an unspoken rebuke to Bobby Ray's own obesity. His long-lost sister-in-law was wearing a bathrobe, but the belt was undone and her tits were hanging out in the cool morning air.

"Good morning, Bobby Ray," the bitch said quietly, her lip curled snidely. "What an unpleasant surprise. Roy Lee, did you invite your wife-beating uncle here and forget to tell me?"

"No way," the little shit replied. "I thought you might have invited him and forgot to tell me."

"Shut up, both of you!" he shouted, reddening in fury.

Jillian sighed. "I wondered when you would show up, Bobby Ray. I hoped you would be stupid enough to not figure out where we were, or smart enough to stay away. Seems like you're neither. Is Dale with you?"

He grinned humorlessly. "That useless sack of shit? Even if he could sober up long enough to come out here, do you think I could put up with him for that long? He's back home in Deer Creek. But don't worry. You'll be back together real soon. You're all coming with me." His eyes narrowed dangerously. "Where's my wife?" he snarled. "Where's Eileen?"

"Out," Jillian said calmly, taking a sip of coffee. Her eyes were distant.

"Fine," Bobby Ray said. "I'll wait." He fished a pair of handcuffs out of his belt and threw them at the kid. "Cuff yourselves together. You're both under arrest. Don't try it, boy," he said. He raised the gun and pointed it at Roy Lee's head. "I know you've been diddling Eileen, you sick fuck. You've got some unhappy days ahead of you. Just wait until I get you back home. You're going to think a mountain of shit fell on you before I'm done with you."

"Strange," Roy Lee murmured, making no effort to pick up the cuffs. He stared over Bobby Ray's shoulder, refusing to meet his eyes. "I thought a mountain of shit just came through the front door. What do you think, Momma? Should we put on these handcuffs?"

"Well, I won't deny the thought of you in handcuffs is tempting," said Jillian with a wicked grin. She had made no sign of being surprised

at Bobby Ray's accusations of incest. "But I was thinking about using them in the bedroom. Not a police cruiser. It might bet a bit crowded, especially if Eileen is there, too. Are you planning on cuffing all three of us together, you disgusting pile of crap?" she asked. "I'd like Roy Lee to be in the middle, please." She leaned over and kissed her son full on the mouth, her hand splayed across his chest.

"Sick," Bobby Ray whispered. "You're all fucking sick." He raised his fist, determined to beat the smart-assed mockery out of both of them, when he felt the barrel of a shotgun pressing into his neck, just below his ear.

*****

"Honey, I'm home!"

Dressing in her small room, the vicious shout made Eileen go cold with fear. Clammy sweat broke out in her armpits and along her hairline. Her knees shook, and she braced her hand on the bureau to keep from falling in a quivering heap on the floor.

He's here. Oh, God, he's here. The thought was terrifying. She waited, trembling, for him to appear in the doorway. For the blows from his heavy fists. For the inevitable humiliation of having to give him a blow job, or even worse, allowing him to screw her.

No, said a small, strong voice inside her. Never again. I swore it. With shaking hands, she finished dressing. Her hurrying fingers fumbled with her buttons. She left her shoes off, hoping to stay silent.

Eileen crept out into the hallway, sighing with relief when she saw Bobby Ray hadn't penetrated far into the house. From the kitchen she could hear voices. Her sister and nephew seemed to be holding her husband's attention. She eased into the hallway door of the bathroom, crossed through, and peeped through the door on the living room side.

She could see Bobby Ray's broad back in the doorway that connected the dining room to the kitchen. For a moment, her breath caught in her throat. In ten steps she could be out the front door and scrambling away. Geraldine next door would surely give her shelter. And she could call the police, beg them to come and rescue her family from the madman who was threatening them.

No.

Her eyes fell on the shotgun, mounted above the fireplace, and her lips drew away from her teeth in a snarling grin. Noiselessly she ghosted across the room. In seconds, the comforting, familiar weight of the gun was cradled in her arms. For the briefest moment she considered trying to find the shells, then shook her head. She didn't have time. And he might hear her when she loaded the weapon.

She glided across the hardwood floor, her steps silent. For the briefest instant she caught Jillian and Roy Lee's eyes. They gave no reaction at all, engaging her husband in contemptuous banter, and she blessed their quick wits even as she raised the gun.

"Sick," Bobby Ray whispered. "You're all fucking sick." He raised his fist. Before he could do more than cock it, she moved forward, shoving the cold blue steel of the barrel into the angle of his jaw.

*****

"Hello, darling," came the poisonously sweet voice of his wife, like a doughnut filled with arsenic. "Why didn't you call to let me know you were on your way? Drop the gun," she said, her voice suddenly cold and humorless.

Falling from nerveless fingers, the revolver clattered on the floor. In response to a savage jab, he kicked it towards Jillian, who picked it up and trained it on his head.

"Honestly, Bobby Ray," continued the voice from behind him, "how did you ever survive Kosovo? You really are too dumb to live. You didn't even bother to search the rest of the house? Pathetic. If I blew your head off and renamed you 'Stumpy' I'd be doing the human gene pool a favor. No, don't move," she continued, as he twitched in anger. "We're all going to stay here until the police get here. Then you're going to get a ride to the Beaverhead County jail, courtesy of Sheriff Delzecki."

"That idiot?" Bobby Ray laughed coarsely. "Dream on, you stupid cunt. I called him on Wednesday. He knows I'm coming. And he's on my side. Lawmen stick together. If you're holding a gun on me when the police show up you're going to leave this house bloody."

"You know," his wife sighed, "I had to put up with you for damn near twenty years, Bobby Ray. It occurs to me that a man with a gun to his head shouldn't be calling other women 'cunt'. I'm tired of it." She reversed the gun, flipping it over in her hands, and drove the stock into the back of Bobby Ray's head with a vicious crack. He slumped forward, toppling to the floor like a punch-drunk prizefighter.

Roy Lee scrambled out of his chair, reaching for the handcuffs. He drew his uncle's wrists together, but was stopped by a touch at his shoulder.

"Not the wrists, honey. Cuff one wrist to the opposite ankle. It makes it much harder to move." She smiled sadly, her eyes bleak. "Trust me on this. I know."

*****

Bobby Ray struggled towards consciousness, his thoughts a confused blur. He cracked open an eyelid, wincing at the pounding pain at the base of his skull.

What happened? Where the fuck am I?

He was laying on his side on the floor, his right arm bent awkwardly behind his back. When he tried to move, he was only able to jerk awkwardly. He quickly found out his right wrist was handcuffed to his left ankle.

He pushed himself off the floor with his left arm, his eyes glaring around the spotless kitchen. "You fucking bitch," he rasped, his voice hoarse and panting. "Where are you? When I get hold of you I'll-"

"Ah, Deputy Sheriff Harris. So good of you to join us." The words could have dipped in acid, for all the warmth they contained.

Bobby Ray levered himself onto his knees, disregarding the cramps in his arm and legs. Twisting around awkwardly, he faced the five figures which stood in the wide doorway to the dining room. His wife, her sister, his nephew. A fidgety young man in a police uniform. And one more. A tall, well-built man near his own age, with dark brown hair and a sheriff's badge pinned to his shirt. He held a mug of coffee in his hands.

"Sheriff...Delzecki?"

"The same," said in a deep voice. "Boy, you're in a mess of trouble."

"Damn it, Sheriff, set me loose! I was attacked. Assaulted by these...people. I talked to you just a few days ago. You can see how dangerous they are!"

"Seems to me," the sheriff drawled, "that they were simply defending their home from an armed intruder."

"I have warrants for their arrest!"

"Do you now," Delzecki said mildly. "And yet the warrants are nowhere to be found." He very carefully did not look at the grill on the deck outside, where the ashes from several pages of paperwork were fluttering away in the cold fall breeze.

"They're fucking each other! Incest! That's a crime here, right?" Bobby Ray said desperately.

Delzecki raised his eyebrows. "And you have proof of this?" he asked. "No? Then shut your filthy mouth. Do you think I'm going to believe anything you have to say?" He waved the mug at Jillian. "Can I trouble you for a refill, Jilly?"

"You really are an idiot, Bobby Ray," Jillian said with biting contempt as she poured coffee into Delzecki's mug. "Do you think I could live here all these years and not tell the cops about you? They've been looking for you to show up ever since you called the sheriff on Wednesday. As it is, I called 911 as soon as I heard you screaming at poor Geraldine next door." She pulled a cell phone from the pocket of her bathrobe. "The police department heard every word of our conversation. Shit, I'm surprised you got this far. If Henry here hadn't been taking a leak behind his squad car, you would have been stopped before you got to the house. He was watching for you by the exit from the interstate."

"Sorry, Miss Coulter," the young trooper said, flushing with embarrassment.

"Don't worry, honey."

"Oh, you better worry, honey," Delzecki said, flashing Harry a sardonic look. "You've got Eileen to thank that this didn't turn into a hostage situation. Nice work, by the way," he said to her. "I appreciate the fact you didn't blow his head off. I probably would have had to arrest you, and you know how much I hate paperwork."

"I just wanted to make sure we didn't have to clean up a mess," Eileen said. She shot Bobby Ray a venomous look. "He's not worth the time it would take to mop him up."

Delzecki nodded and crouched so he could look Bobby Ray in the eyes.

"Here's the deal, you pathetic pile of crap. I've got you for assault. Trespassing. Breaking and entering. Attempted kidnapping. And a bunch of traffic violations as well." He nodded to the young trooper. "Simpkins, get him on his feet. We're going to book him."

Disbelieving, Bobby Ray struggled fruitlessly as his wrists were cuffed behind his back. Only when his arms were secured were the cuffs removed from his ankle. A pair of ungentle hands pulled him to his feet. Delzecki's voice droned in his ear.

"You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an-"

"You can't do this! I'm an officer of the law!"

"No, shithead. You're under arrest," Delzecki said dispassionately. "And if I have my way, you'll be an old man before you take another lungful of free air. Let's get him to the station, Hank." They led the feebly protesting thug out the door. In the doorway, the sheriff paused and turned.

"I truly am sorry we weren't here when you needed us, Jilly. We'll be in touch regarding arraignment and the trial and such." He tipped a finger to the brim of his hat and closed the door behind him.

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Eileen fell onto the couch with an exhausted groan.

"Just when I thought our past was behind us, that asshole had to show up."

"It's probably for the best," Roy Lee opined. "If he hadn't come here, we would have been looking over our shoulders for years. Now we'll know where he is. Attempted kidnapping," he mused. "I'm pretty sure that's a federal crime. Wonder what Uncle Bobby thinks about being an ex-cop going to federal prison?" He chuckled evilly.

"What an idiot," Bobby Ray Harris' soon-to-be ex-wife sighed. She glanced at her sister and her nephew, her eyes bright and mischievous. "So how was it, last night? I think I fell asleep while you were doing it for the third time." She paused. "Or was it the fourth?"

"It was very good," Jillian purred. She pulled her son down beside her on the couch, nuzzling his neck. His warm hands eased inside her open bathrobe, finding her breasts. "And we had a nice long talk afterward," she continued. "The lease is up on this place in May. I'm thinking that between the three of us, we can swing a mortgage. We can get us a nice, three-bedroom place, so we can each have our own space. Big beds in every bedroom, so whenever we feel like it we can sleep together. Two of us, or all three," she said, looking at her sister.

"All three?" Eileen teased. Her hands worked at the waistband of Roy Lee's shorts, easing them down over his hips. His erect cock sprang up, and she bent down for a long, slow lick. Opening her mouth, she swirled her tongue around the head of his phallus. "Ambitious. Do you think you would know what to do with the two of us, baby?" she said, pumping his swollen member slowly in her hand.

"Not at first," her nephew said. He grinned. "But I didn't know what to do with you at first either. You taught me. And so did Momma." He sighed as his mother crawled onto his lap, rubbing her tits against his chest. He spread his legs so Eileen could kneel between them. "Anytime the two of you feel like cutting loose, let me know."

And as her sister sank onto her nephew's throbbing cock, Eileen Coulter smiled.

"It's a deal."

The End