

IN THE ARMS OF ANGELS PT. 10

NoMoreMisterNiceSpy

Jason makes a decision, and Other Paige revealed.

Novels and Novellas

4.86

12.8k words

This is a continuation of In The Arms of Angels Pt. 9.

Recap - After a long 3 1/2 hours at the local municipal building, Jason, Paige, and Elaina walked out as newly christened Belgian citizens, and they immediately jumped into house-hunting mode. It was a long and arduous process, with properties that didn't seem to fit just right, but they pressed on. During a lunch in an outdoor setting, Jason suggests that they change their last name wanting to erase the last vestiges of his father from their lives. In doing so, he suggests a return to Elin's maiden name, van der Elst. Elin panics, reacting poorly as the thought of returning to the woman who had been the mother of her three spouses scared her. She is adamant that she is no longer that woman and will never return to being that woman. Elaina suggests that they consider building their own home the way they want it, while Elin finds a large house just outside of Ghent. The four must decide if they want to spend more money to move into a large home quickly or find something temporary (or fly back and forth from L.A.) until a house can be built. When pressed for her input on the large home, Paige's reaction is strange, and she suddenly becomes withdrawn. In a discussion with Elaina later, Paige begins to explain her concern.

Sadly, there's no sex in this one. Sorry. :(

All characters in this story are 18 years old or older. This is a work of fiction.

"What's gone?"

Paige let out a shaky breath, then moved her hand around the side of her head. "All of it. It's just...gone."

Elaina gawped down at her. "Wh--how can...WHAT!?"

"Exactly," Paige muttered.

"But...how?"

Paige sighed, sitting up. "No clue. It's been weeks, I think."

Elaina had no clue how to react. For as long as she could remember, Paige had this other side to her that just let her know and do things that a child her age, and then the young woman she was now, shouldn't have been able to pull off on their own. For a part of anyone that had been with them for so many years to suddenly be gone must have been like ripping out a part of themselves.

She pulled Paige close, squeezing her. "I'm sorry, Paige. I don't really know how to respond to this because, well, it was always such a mystery. But it can't be easy for whatever was going on in that beautiful brain of yours to just...stop."

"It's lonely. The silence is deafening and uncomfortable." Tears continued to fall. "It's just me now."

Elaina pulled back to look at her with concern. "It's not just you, Paige. It's never been just you. How could you say that?"

"That's not what I meant," she whispered with a frown, laying her head against Elaina's shoulder. "I've always had you and Elin, and now master. But in the in-between times, when it was just me," she patted the side of her head, "it wasn't just me. It, they—whatever--was always there."

"Weeks," Elaina repeated what Paige had said. "Weeks? What happened weeks ago? Or did anything happen weeks ago?"

"Normal stuff. Swimming, teaching the kids to swim, sex with you, Elin, and lots of sex with master--"

"Oh shit!" Elaina whispered, pulling Paige's head up. "Paige! What if that's when you got pregnant? Would that change things, somehow? You know, 'There can only be one'?" She made a face, muttering, "God, I can't believe I just quoted that dumb ass movie."

"That would be the only thing that had changed in me, though. There's no way to know when I actually got pregnant." She half-grinned. "He cums in me so much."

Elaina snorted. "Well, you guys were in full-on babymaking mode. But, yeah, so much cum." She grinned. "I like it."

Paige's half grin turned into a small smile. "Me too."

"Okay, so it could be that your pregnancy caused this. What does it mean? Is it temporary? Like, baby girl pops out and *whoosh* it all comes back?"

"There's not an out of office message, El. I have no...idea..." Her voice trailed off just before her eyes shot wide open. "Oh no. Oh no, oh no!"

"What?"

Paige suddenly looked scared as more tears dropped from her eyes, and her body began trembling. "What if it's in my baby now?" she whimpered. "I...I don't think I want that, El! It—it helped me, but that was different." Her hands fell to her stomach, and she rubbed lightly. "She won't need it, and I don't want her to have it!"

"Okay, shh, okay," Elaina said, hugging Paige's shivering body to hers. "Hey, listen babe, unless there's a note or something explaining things for you, we won't know until that gorgeous little girl is born. And is it so bad? It helped you, Paige. I know that things were different for us, and you needed it, but I don't ever recall you saying that it was bad to you, or malevolent."

"It was so confusing, and scary at first. It was hard enough being who I was at five years old, only to find that I had some sort of hitchhiker or a neurological condition going on." Paige shook her head. "Yes, it was always helpful, and it wanted me to be me. But sometimes it made things harder."

"Harder how?"

"My head doesn't hurt, El," Paige said, taking a moment to wipe her face on Elaina's shirt.

"I swear to God, if you just wiped snot on me, I'm going to toss you off the balcony," Elaina growled. Her voice then softened. "You mean while you're talking, right?"

Paige nodded.

Elaina kissed Paige's head. "I wasn't going to say anything yet, but it is odd hearing you speak so much like this." She paused before adding, "I--I don't mean that to be an insult, or anything. Please don't take it that way."

"It's okay, but you're right. I never could figure that part out, though. Talking too much, normally, made my head hurt so much. That's why it was easier to talk like I did. Short bursts or trying to describe things with pop culture references you guys would get."

"It really was the beast at Tanagra," Elaina replied, smirking. "But we were like Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra."

Paige sat up, giving her a flat look. "And you guys thought I watched too much TV?" She chuckled. "Who's the nerd now, you weirdo?" She then poked Elaina in the ribs lightly.

"Loving Star Trek doesn't make me a weirdo, you skank." Elaina stuck her tongue out.

"I still don't know why it was easier with you and Elin, and even easier with master," Paige continued. "Our connections to each other, or just the physical act of love, maybe?" She shrugged. "I don't know. The whole thing leaves me with more questions than answers."

"But you've still been speaking like you used to, at least on occasion," Elaina pointed out.

"Habit?" Paige offered. "I'm going through periods of that and periods of word vomit just because I haven't been able to in so long." She chuckled ruefully. "I'm also a bit scared to say too much. You know, just in case the pain suddenly comes back out of nowhere."

"As long as you never shut up, I don't care." Elaina kissed Paige's cheek and pulled her back into her arms.

The mood had lightened, but not completely. Paige was still worried that the being, or voice, or her imagination if that's what it was, would wind up in her unborn child. She didn't know how to deal with that, but what could she do about it? There had been no EULA for her to arbitrarily click 'Accept' on, and nothing had asked for permission. It had, in fact, terrified her for several months until she suddenly realized that it was on her side, and would never harm her. Still, for those few months as a five-year-old, she thought she was going crazy. She didn't want that for her daughter. She didn't want her child to speak in memes or allegory in short bursts. She definitely didn't want her child to be asocial by choice only to keep from being the target of bullies.

"I'm sorry I yelled at you earlier," Paige said quietly.

"It's okay. We've had worse arguments than that, but it's been a while." Elaina smiled wistfully, remembering the young women they used to be. "But I wasn't lying earlier. I've loved you for a thousand years, and I'll love you for a thousand more, Paige Kitty."

"I love you, too, El. I have for a long, long time." She intertwined her fingers with Elaina's and sighed. "I guess I should tell master and Elin."

Elaina nodded. "Get your swimsuit. They went to the hot tub."

"What!?" Paige shrieked. "You let me sit up here and whine about my jacked-up brain while I could have been in the water!?"

"Well, at least I know it wasn't the brain sucker that made you love the water so much."

Down in the hotel's hot tub, Jason and Elin were luxuriating over the massaging effects of the jets. They hadn't realized how much stress they'd felt the last few days that even the loving caresses from their spouses hadn't completely taken care of. Both stole glances at each other, Elin enjoying her husband's wet, muscular body, and Jason grinning at the sight of Elin's bikini-clad breasts jostling just above the waterline from the power of the jet on her back.

"When we get back up to the room, I'm going to pull a report on all of our finances so I can crunch some numbers," Jason said, closing his eyes as he relaxed in the steaming water.

"Already done, husband. I updated it this morning."

He opened one eye and looked at his wife. "I don't know why that surprises me, but it does." With a chuckle, he reached out through the water to find her hand. "I'm so glad you're in my life."

"So, you *do* like my spreadsheets!" she laughed.

In the silence that followed, only the gurgling of the hot tub to be heard, Jason frowned. "What if I make the wrong decision?"

Elin abandoned her own jet and slid close to him. "Don't worry about the money. We can afford the options we've laid out. And, personally, I think the only wrong decision would be to move back to L.A. forever." She made a face. "Yuck."

"I wish--" he began but stopped himself. "Never mind."

"Don't do that, master. You can talk to me."

"I was going to say that I wish you'd tell me what to do," he frowned, "but that's not you anymore. I realized it as soon as I said it. Sorry."

They'd just had a bit of a blow up about how Elin was no longer their mother, and how she would never return to being that woman. Which meant that as much as Jason wanted the old Elin to tell him what to do, she wouldn't. The caterpillar had gone into its chrysalis and emerged as a butterfly, and you could never get the caterpillar back.

"I will always give you my opinion, Jason," she said softly, her wet hand touching his face, "but, no, that's not me anymore. You are my master, and I will follow you wherever we go."

The two sat together in the hot tub listening only to the sound of the bubbles. It was like white noise attempting to lull them to sleep. But sleep wouldn't come because a tiny cannonball soaked them to the bone, followed by giggles they would know anywhere.

"Dunk her?" Jason asked as he wiped water from his face.

"Dunk her," Elin confirmed.

Jason stood, placing his hands on the small, wet shoulders of Paige and pushed her under the water. She was all smiles as she went under, not resisting at all.

Like a fishing bobber, she popped right back up and was once again wrapped in her lover's arms as Jason held her, pulling her down with him to his vacated seat.

"Hello, beautiful," he smiled, kissing her wet face.

"Hello, master. You went here without me. Not cool."

"I'm sorry. You and El were talking, and I didn't want to disturb you."

She suddenly looked a bit apprehensive, and only looked away from him once Elaina emerged from the entrance.

"You just ran off and left me, you brat!" Elaina said.

Jason smiled as his very pregnant wife made her way in, set down her towel and a small bag, then stepped into the tub. Her all-black two-piece swimsuit accentuated her full breasts, which had grown quite a bit as the pregnancy progressed, along with her growing stomach.

She saw the look in his eyes and smiled proudly. "You love my sexy pregnancy body," she said, waggling her eyebrows at him.

"Fuck yes, I do," he grinned wolfishly as she slid against his left side. With Elin on his right, and Paige in the same revealing swimsuit she had purchased when he'd taken Paige and Elin shopping, any man who saw him would be in awe.

"I love you, husband," she said, "but sex in a hot tub isn't a good idea."

"Doggystyle would fix that. You'd be standing and out of the water," Elin suggested, making three pairs of eyes turn to her in surprise. She blushed. "Um, but we are technically in public, so..."

"Paige has news," Elaina interjected, amused at Elin's comment and poor attempt at backpedaling.

"Oh?" Jason asked.

The apprehension returned, but she soldiered on. "Other Paige," she said, instantly grabbing his attention. "It's gone."

"Gone? Wait—Paige, did something happen? Are you okay?" His tone was urgent, and he checked her face, eyes, and even her head in a panic. "Did you fall, or hit your head?"

"We believe something did happen, but not to my head, master." She gently pulled his hands away, kissing them gently.

"Then...what?" Elin asked. In times like this, it didn't matter that she would never be the woman she was. Paige had been her daughter, and she'd raised her with this battle being waged in her little head, seeing the effects of it throughout the young woman's life. Sure, whatever had manifested had helped Paige press on through the trauma of losing her brother and father virtually overnight, and from that point on, but to have it simply be gone now?

"Don't worry," Paige said as she took Elin's hand. She then turned to Jason, smiling softly. "I think it happened when you got me pregnant. I don't know why, or how, or even what it means, but it's been gone a few weeks and that's the only thing I can think of that has changed in that amount of time."

"I'm sorry--the only thing *who* could think of?" Elaina asked, looking pointedly at Paige.

Jason's eyes never left Paige, the depth of his confusion and worry clear to everyone as his face worked to settle on an expression. "Paige, your headaches." He placed a hand on the side of her blonde locks. "You're talking. Like, really talking."

She nodded, warmed by his genuine concern. "It doesn't hurt. Not anymore. It's just me in here now," she added, placing her hand atop his, still touching her head. "I don't know if it's gone forever. It will take some getting used to, though."

He continued to study her. She tried to look relieved, possibly happy, even, but her smile hid something, and he needed to know what that was. Having something in your head for thirteen years was one thing. But having it just disappear without a trace was something else altogether.

"There's more," he said. "You're worried."

Her smile faltered as she pursed her lips and nodded. "I don't know if this was just my mind coping, if I had some sort of brain infection, or, I don't know, maybe some alien taking up residence."

"You had MRIs," Elin said, clutching at Paige's arm. "No anomalies. That's what they said."

Paige smiled warmly at the memory of her mother being so worried, taking her from doctor to doctor to make certain she was okay. "I remember. You--" She paused to correct herself. "My mother took very good care of me."

Elin teared up, nodding.

"I just worry that whatever this was, coinciding with being pregnant," she let out a sharp breath, "that it might move to our baby." She shook her head, tears now forming in her eyes. "It was never mean to me, but it scared me in the beginning. The bullying, the strange looks, the feeling of isolation with only my sister and mother who would truly put up with me..." Her words trailed off as she pressed her forehead to Jason's. "I don't want that for our child."

Elaina and Elin couldn't restrain themselves, both wrapping their arms around Paige and Jason for a group hug.

"It won't be the same as it was for you, Paige," Jason said softly. "Our children will have their father, their mothers, their siblings, and they will be loved. Even if our little girl has her own Other Paige--"

"Prue," Paige softly said, then pulled her head back. "If that's okay?"

He smiled happily. "Prue. I love it." He nodded, then continued. "Then little Prue will be loved, cared for, and understood by all of us, even if she has an Other Prue in there."

Paige scowled. "I still don't want it for her."

"Neither do I, but we will face it head on and together. Okay?"

She nodded. "This is why I love you so much, Jason. You never give up on our happiness." With that, she gently pressed her lips against his, then gazed deeply into his eyes. "That's why I'll always be your girl, and you'll always be my master."

"And don't you forget it," he grinned. "Any of you. You're mine, and that's final."

Satisfied smiles and a group hug slowly receded into the four relaxing, taking advantage of the entire reason for the existence of the large tub they were in. There were still some stressors amongst the four, but they were minor now that Paige's conundrum had been addressed—not fixed, but she knew she had her family's love and support, no matter what happened in nine months, and that was good enough for her.

"Still thinking about our housing situation?" Elaina asked, stretching a leg out to rub against Jason's thigh. "You look more thoughtful than relaxed, my love."

He glanced at her, pressing his lips into a worried line as he nodded.

Elin spoke up. "Our master is under the mistaken impression that he might make a poor decision. I have told him any decision he makes is fine by us, and we will follow him no matter what he decides."

"Works for me," Elaina replied, flashing him a supportive smile.

"Yep," Paige added, not opening her eyes as she rested her head against the edge of the tub.

"Okay, but hear me out," Jason began, but Elaina pushed her foot further to stroke his crotch.

"Master, if you're going to bring up my photography business again, please don't," she said now that she had his attention. "I just like to take pictures. If I happen to make some money with it, great. If not," she shrugged, "who cares?"

"But you started a legitimate business, El," he argued weakly.

"So? I can bring it over here when we're ready. If that's in two months, or two years, then so be it." She removed her foot and leaned forward, reaching for his hand. "I'm serious, husband. If that's your hang up, or one of them, please strike it from the list."

He inhaled deeply, then breathed it out through his nose in a long sigh. "Okay, then Paige—"

"Nope," she said, drawing out the word and still not opening her eyes. "I finished my job with the little swimmers. That was for them, not for me."

He frowned. His last few, lame excuses for putting off a decision, or asking for help, were just that: lame. And he knew better than to bring up Elin since she only wanted to be a housewife, full stop. She would do that anywhere they moved, so that was even worse than a lame excuse. In the end, the reality was that he was nineteen, a millionaire, and being put into the position to house his family and not lose all their millions in the process, leaving his family destitute. How many nineteen-year-olds had to face that type of decision?

The idea of making the wrong decision messed with his head. Yes, they could afford the big house outside of Ghent. Yes, they'd still have several million in the bank afterward, as well as what they had in stocks, bonds, and the trust fund for the kids. Just the idea of working with that large amount of money was ridiculous, though, so he had to liken it to the \$100 bill problem. If you had a \$100 bill in your wallet, you always had \$100. But as soon as you broke it, it would disappear in the blink of an eye. In this instance, he was worried that if he plonked down the money for that big house, they'd burn through the remainder of what they had just as quickly. It wasn't likely, but it was a concern for him.

"Elin, where is that spreadsheet on your laptop?" he asked.

She began to stand. "I'll show you."

"No. I want you three to stay here and relax," he said, putting a hand on her arm to stop her. "I need to do this. And if any of you are there, I'll probably make more excuses instead of deciding."

Elin gave him a sympathetic nod, told him where to find the files, and rejoined her wives in the bubbling water of the hot tub. The three watched silently as he toweled off and left the room.

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Jason spent the next three hours poring over the information Elin had amassed. He had the spreadsheet open, along with their bank's website, as well as a separate spreadsheet detailing various homes she'd earmarked for one reason or another, complete with links to their listings. Along with the laptop, he'd found a pen and pad of paper with the Die Swaene logo on it to scribble his own notes on. He'd been working so hard that he hadn't even heard his wives entering, none of them wishing to bother him as they each showered and shuffled off to bed.

He sat back in the chair rubbing his tired eyes. It had been a while since he'd focused so much on a laptop screen, or crunched numbers like he'd been doing the last few hours. But he'd made a decision for their path forward. It made him incredibly nervous, not wanting to let anyone down, but his mind was made up. ...okay, maybe 97% made up, but that was much better than his mind had been earlier in the hot tub.

Unfortunately, it was just after midnight and too late to make any plans through Liesbeth. Instead, he sent her a quick email along with additional instructions for her to dig up more information for him. He closed the laptop, blew out a long breath, and stretched. Right or wrong, he'd made his decision.

After a quiet trip to the bathroom to brush his teeth and relieve himself, he walked to the bedroom expecting to find his wives cuddled against each other. Instead, one beautiful woman lay on her side, hugging a pillow to her stomach with only a sheet to cover her.

He moved slowly as he slid into the bed, not wanting to wake Elaina. As soon as the bed dipped ever-so-slightly with his weight, her eyes popped open, blurry at first as she worked to clear the fog from her mind, but it was quickly followed by a warm smile at the sight of her husband.

"I wondered if you'd ever finish." She pushed the pillow out of the way making room for him to snuggle close to her. "Did you make a decision?"

After a quick kiss and a gentle sweep of hair from her face, he nodded. "I did."

"Good. Now you can stop stressing about it." She turned onto her side so Jason could spoon her from behind. A grin appeared as she felt his hand first rub her large stomach, then it widened into a smile as he cupped her breast. "Do you wish to take me, my love?"

Behind her, Jason closed his eyes and kissed the back of her head. "My heart and mind are screaming for me to do so, but my body is whining about my lack of sleep. Is that okay?"

She scoffed, turning her head toward him. "If you wish to sleep and not avail yourself of this willing body, we will sleep."

Leaning close to her ear, he whispered, "I will always love you."

With those five words, her heart soared. "Forever and ever, Jason," she whispered back. "Forever and ever."

They lay in the dark, Elaina caressing his hand as it swapped between her stomach and her exposed breasts. His touch always thrilled her, but the love she knew he had for their child told her everything she needed to know about her husband.

"Have you thought about names yet?" she asked softly.

His hand paused the gentle stroking it had been doing at her question. "...yes?"

She chuckled. "Let me guess, after Paige's Prue, you were going with Elaina's Eliza, or something like that?"

He let out a small groan, and she giggled.

"Elizabeth? Ellie?" she suggested, then nudged him. "Tell me."

"Evie," he said, then quickly added, "but it was just a thought. I'm leaning toward Charlotte or Sophie now, though."

"Those are all nice names."

"What about you?"

"I like Natalia," she replied, pulling his hand up to kiss the palm. "Mix and match?"

"Which ones?"

"Sophia Natalia. We could call her Sophie like you wanted."

He considered it. "It should be Natalia something. You're her mother, so you should pick."

She chuckled. "Okay. I pick Sophia Natalia, then. It sounds better."

She could feel his face, pressed against the back of her head, spread into a wide smile before he said, "Okay. Sophia Natalia." After a beat, he squeezed her tighter.

"So, are you gonna' tell me what you've decided about the house?"

"Of course, I am."

A full minute passed before Elaina lightly pinched his hand. "Well?"

"Oh, you meant now? I'm not going to tell you now," he teased, pulling her closer. "In the morning, so I don't have to say it all twice."

"Brat."

"What?" he laughed. "I have this whole thing. It takes some setting up, you know? Hell, I even considered a PowerPoint presen—"

She huffed. "Go to sleep, weirdo."

"Yes, dear."

Soon after, they were both asleep in blissful slumber.

In another part of the hotel, however, someone else's slumber wasn't as blissful. Elin and Paige had chosen the spare bedroom to snuggle and talk, Elin still unable to shake her concern for who had been her youngest child. Paige's reassurance that she was okay had helped, and Elin was nearly to tears of joy now that she could have actual conversations with her youngest wife instead of cryptic comments that required a secret decoder ring or cipher wheel to understand. It had been a bit surreal for Paige as Elin recalled moments of their past and asked questions of clarification, having never truly understood what was happening at the time. For the oldest wife, it had been cathartic and soothing. For Paige, it just caused more worry.

As Paige lay there in the dark, her mind was in overdrive just as it had been since Other Paige had abruptly disappeared. For the first few days she'd been in panic mode. Thankfully, she'd been able to busy herself with swimming or running that kept her at arm's length from the three who would have immediately noticed a change, but that had only been a stopgap measure. Spending intimate time with her spouses calmed her to some degree and allowed her to focus on the pleasure she gave and received. Otherwise, her decision to remain quiet and to ruminate the massive change in her life had just looked like normal Paige to everyone else. She'd comment when needed, still afraid to speak too much at first, which only continued to convince them that there had been no change.

She worried about her child. Remembering the fear and bouts of uncertainty she'd faced as a five-year-old with a new mental 'friend' scared the hell out of her. Was this thing already in Prue's head? Was it mucking about her little brain in the womb, already setting her on a path of oddity and strangeness? Would she be normal when she appeared?

Small nails dug into her palm as she balled her fists in fear. She only wanted to be excited about meeting her child, not fearful for the next nine months about the state of her little mind or if Other Paige—er, Other Prue had already firmly ensconced itself within her.

Finally, sleep took her. Exhausted as she was, it was just a matter of time, but her racing mind had made sleep difficult to achieve the last few weeks.

Donning a one-piece swimsuit, she perched on the side of the pool with goggles in place and the swimmer's cap atop her head as she waited for the horn to sound. Not bothering to look to her left or right to the other competitors, she focused solely on her breathing and training. The horn sounded and she launched herself into the deep blue water, following the black lane line as she pointed her hands forward and kicked her feet underwater to gain distance. When she surfaced, the butterfly strokes came easy to her, and she felt alive as she sped down the lane.

Flipping against the far wall, she repeated the procedure, pointing her hands and kicking like a mermaid to speed through the water before surfacing to continue her strokes. She was laser focused on her technique, paying no mind to anything but her heartbeat, her breathing, and her form as the invigorating sensation of the cool water embraced her, welcoming her back into its depths.

Four laps later, she realized something was wrong. Races didn't go this long. They didn't go this long, and she felt no fatigue whatsoever. And stranger still, she'd stopped taking breaths as she swam, no longer needing to bother with oxygen as she raced through the environment she felt as if she should have been born to.

Stopping in the middle of the pool, she removed her goggles as her eyes widened. The large Olympic pool was gone. Instead, she found herself surrounded by a slowly swirling pool of white,

purple, and pink shining water, illuminated by an unseen source from deep below her.

Panic filled her, and her body began to tremble in fear.

"Calm yourself, young one." A thousand ethereal voices spoke as one, coming from nowhere and everywhere all at once. "You are in no danger here. You never were."

She panicked still, her breaths quick and shaking as she looked beyond the pool. Space. Endless stars. Distant nebulae and slowly spinning galaxies. She hadn't seen this sight for thirteen years, her first introduction to what she would begin to call Other Paige.

"Please don't hurt my baby," she whispered. It came out as a plea as tears immediately began to fall. "If—if you need someone, come back to me."

"You do not need us."

"*She* doesn't need you!" she sobbed. "She has me! She has her mothers! She has—"

"—your master."

Continuing to breathe heavily, Paige nodded, wiping tears away as she turned in a circle. She knew she'd never find whatever this was, but she couldn't help searching for a glimpse.

"Jason," the voices whispered. "Your brother. The father of the Prue child. Your master."

Paige blinked, confused. "What—"

"He is not a normal man."

Her brows knit in a quick flash of anger. "He is an amazing man!"

Light laughter echoed, lightly rippling the swirling, colored pool she was in. "We know, young one. We know all too well. He is why you do not need us."

Her mouth fell open slightly, and she tilted her head, even more confused than before. "Explain," she demanded, still turning slowly hoping to find at least a glimpse.

In the distance, she saw movement that sent a shiver down her spine. A turbulent black mass, like thick smoke and filled with streaks of lightning, snaked toward her from a faraway nebula. She was unable to move, both the pink, white, and purple mass holding her firmly in place, and her body frozen in place out of fear.

Her eyes widened more and more as the unthinkable massive cloud quickly closed the distance, and her heart felt as if it would leap from her chest from fright. Suddenly, the smoke swirled into a compact ball before it began to change form again.

"You are still in no danger, young one. Fear not," the voices, now sounding...lesser, said.

Squinting as the form continued slowly toward her, Paige gasped when the light of her own pool illuminated the shape. Young Paige, five-year-old Paige, all knees and elbows, walked toward her.

"This is you?" Paige asked. "Or all of you?"

Young Paige smiled and shook her head. "No. This is you. We are you. You are us," it said, now in one small, young voice. The young version spread her arms around before turning back.

Paige looked down at her younger self, considering the words. Maybe this was a dream? Maybe she was just—

"This is not a dream, young one." Just as Paige had done earlier, Young Paige tilted her head, her mouth slightly open. "No longer a young one, it seems," the being said, pointing to Paige's abdomen. Young Paige then sat cross legged atop the swirling mass of colored water, plucking a small, plastic crown out of nowhere before placing it on its head. "Your blessed child, the child of your master, has seen to that."

"All of his children are blessed," Paige shot back, crossing her arms. "Mine, Elin's, El's—"

With a dismissive wave of its hand, Young Paige acquiesced. "Yes. You are correct. Any child of your master is blessed, no matter its mother." It looked up making eye contact, an act that sent a shiver through Paige's body. "Unorthodoxy aside, he is worthy to be called master. You, your mother, and your sister have made the correct choice in your lives."

"They're my wives," Paige corrected.

"Call it what you wish. You all know from whose loins you came." Young Paige summoned a doll and began straightening its skirt and long, blonde hair. "Elin of the Woods and...*David*," it said with disgust as it summoned another small doll, this one male in a white suit, "were wed and began what should have been a wonderful life together."

Suddenly, a doll house appeared, sitting atop the spinning pool of light. Young Paige stood the two dolls in front of it, then summoned even smaller dolls, a girl with black hair, a boy with black hair, and a baby with blonde hair, placing them around the home.

"They joined their bodies and out came three wonderful children, full of hope, full of love, and full of happiness." It spoke as a child, lightly and playful as it moved the children around as if playing in a yard in front of the doll house. "Until greed, lust, and power tore that life asunder."

With a snap of its small fingers, the man and the boy disappeared. The home was transformed into a model of the home in Vermont that Paige grew up in.

"Sadness, grief, and woe filled Elin of the Woods, but she never gave up hope. She never forgot about that little boy. She never let her girls feel anything less than absolute love." With a flick of her hand, across the pool of swirling lights, another home appeared. Jason's home in Los Angeles. "And despite being so far away, that lonely little boy never forgot, either."

A thin tendril of purple light, barely visible across the swirling mass, slithered across the distance. As it closed in on Paige's old home, it split into three parts, each end wrapping delicately around the mother doll, and to what had now become young teen dolls.

As it continued to speak, the purple tendril shook and thinned out at times, barely holding on as it sought out those three women.

"Corruption, lies, half-truths," it said in a cacophonous whisper of thousands of voices, all filled with vitriol as its eyes glared balefully at the doll in the white suit. "All meant to tear that little boy down. Even though he wavered, that little boy made up his own mind, never fully giving in to the monster who raised him."

With a small click, the male doll was split in half, and that barely visible purple tendril of light began to pulse. It strengthened and became a power that yanked the three remaining dolls across the expanse until they were wrapped in one shimmering orb of purple.

"Your master's love is powerful," it continued. "It has been tempered through hardship, withstanding the test of time. It is what gives you strength. It is what freed your mind from us." Young Paige looked up again, the dolls and small homes disappearing. "It is why you do not need us."

"But Prue..."

Young Paige let a small, comforting smile cross its lips as it shook its head. As it did, its face and body morphed again, this time into a ten-year-old girl with light brown hair, braided into long pigtails, and bright blue eyes.

"Prue does not need us. Sophia does not need us. Eric does not need us." As Paige had done many times in the past, Young Paige—or Young Prue?—stood straight up from its cross-legged position. Holding out a hand, it waited for Paige to take it. "You only created us because you needed us. You have outgrown us. You have found your own safety. You are your own woman now, with a loving master and wives who will never make you or your children feel the way you did as a child."

Paige teared up, a sudden realization hitting her like being slapped in the face. "So, you were just in my mind. I did go crazy."

"You did not go crazy. You found clarity. Truth. The ability to love and be loved through adversity." Young Prue gently squeezed Paige's hand. "You found the strength to continue through heartbreak, and it served you well."

"But I—I could see things," Paige continued, wiping tears from her cheek. "I *knew* things. If I just made you up in my head as a coping mechanism..."

Young Prue just shrugged. "That was not our doing. We simply helped you put it into words."

Paige glared at Young Prue. "You could have done better with those words. I sounded like a lunatic."

It grinned. "You sounded like what your mother, sister, and master needed at the time. It was you who brought them together through those things you saw and knew."

"Wait—so, I can still do that?"

Young Prue rolled her eyes, which was very odd for Paige to see after what had been voices in her head, then a massive smoke monster. "You always could, and always will. You have simply been ignoring it for the past few weeks."

The two were quiet for several moments before Paige drummed up the courage to ask, "So...my baby is safe? All our children are safe?"

With a small smirk, Young Prue let go of Paige's hand. "You are going to be a wonderful mother. And how could your master's children not be safe if we were only created by you, for you, to help you?"

Paige let out a short breath, then nodded. "And the—"

"Paige?"

She stopped short, looking at Young Prue. "What?"

"Paige?"

Arms were turning her over, then a warm hand touched her face.

"Oh, honey, are you okay?" Elin asked, gently kissing Paige's face and wiping tears from her cheeks. "You were crying in your sleep."

The dimly lit room of Die Swaene came into view as Paige looked up to see the concern on Elin's face. She could see light beginning to peek around the luxurious window coverings and knew it had to be morning. It was a dream. An odd dream. But a dream, nonetheless.

"Weird dream that got weirder, then sad, then crazy, then," she paused, giving Elin a small, loving smile, "then it was all good."

Elin slid down next to her, wrapping her up in a warm embrace. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Paige closed her eyes as Elin continued to gently place kisses on her cheek and temple. The sensation was welcome, and it filled her with warmth.

"No need. I was apparently just working some things out, but it's all good." She turned for a small kiss on the lips. "I love you. Thank you."

Elin's head pulled back, an inquisitive look on her face. "For what?"

Paige hesitated, but she needed to say it. To say everything. "For being who you are. For being a loving mother despite how strange I was. For never giving up on me and my weirdness. For never giving up on finding Jason. And for giving all of that up to be one of the best wives a woman could ever ask for."

Elin swallowed hard as Paige pulled her down for a long hug.

"But everything is right now, Elin. Without you, none of our happiness would have been possible," Paige softly continued. "And I will never, ever forget that. And neither should you."

* * * * *

Jason awoke alone in his bed.

Two voices were coming from the living room, but he heard the shower running. After stretching, and needing a shower himself, he walked in on Elaina with her foot up on a small ledge, leaning forward to shave her legs.

"Mind if I join you?" he asked.

"Don't be silly. Get in here," she said as she slid the razor up one calf. "Did you sleep well?"

"I did. Having a gorgeous woman pregnant with my child in my arms sure helped." He leaned down to kiss the middle of her back.

"She's been kicking lately," Elaina said, looking over her shoulder at him. "For some reason, she was playing the bongo drums on various internal organs last night before she finally settled."

"Did she keep you up? Do you need to lie back down?"

She rinsed the lather from her legs, finishing up, then turned to wrap her arms around her lover. "Maybe later. I'm hungry and I believe you promised to show us your super-nerdy presentation."

"Super nerdy?" he laughed.

"Yeah. You said something about a PowerPoint presentation?" she smirked, then pressed her lips to his. "No matter what you chose, though, we approve and will go with you. We're with you all the way, husband."

"Thank you. Also, I didn't actually create a presentation," he chuckled. "Why don't you see if there's some food out there for you? I'll finish up quickly and join you in a moment."

She gave him one more lingering kiss, then left him alone. After drying off, she wrapped a fluffy robe around herself, letting it hang open as she walked out to find her wives.

Elin and Paige sat on the small balcony overlooking the canal, sitting close enough to hold hands as they ate berries and pastries while sipping coffee or juice. They had ordered room service, and Elaina saw two covered dishes still on the table, apparently for her and Jason.

Elin, looking as elegant as ever, wore silk pajamas in white and pink with a thin, flowing white robe. Sitting out in public view required at least a bit of decorum, so dressing as she did within their suite would have been giving away secrets that she jealously guarded, only given freely to her husband and wives. Paige, however, gave zero fucks with her navy blue, lacy bandeau bra that was mostly see-through, and matching lacy boy shorts. The only thing keeping anyone from seeing her lady bits, if they had even noticed the gorgeous young woman up on the balcony, was the fact that her feet were up, legs crossed at the ankles.

"Mmm, sexy!" Paige grinned, popping a grape into her mouth as she eyed Elaina's nude body just inside the door. "Is it frisky time?"

"I think our husband is going to give us his decision," Elaina said, quickly tying her robe before stepping closer to grab a few berries for herself. "He'll be out of the shower soon, and after being as nervous as he has been about this, we shouldn't delay it longer."

Paige grumbled. "Stupid logic."

"Very insightful, Elaina," Elin said, proud that her wives were able to control their carnal urges for this occasion. "And, I agree," she added, giving Elaina a sultry smile and a wink. "Very sexy."

Jason appeared just as Elaina was finishing pouring his coffee, and he inhaled deeply at the wonderful scent. "Thank you," he said, kissing her cheek.

No one said a word as the two sat to eat, despite how much they wanted to know what he had decided. It wasn't a matter of whether they would judge his decision, or even suggest alternatives. They'd follow his direction no matter what. The reason they were so eager was just to know the direction their lives would take so they could prepare, whether it be moving in right away, renting, living in L.A., or even moving under a local bridge to become grumpy old trolls.

Halfway through his meal, consisting of a boiled egg, toast with a berry jam, and two sausage links, he looked up to find that no one had said a word since he'd come out.

"What's wrong?" he asked, worriedly. "Did something happen?"

"What do you mean?" Elaina asked before sipping her juice.

"Everyone is so quiet. Did I do something wrong?"

Elin scoffed, Elaina rolled her eyes, and Paige craned her head around to him, holding up a finger.

"A, no. B," she added, producing a second finger, "house news."

"Oh." He looked down at his half-finished breakfast, then pushed the plate away after popping the entire boiled egg into his mouth. After several hard swallows trying to force the dry yolk down, and two helpful sips of coffee, he spoke. "Elin, Paige, if you're ready, join Elaina at the table so she can finish eating." He spotted the berries. "Ooh! Bring the berries!"

Passing him with the bowl in hand, Paige popped a strawberry into his mouth before taking her seat. She then ate the last two bites of his toast, gaining a disapproving glance from Elin who sat beside her.

Jason was nervous. This was a big decision for a 19-year-old, but he had assumed this role, and he'd done his best. That was all he could ask of himself. Once he was ready, he looked up to see three very beautiful, but very intense eyes on him. It shook him, briefly, as the realization punched him right in the breadbasket. He was responsible for three amazing women's futures, and this was a huge part of it.

"I'm not going to dance around it, so I'll just rip the band-aid off. We're going back to L.A.," he began, pausing briefly when he heard a small whimper, "to put the house on the market."

All three women let out a collective sigh of relief, and he relaxed, thankful at least that part was the right decision.

"Elin, since you got on with him so well, I've emailed Edwin Grace from Cooper-Price Realty with your phone number to get things started." He paused. "You remember talking to him, right?"

Before Elin and Paige had first been reunited with him, Jason had been dead set on selling his house. It had been a home with no joy, no love, and years of nothing but lies. At Elin's request, he'd delayed selling the home but had forgotten to notify the realty company. Luckily, they'd been able to cancel the appointment with Edwin at the last moment, the man assuming that the Mrs. Hughes speaking to him through the car's phone link was married to Jason.

Elin was all smiles, remembering the first time anyone had called her Mrs. Hughes, the wife of Jason Hughes. Her eyes also glittered with joy that they were not permanently moving back to L.A. "I do. I will take care of it, husband."

Jason nodded. "We'll head back, mark the things we want to keep and have them shipped over here. That will take some doing, and while I know you're the list master, Elin," he said, winking at her, he then turned to Elaina, "El, I want you to keep a detailed list of everything being shipped along with photos of each item so we can ensure they arrive undamaged."

Elaina nodded, a smile in her eyes as she bit into a long sausage link.

"Before we go, however, I've contacted Liesbeth, who will hopefully call me soon," he said, checking the time on his phone. "I asked her to put in an offer on the place in Ghent. It's a bit lower than their asking price, and maybe I'm just being stingy, but I want to save as much money as possible on such a large purchase."

The three women were all smiles, with Elin standing to circle the desk for an embrace. "I think you've made an excellent decision, my love." She kissed his cheek tenderly.

"How long will it take?" Paige asked.

"The seller has to agree to the offer, then there's a bunch of paperwork," Jason began, but shook his head to stop himself. "A month...ish?"

Elin nodded. "Maybe two, but it shouldn't be much longer than that. Speaking of, it's move-out day. The BnB we booked should be ready for us now."

"Ooh! Good!" Elaina said, standing to give Jason a kiss, then making her way to the bedroom. "I can't wait to get railed like we did the first night and not have to hold back. Come on, squirt," she said, patting Paige's shoulder as she passed. "Let's get packing."

"I'll also begin packing," Elin said, kissing him once more.

Now alone with Paige, he welcomed the hug she gave him. Her lean, muscular arms were wrapped around his body and her cheek was pressed against his chest.

"You did make a good decision," she said. "You were worried, but we'll be fine."

His eyebrows popped up as he looked down at her in surprise.

She looked up with a wry smile. "No, Other Paige isn't back."

"I trust your gut, Other Paige or not." He squeezed her gently, then kissed the offered lips. "Let's get packed. I want to get out of here."

"Yes, master," she replied, then took his hand and led him to the bedroom.

* * * * *

After checking out of Die Swaene and into the BnB, the four relaxed only two days before catching a flight back to L.A. Before leaving, Jason scheduled a home inspection for the 'castle'. He didn't expect to find anything bad, but he did want to know of any smaller issues that he may need to keep an eye on for later. The owners had settled on an offer of \$13.7 million, which settled Jason's nerves on whether the sale would go through, but nothing would be signed until the inspection was completed. Due to the size of the house, pool building, and the two outbuildings, that gave them around three weeks to get some things handled back in the States.

The first thing they did was to drive Elin and Elaina's cars out to a shipping port, load them up, and have them sent to Belgium. It wasn't a guarantee that their vehicles would be there upon their return, estimating a 4-to-6-week travel time, but at least once the vehicles arrived, they wouldn't have to keep paying for rides from Amara or other rideshare drivers. They also hired a moving company to help them ship the furniture they wanted to send over, along with the decorations and personal items they'd all spent hours upon hours boxing up in preparation. These, however, weren't

sent via ship, with the group opting for air cargo and a holdover in storage until they returned to pick it all up.

They'd moved non-stop getting everything sorted, even contacting a local Goodwill store to bring a box truck to pick up several large items and old clothes they had decided to donate. They had been moving at full tilt since they arrived, not even attempting to stop for their casual lovemaking sessions due to being so worn out at the end of each day.

They did, however, make time to see an old friend before they left. Margaret, this time being picked up and driven by Jason, along with her daughter, Chelsea, were treated to dinner at Evan Wright's. The group had been saddened to hear that Margaret's husband, Jacob, had died two weeks before they'd left for Belgium. Elin was ashamed for not having kept regular contact with Margaret since the two would text or call somewhat regularly, and she apologized profusely to the woman for not being a better friend, and not being there for her when she needed support. Chelsea had flown out to help with the memorial service even though she and Jacob, her stepfather, had rarely spent time with each other and, for the most part, did not get along beyond cordiality.

Learning that Chelsea was still in town, Elin insisted she come along. Margaret was touched by the gesture but finding out that they were moving not just to another state, but to an entirely different country, she was a bit irked since she was supposed to be the one giving them a going-away party, not the other way around. But the food and atmosphere quickly brightened her mood. Neither she nor Chelsea had been to a place so fancy, and it didn't take long for happy smiles to appear as the delectable hors d'oeuvres, tender steak, and mind-blowing desserts were all served.

"If you ever want to visit, just say the word," Jason said. "We'll fly you over, and our new place has plenty of room for visitors."

"Jacob and I used to go international," Margaret replied, a wistful smile on her lips. "That was a long time ago, though."

Elin placed a hand on the woman's arm with a brilliant smile. "Please, do consider visiting, Margaret. I'd like to remain in touch with you, and phone calls or text messages just aren't the same. Ooh! We could give you the grand tour of Sint-Martens-Latem and Ghent, and maybe even take a weekend trip to Germany!"

Margaret rolled her eyes, waving her hand leisurely. "I'll think about it."

Elin pursed her lips, giving her friend a dissatisfied look, but soon smirked at her. "Fine. You think about it, but if you take too long, we're coming to take you anyway."

Margaret snorted a laugh, the second old-fashioned affecting her more than she realized. "Okay, okay! Once you all get settled, we'll figure something out." She let out a deep breath through her nose. "I guess I could use some time away."

As the night wound down, and everyone had eaten their fill, Jason drove Margaret and Chelsea home. Waiting until Chelsea had gone inside, Margaret stood on the stoop of her house.

"Thank you, Elin. I don't think I've had such a great night, and it truly did help me take my mind off things."

Elin placed a hand on Margaret's shoulder, giving her a sympathetic look. "I truly am sorry that I wasn't there for you."

The older woman nodded. "Listen, about your offer to visit," Margaret began, then hesitated. "I don't want to cramp your style."

"My style?" Elin asked, confused. "Margaret, you wouldn't—"

"Honey, you called him husband four times tonight." Margaret continued, even though Elin's face had gone pale. "Look, I'm too old to give a damn about what's going on there. And I'm not so closed-minded that I'd ghost you. But you'll need to decide if you're going to continue doing a poor job pretending while slipping up regularly, or just be whatever it is you all are."

After a long moment of Elin nearing the panic threshold, Margaret took mercy on her by taking Elin's hands.

She chuckled lightly. "Elin, you have been an amazing friend to me. If what I think is happening is actually happening, it's not my cup of tea, but you *are* my friend. That won't change because of this." Seeing Elin on the verge of tears, she pulled her in for a hug. "I'm not judging, and I won't. But as my friend, I just want you to be who you are. That's what I meant by cramping your style."

Breaking the hug, Margaret kept Elin's hands in hers. "Elaina's baby is his?"

Elin nodded, then smiled as the panic dissipated, replaced by pride. "Along with mine and Paige's," she said, straightening her shoulders.

"Jesus Fucking Christ, Elin," Margaret said in shock, then laughed. "Go big or go home, isn't that what they say?" She shook her head in disbelief. "Damn, that's gonna' be a ton of diapers," she muttered.

Elin chuckled. "I guess it will be."

"I'm not gonna' lie. I think it's weird," Margaret said bluntly. "But you, and your family, for that matter, are the nicest, kindest people I have ever met. Who am I to shit on your happiness?"

Elin continued to smile but worry crept back into her features. "Does this mean you'll still consider coming to visit?"

"Consider?" Margaret barked a laugh. "I was sold when Jason said he'd fly me over!"

They hugged again, and Elin looked curiously at her friend. "We're still friends?" she asked, seeking reassurance.

With a scoff, Margaret cupped her cheek like an old grandmother as she smiled. "Yes, we're still friends. Those are too hard to find at my age to walk away from because of something like this." With a sincere smile, Margaret jerked her head toward the waiting vehicle. "Now, go and get my room prepared. I've got some vacation time coming up, it seems."

Elin laughed happily, waved, and joined her family. As they drove away, Paige twisted her body around in the front seat.

"So...she knows?"

Elin's eyes went wide. "I—I thought the...whatever was gone?"

"Deductive reasoning," Paige said, cutting her off. "You called our master husband more than once at dinner, and you were very touchy-feely."

Elin huffed. "I am so glad we're moving. And it was apparently four times, according to Margaret." She looked at Elaina, then Paige. "And, yes, she knows. About us, and now about our children. But she's still my friend and she still wants to visit. That's all I care about."

* * * * *

Several things happened before the four permanently left Los Angeles behind. Once everything had been removed from the home, and the cleaning, pool, and lawn services had gone over it with a fine-toothed comb, Edwin, their realtor, had the property listed and immediately began scheduling showings and an open house. He'd explained that it was a seller's market, which worked out for the family of four. It worried Jason at first, thinking it would be difficult to sell since they could ask for a higher price, but Edwin waved that concern away. To hear him say it, the only people who could afford to live in this area of L.A., within a gated community, and wanted a home as beautifully designed as theirs wouldn't have an issue affording it. And as luck would have it, Edwin just happened to have a list of wealthy people who were in the market for a place just like theirs.

Listing it at \$10.2 million was a gamble, but it left wiggle room to be talked down a bit. To the family's shock, even at that price, four people had already requested a viewing, two of whom were quite interested in the property. Assuring Jason that he didn't need to be present to complete the sale, signatures being authorized through a specialized portal that Cooper-Price Realty utilized, Edwin thanked the family for choosing him as their realtor and wished them well with their new life in Belgium.

Jason also regrettably sold his new Jeep Wagoneer taking a loss on it. He'd really loved that vehicle knowing it was large enough to accommodate his entire family, even once the children were born, but now they were left with the two smaller SUVs that were probably slowly moving through the Panama Canal en route to Belgium on a container ship. After discussing vehicles with Amara, however, it just wasn't worth the headache of bringing it over with them in the event it needed repairs.

Lastly, the final use of Atkinson, McCarty & Ward's services saw the four meeting once more with Demura Megumi to change their surname. According to Demura, putting a reason down was more of a formality as long as the name wasn't completely ridiculous, but choosing to distance themselves from David Hughes' influence after what he'd done to their family was more than sufficient for any judge in the area.

While packing everything up to be shipped to their new home, Jason came across several honest-to-God photo albums Elin had brought with her when they'd moved from Vermont. In an age of digital everything, the idea of flipping through photo books was a new experience for him. There were images of David and Elin's wedding, and more of them on their honeymoon or candid photos taken around the house or other small trips. Having forgotten about those particular photos, Elin nearly lost her mind as she violently ripped those pages from the books, cursing angrily at her dead ex-husband. It was very likely due to embarrassment that those images were still in the books and her current husband was having to endure looking at them, but her burning hatred for David was real after the schism he'd created within the family. She'd been the voice of reason within the family to this point, not truly allowing Jason or Elaina to vent their own hatred of the man since he'd died so horribly. Seeing the pictures of what had turned out to be a lie, however, sent her into a fiery rage.

Beyond the random baby photos of their first steps, playing in the yard, or a very touching photo of the then one-year-old Jason, and newborn Paige breastfeeding at the same time, the book also

included old photos of extended family. Some were of David's side of the family, but Elin had brought many pictures of her family going back several generations. It was there that Jason found inspiration.

What would have been his great, great grandmother was just a young woman, maybe 15 years old when the photo was taken. It was black and white, and fragile due to its age, but Jason saw something within her that made him smile.

"Elin, she looks exactly like you," he said, touching the bashfully smiling face in the book separated only by the thin film of cellophane for its protection. The young woman was standing on the small porch of a farmhouse with what must have been her mother, both clearly embarrassed about having their picture taken.

"Her name was Marjolein van der Meer," Elin said. "That was," she paused, drawing out the word in thought, "I think about two years before she was married. Their family came from the Netherlands near what we call the IJsselmeer, or Lake IJssel, hence the name."

Van der Meer was a Dutch surname meaning 'from the lake,' which was fitting since the lake was massive. It had been known as the Zuiderzee before a major hydraulic engineering project drained it, changing it from salt water to fresh water, and a large flood barrier called the Afsluitdijk was put into place.

Jason wanted a name from Elin's family, but not one that would remind her of who she was. With the approval of his wives who all thought it was a great choice, especially because it would honor one of their ancestors, Demura worked her magic and came back with their name change forms. They did take the time to update their California licenses before they departed for Belgium, just so they wouldn't have to worry with it if they came back to visit. They were more concerned with updating their information with the Belgian authorities than anything else, but that was just a formality and the proper application of bureaucratic paperwork to accomplish the task.

And just like that, the scourge that had been David Allan Hughes was removed from their lives.

In the two months that passed, the family settled into their new home with parts of their past in the form of furniture and decorations brought with them creating a somewhat familiar space. With the knick-knacks Elin and Paige had purchased for decorations, and Elaina's beautiful photos lining the walls, the strangeness of being in such a large home that had felt so empty was quickly dampened by familiarity. For a week straight, the four spent time driving around to various antique shops, markets, and furniture stores to find more things to fill out much of the home's empty spaces. Their focus was the living areas, kitchen, nursery, master bedroom and two guest bedrooms, the latter being important so that Margaret would have a cozy place to come to when she visited. The rest of the house could be decorated as time went on and as needed.

"You swim like a Cocker Spaniel," Paige called out as she watched Elaina swimming laps. "At that rate, you'll be lucky to get back to the shallow end."

Pulling herself up to the edge of the deep end, Elaina glared at the young swim master. "Oh yeah? Let's see how well you do with this much ballast attached to you, you little turd!"

"Come on! Come on!" Paige clapped with purpose. "Keep that heart rate up! Get back to it, woman!"

With a growl, Elaina pushed off the wall and began her swim back to the shallow end, if nothing else but to drown her tiny wife. Paige had taken it upon herself, with direction from their doctors, to keep the women in shape during their pregnancies. That, of course, included lots and lots of swimming. The health benefits were fantastic for anyone, but during pregnancy, it was a great form of low-impact exercise with the added benefit of added circulation. It was supposed to reduce stress, but Elaina was getting the opposite effect today.

Other than being a strict taskmaster, Paige had been incredibly attentive to her wife's conditions. As soon as Elaina reached the end of her lap, Paige met her with a fluffy towel and a bottle of water.

"That was good, El. You—"

"You said I swim like a Cocker Spaniel! How is that good?" Elaina hissed, yanking the towel away from Paige.

"Motivation, my dear wife," Paige replied coolly, then followed with a shrug. "And it worked. You were swimming like a veteran athlete on the way back, although I'm sure it was just so you could suffocate me. Also, if you're gonna' do that, I'd prefer to go out with a mouth full of muff, but I'd settle on those fantastic tits, too."

Elaina's anger quickly subsided as she snorted, pulled Paige's lips to hers, and kissed them. "It's a damn good thing I love you."

The two walked through the connecting hall to the house to find Jason and Elin in the kitchen. The aroma coming from there was so strong it was like a magnet drawing them both down the corridor.

"Mmm. Smells good!" Paige said brightly as she sat on one of the stools at the large kitchen island.

"Chicken parmesan with gnocchi," Jason said as he began scooping the food out onto plates. "You two have good timing."

While he had put off his return to college until his children were born, Jason had taken up self-taught cooking courses. This was mainly just finding recipes that he liked from the internet, buying the ingredients, and trying to follow the recipe. Elin had been a great help during his attempts, giving him tips and guidance while also being slightly peeved that he was edging in on her territory.

"But I'm supposed to cook for you," she complained.

"And you're going to get up and cook right after giving birth?" he countered, playfully. "By my estimation, both you and Paige will be down for the count, and Elaina will still be taking care of Sophia. Were you up and cooking that quickly last time?"

She frowned, a sad look on her face as she remembered coming home with her three children. "For the most part, yes."

Wrapping his arms around her, he looked her in the eyes. "Not this time. You'll be a momma first, then ease back into what you want to do when you feel up to it. I'll be the woman of the house for a while."

She chuckled and shook her head at him.

He had taken to cooking quiet easily, having had some sense of it going all the way back to the beef stroganoff that he'd made for Elin and Paige when they'd first reunited with him in L.A. It was honestly no surprise to Elin that his skills were increasing rapidly, and despite her thoughts on her role as the housewife, she couldn't have been prouder of her husband.

"Are you girls going to eat in your swimsuits?" Elin asked as she brought out glasses for their drinks.

Both Elaina and Paige glanced at each other, smirked, then immediately stripped out of their attire and took their seats back on the stools completely naked. They then began to laugh as Jason, who had seen the free strip show, stood frozen in place with a skillet in one hand and a spatula in the other. His eyes were bouncing back and forth between two incredible sets of breasts hovering just over the marble countertop.

With only two months in their pregnancies, both Elin and Paige's bodies had begun to change slightly. Neither was showing yet, but everyone had noticed the slight increase in the size of their breasts. And now that Elaina was ready to pop, the sight of her large baby belly and full breasts made Jason salivate each time she disrobed. What he found to be incredibly alluring was that Elaina's nipples were almost constantly erect, and he licked his lips as he ogled them from across the kitchen.

"Oh!" Elin fussed, seeing the two naked, sitting proudly as their husband made eyes at them. "I swear, I don't know why we bother wearing clothes around here."

Taking pity on Jason, but only a little, Elaina cupped her breasts and sighed dramatically. "Come on, Paige. If we don't at least cover ourselves somewhat, we may find ourselves at the mercies of strong hands bending us over the table to have their way with us."

Unmoving, Paige just grinned. "And?"

"Shoo!" Elin said, flicking her hand out at them both. "He has to eat, you know?"

With a scoff, Paige hopped down and followed Elaina to the bedroom. Moments later, they begrudgingly returned with Paige wearing a very tight crop top that showed off quite a bit of underboob and an extremely short skirt that barely covered her crotch. Elaina, having fewer choices in her state, wore a large maternity hoodie that Jason had fallen in love with due to a special feature built into it. With a flick, her breasts could be exposed for ease in feeding a hungry child, or a horny husband who is too impatient to remove the top. It was long enough that she didn't bother wearing pants, and probably no underwear either.

The two sat at the table, smirking, as they looked down at the plates of food in front of them.

"This looks amazing," Paige said, inhaling deeply.

"Master made—" Elin said, turning to the table. Her lips immediately pressed tightly together at the sight of the girls, knowing exactly what was going on. "Oh, no," she said, putting the last two glasses on the counter. "If we're competing, then I'm game," she said.

In astonishment, Jason watched as Elin stripped out of her peach blouse and slacks to expose a white, lacy lingerie set, complete with a thong bikini, sheer hose, and garter belt. Once relieved of her clothes, she grinned in satisfaction seeing the desired look of lust from Jason.

He closed his eyes and took several deep breaths. "I have died and gone to ridiculously sexy woman heaven," he whispered.

"Come," Elin said with a smile on her face as her hand slid gently over the front of his jeans. "Eat with your wives. Or fuck us silly. We will do as you please, master."

"Ooh!" Paige said as her hand shot up, firmly placing herself at the front of the 'fuck us silly' line.

"Oohhhh!" Elaina groaned, one hand shooting down to her stomach.

Everything stopped as Jason, Elin, and Paige all looked worriedly at her. After several long moments, Elaina let out a sharp breath and opened her eyes.

"And so it begins," Paige said, entwining her fingers into Elaina's. "First one?"

"First big one," Elaina replied. "It's been hit or miss all day, but irregular."

"Is your bag packed?" Elin asked, her tone all business now.

"Yes."

Jason stood wide-eyed as he looked at Elaina. He'd been imagining having their child in his arms for nine months, but now that they were this close, the nervousness he'd been pushing down was beginning to leak out. Rushing across the room, he knelt beside her, wrapping his arms around her waist.

"I'm okay," she said softly as she rubbed his back. With a glance up at Elin who only nodded, Elaina kissed the top of his head. "We're okay, Jason. We've prepared for this."

They'd signed up for the public insurance as well as picking up a private insurance coverage as soon as they had returned from L.A. Copies of their medical records were sent over and OB/GYNs were chosen for each of the women, each undergoing an examination and, for Elaina, pre-planning for her pending delivery. The nursery was stocked with diapers, wipes, clothes, breast pumps, and anything else they'd need for a new baby in the house. But none of those things could actually prepare someone for the birth of their child.

"I'm just nervous," he said. "I just don't want anything bad to happen."

"It'll be okay," Paige said softly as she nodded. "You'll see." When Elaina and Elin looked up at her skeptically, she frowned. "You'll see," she insisted.

Having told them of the dream she'd had months ago, it just left everyone confused to find out that Paige was, apparently, clairvoyant and it had nothing to do with Other Paige having been in her brain. Since then, she'd taken the soft approach with her proclamations due to a fear of being wrong. With Other Paige, she'd been so certain about everything she'd said. Without it, knowing it had been her all along, she was terrified that she'd steer her family wrong.

Jason nodded, being the only one who had accepted her words as gospel, then stood. He kissed Elaina gently, stroking her face as he looked worriedly into her eyes.

"I'll be with you through everything," he said. "Fair warning: I may cry if you're in too much pain."

"Aww, come here, husband," she replied, hugging him. "Cry as much as you want. We'll tag team it."

"Should we eat?" Elin asked.

Elaina nodded, kissing Jason once more. "Yes. It may be a while and I'm starving. Besides, this looks too good to become leftovers."

Slowly throughout the night, the contractions became more severe and much closer together. They'd tried to nap, but laying on her side or back had been uncomfortable for Elaina. She'd managed to drift off for small cat naps only when Jason sat against the headboard, and she lay back against him. Elin and Paige sandwiched on either side of her, gently stroking her stomach until they, too, fell asleep.

At 4 a.m., however, it was showtime.