

JANUARY THAW

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Violence Warning: Slight here. Nothing that rises to the level of the stuff found in my Conqueror Series.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RAGE OF CHARYBDIS

Rejeanne stared blankly at the television set as she slowly chewed on the last piece of pizza that she would have for the evening. After finishing it, she rose to take the remaining pieces out of the box, place them in Ziploc Baggies that she retrieved from her overnight bag, and put the slices in the small hotel room refrigerator. Lindsay peered out of the bathroom as Rejeanne shut the refrigerator door.

“How was your shower?” Rejeanne asked.

“Fine,” Lindsay replied. “What are you doing?”

“I don’t believe in letting food go to waste,” Rejeanne responded. “I always keep a box of Baggies handy for leftovers.”

Lindsay smiled as she emerged from the bathroom. “My mother’s gonna love you,” she said. “She still has peaches that she canned in 1982. She blames her ‘condition’ on her Depression-era parents and their old quips about starving children in China.”

Rejeanne eyed her friend as she absorbed that last comment. *Hmm, so I could be meeting the mom someday?* “Those rainbow pajama pants that you bought earlier look good on you,” she said.

“Thanks,” Lindsay replied. “They fit perfectly, surprising since they’re meant for guys to wear.”

“Well, most everything that you can buy to wear at a queer store is meant to be non gender-specific,” Rejeanne advised as she took possession of the bed closest to the door.

After nestling herself in, she grabbed the TV remote. “Is it alright if I turn it off?” she asked. “I’m whipped.”

“Sure,” Lindsay replied as she pulled the covers back on the other bed and climbed in. Resting her head on the pillow, she looked up at the ceiling and felt a barrenness. She did not want to lie there alone. Just as strong as her desire for sexual intimacy with Rejeanne was her desire for physical closeness. She wanted to proffer the idea of an embrace, but was afraid that she had already crossed too many boundaries with her friend. The combination of Lindsay’s deep thoughts, the pizza churning in her belly and that drink from the bar was causing her stomach to feel queasy, so she turned to her side and eyed Rejeanne in the darkness.

“Can’t sleep?” Rejeanne asked, as she too was doing her share of eyeing.

“My stomach hurts a little.”

“You’re not going to be sick, are you, Lin?”

“I don’t think so.”

At that moment, Rejeanne rose up, crawled out of her bed and leaned over to crawl in next to Lindsay. “Look, I’m not trying to be a clit tease or anything, but I so enjoyed our embrace in my bed the other night.”

“I liked that too,” Lindsay affirmed.

“Can we maybe do that again?”

“Absolutely.” Lindsay was beginning to suspect that Rejeanne was a mind reader.

She gathered Rejeanne up in her arms and caressed the back of her neck. Rejeanne relaxed her head on Lindsay’s left shoulder.

“So, Lin,” Rejeanne started, “Classic pick-up line time. What’s your sign?”

“I’m an Aries.”

“Figures.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lindsay asked.

“Aries are arrogant and pig-headed.”

“Oh, really?” Lindsay quipped. “So what sign are you?”

“I’m an Aquarius,” Rejeanne replied.

“Huh,” said Lindsay. “I understand that they can’t make a decision.”

“Screw you,” Rejeanne smirked.

“I’d love that,” Lindsay quipped.

Both women chuckled. “So, you have a birthday coming up soon, then,” Lindsay said.

“Next month.”

“How old will you be, Jeannie?”

“Twenty-six.”

“So, like, you were born in ’77,” Lindsay calculated.

“Yeah,” Rejeanne remarked. “What year were you born? Nineteen-seventy?”

“Yup.”

“You probably remember 1977 pretty well, huh, Lin?”

“Absolutely,” Lindsay said. “That was the year that ‘Star Wars’ came out.”

“Big fan, I take it?”

“Oh, hell yes,” Lindsay said. “I saw ‘The Empire Strikes Back’ six times in the theater when it originally came out in ’80 and ‘Return of the Jedi’ four times in the theater. And mind you, I was still a young kid traipsing off to the theater all those times.”

“That’s cute,” Rejeanne looked deeply into Lindsay’s eyes. “Were you a ‘Saturday Night Fever’ fan too? That came out in ’77.”

“No,” Lindsay smiled. “But I think that was R-rated anyway. I couldn’t have seen it even if I wanted to back then.”

Rejeanne grinned as well. “So, the name Alasdair, is that, like, totally WASP?”

“Pretty much,” Lindsay responded. “The Alasdairs originated in Wales, and most of my blue-blooded forefathers were careful to take spouses of prosperous Welsh, Scottish or English lineage. Although, there were a couple in guys in the line that broke rank and married Irish.”

“Ah, but it seems that you followed protocol, huh?” Rejeanne asked.

“Yeah, the MacMahons are old nobility from the Scottish highlands,” Lindsay stated as she began playing with a lock of Rejeanne’s hair. “How about you?”

“Oh, classic Euro-mutt here,” Rejeanne said. “Mom’s German-Irish with a dash of Polish and Ukrainian. Dad is Cajun, Dutch and Austrian.”

“Wow, you have half the continent covered in your DNA,” Lindsay remarked.

“Yeah, well, fuck you,” Rejeanne smirked.

“I’d love that,” Lindsay quipped.

Both women chuckled again. “You know, my dad’s dad’s family hails from southern Louisiana. There’s an old rumor that one of my forefathers down there took a mulatto for a wife.”

“What’s a mulatto?”

“A biracial person,” Rejeanne said. “Half black and half white. So, you never know. I may have a splash of color in me.”

“Well, that might explain why you have such great rhythm.”

Rejeanne’s eyes glazed over as she lowered her voice. “You haven’t seen a thing... yet.”

Lindsay slightly squirmed as she tightened her thighs together. “Please, this is painful enough as it is.”

Rejeanne let out a sigh. “Sorry ‘bout that,” she said as she shifted her body a little so she could caress Lindsay’s right arm. “A change of subject is in order. So, what’s your favorite pastime?”

“What’s yours?”

“Sex,” Rejeanne jibed. “Kidding, although it’s up there on the list. I would have to honestly say that my favorite pastime is writing.”

“You must really love going to work everyday,” Lindsay remarked.

“No, not that kind of writing, silly,” Rejeanne said. “I write poetry.”

“Really?”

“Yup.”

“I’d love to read it sometime,” Lindsay requested.

“Perhaps,” Rejeanne said. “So, you didn’t answer me. What’s your favorite pastime?”

“Riding.”

“Riding?” Rejeanne asked. “Like a bike or that motorcycle that I saw in your garage?”

“No, silly. Riding horses.”

“Oh,” Rejeanne said, slightly embarrassed. “Did you have a pony when you were a little girl?” she asked.

“No,” Lindsay replied smugly. “Ponies are for wimps. From the time I was four, I’ve ridden horses.”

“Ooh, well, excuse me,” Rejeanne lightly pinched Lindsay’s forearm. “What was the name of your first horse?”

“I didn’t name the first one, so don’t laugh,” Lindsay warned. “Buttercup.”

Rejeanne laughed. “Sorry,” she chortled. “Why Buttercup?”

“Because of her golden color,” Lindsay said. “Mother named her. I named my second horse that I acquired when I was eleven.”

“What was her name?”

“**His** name was Aragorn,” Lindsay replied.

“Son of Arathorn?” Rejeanne quipped. “Tolkien fan are you?”

“Big time,” Lindsay remarked. “I obtained a second horse a couple of years later that I named Arwen. The two became an item.”

“You are too adorable, Lin,” Rejeanne said.

* * * *

Lindsay awakened to the pitch-blackness of the hotel room. The only sounds that she heard were the humming of the room’s heater and the gentle breathing of the woman who lay next to her. In the darkness, Lindsay could only see the outline of Rejeanne’s face. She began to lightly caress that face with the tips of her fingers as she began to

contemplate her predicament.

Lindsay was in hopelessly in love. Although she had been in love in the past, she was now encountering feelings more intense and profound than any she had ever experienced. Despite that, she was quite surprised that she was not particularly fazed by the fact that she had fallen so deeply for another woman. Her father had worked very hard to instill in her a sense of ethnic, racial and class superiority. Lindsay smiled in the darkness as she reflected on so many of the hateful and narrow-minded things she was fed by him during her formative years, and how she refused to succumb to most of those views. Yes, she was a card-carrying Republican, a member of the NRA, and an avid reader of *The Weekly Standard*. But she also prided herself on not agreeing with everything that came from the conservative right, particularly with regards to social issues. Her early fascination with the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King and her studies of some of the greatest American women in history, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and of course, Amelia Earhart combined to challenge her father's notion of the importance of the white male power structure. And it was her cousin Keith who had, years ago, exposed to her that gays were not the sick perverts that her father had professed them to be.

Thus, thoughts of loving another woman or of being lesbian were not earth shattering to Lindsay. Perhaps, deep down, she always knew that she was never particularly hot for men. Her college affair with Nadir was sexually satisfying for the most part, but their relationship was borne more of their combined passion for global awareness. At Dartmouth, she majored in economics and minored in Asian and Middle-Eastern studies. Initially, her plan was to develop a keen understanding of corporate Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and the oil-rich Arab nations for her future role as head of the Alasdair family dynasty. But as she was exposed more and more to the cultural richness of those areas, and especially after meeting Nadir, her interests shifted from exclusively economic to both a social and cultural understanding. Together, Lindsay and Nadir joined a student group affiliated with Amnesty International. She was particularly passionate about confronting the oppressive Caste system in India, the then growing tensions in the former Czech Republic and ongoing political strife occurring in Central Africa. It was their social passion, not a sexual one that fueled the relationship between Lindsay and Nadir.

Lindsay's father was troubled as much by her amnesty work as he was over the fact that she was dating an Indian. He had hoped that, once Nadir was scared off, Lindsay would channel her interests back to learning how to make money. Even though she was the consummate capitalist, her social interests didn't end with the relationship with Nadir. After taking over the family business, Lindsay expanded her global understanding through travel and investments, which included parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Central and South America as well as Asia and the Middle East.

However, as she lay there with Rejeanne, her arm wrapped around the smaller woman's torso, her lips delicately touching Rejeanne's forehead, she thought neither of her work nor her destiny. The only thoughts that consumed her were Rejeanne and her future with

the small blonde beauty. *What do I do now?*

Leaving Martin was a very appealing thought. So was sharing a life with Rejeanne. Her problems centered on how she could accomplish either. Divorcing her husband of nearly ten years and then living in an openly lesbian relationship would not resonate at all with her parents, her shareholders, or the various individuals who contributed to her enormous wealth. She considered her options. She could remain married and take Rejeanne as her secret lover. Or she and Martin could agree to live separately but not get divorced. Rejeanne could then move into Stone Hills under the guise of an employee of some capacity. *She could be my personal press secretary*, Lindsay thought.

As Lindsay pondered her choices, she could not escape one factor. Rejeanne had already been down the road of a covert relationship. Lindsay believed that she would not be willing to do it again, nor, in the end, would Lindsay ask such a thing of her. Her profound love for Rejeanne, ironically, would not allow her to even suggest that Rejeanne return to an oppressive situation. The question thus became whether Lindsay's love for Rejeanne was strong enough to be with her openly and honestly.

All of her contemplation was giving Lindsay a headache. When she lifted her hand to rub her eyes, the body next to her stirred and yawned.

"Hey, are you awake?" Rejeanne whispered.

"Yeah," Lindsay replied.

"Can't sleep?"

"I haven't been awake long," Lindsay said. "Didn't mean to wake you."

"You didn't," Rejeanne remarked. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I feel fine, dear. Go back to sleep."

* * * *

The long ride back became increasingly tense as the two women neared Dell Valley. Neither one was ready to face returning to their so-called normalcy. Neither was ready to be without the other. For Rejeanne, the thought of parting from Lindsay was particularly distressing. She had revealed to Lindsay the perils of her previous relationship. She had not wanted to do that, fearful that the revelation would make Lindsay feel pressured into doing something she was not ready to do or, at the very worse, frighten Lindsay away. As they drew nearer to Stone Hills, Rejeanne's worst fear seemed to be coming to fruition. Lindsay's already reserved demeanor became even more distant. With only ten more miles to go, Lindsay decided then to pick up one of her cell phones and call Leigh to check the status on several real estate projects that she had going and meetings that she

had scheduled.

For the first time since they got together the day before, Rejeanne felt completely alone.

* * * *

The Hummer rolled up to the Lindsay's garage as one of its doors opened, exposing Rejeanne's Subaru. At the angle that Lindsay's vehicle was parked, both women could not help but notice a Mercedes parked next to the Subaru.

"Marty must be back from his boat show," Rejeanne said.

"Apparently."

Rejeanne reached behind Lindsay's seat and grabbed her overnight bag. "So, what happens now?" she asked.

Lindsay gripped the steering wheel with both hands and looked ahead. "Honestly, I don't know," she said. "There's nothing more that I want than to be with you." She looked at Rejeanne. "But you so deserve someone who'll be committed to you fully, without any restrictions... without any baggage. My situation is, as you know, very complicated. And I'm not sure that I can give that to you right now."

Rejeanne opened the car door. "Right," she said angrily as she began to step out.

Lindsay grabbed her arm. "Don't leave like this, Jeannie," she pleaded. "You're... you're... I consider you my very best friend. I've enjoyed every minute we've spent together. I just don't want to hurt you. Can't you see that?"

"I understand," Rejeanne said sardonically. "You have an image to uphold. Family tradition and all. Can't be rocking any boats."

Hearing it that way, Lindsay realized just how shallow and repressive her existence had been. "Look, I just have to think about things, okay?"

"Sure," Rejeanne hissed. "Sorry that I didn't give you what you really wanted from me this weekend."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Think about it."

"Hey, you're wrong," Lindsay implored. "This isn't about sex in the least. There are many things for me to consider here."

“Yeah, sure. You consider things, Lindsay.” Rejeanne tore her arm from Lindsay’s grip and exited the vehicle. Jumping into her own vehicle, she peeled out of the garage and sped off, eyes straight ahead.

Lindsay continued to sit in her H2, eyes staring blankly ahead, for several minutes before putting the truck in drive and pulling into the spot that Rejeanne had vacated. As she walked into her home, profound anger began to build up inside of her as well. *She didn’t have to tear off like that*, Lindsay thought. *Have her little temper tantrum. Can’t she see what I’m going through because of her? To hell with it. Fuck her.* Lindsay’s strides quickened as she walked down her main corridor to the front staircases, overnight bag in hand. Barreling up the stairs and to her bedroom, she entered and saw Martin sitting on the sofa facing the room’s small fireplace. She unbuttoned her coat as she battled a flurry of emotions.

“Have a nice weekend, dear?” Martin asked.

“What do you fucking care what kind of weekend I had?” Lindsay replied irately as she took the coat off and placed it next to her bag on the bed.

“Why should I not care what my wife’s been doing?”

“Because you never gave a shit before, Marty, that’s why.”

“Before, your weekends were filled with productive business ventures, important social functions, visits with your parents, et cetera,” Martin stated. “Heading down to the Windy City with a white-trash dyke, now that’s something I care about.”

Lindsay approached Martin and stood over him. “Don’t you ever fucking call her that,” she warned as she clenched her fists.

Martin stood up. “A little sensitive, my dear?” he asked cynically. “Tell me something, how does it feel to be the first Alasdair, male or female, who has ever eaten pussy?”

Lindsay felt a boding heat course through her body. “You rat bastard!” she exclaimed as she cold-cocked Martin, sending him to the floor. Wincing in pain, he looked up at her, totally stunned at what just happened, before gripping his throbbing jaw. He saw a rage in the eyes of his wife that he had never seen before.

“Holy shit, I think you cracked my jaw,” Martin declared. “What the hell’s gotten into you?” He looked down on the carpet at several fresh drops of blood.

Lindsay sat on the couch and took a deep breath before peering down at Martin. “For years you’ve been fucking around on me with common street hookers, Marty. So where do you get off coming into my bedroom, insulting my best friend and accusing me of

infidelity?"

Martin leaned up as he wiped the blood trickling from his mouth. "This is our bedroom," he proclaimed.

"No, this is **my** bedroom, Marty. My bedroom, my house. Your existence here has not been a right but a privilege. And as you well know, lawyer husband of mine, privileges can be waived, modified or terminated."

"What are you saying to me, Lindsay?" Martin asked with what Lindsay detected was genuine trepidation in his tone.

"Nothing happened," Lindsay admitted. "Not that I didn't want something to happen. For the first time since I don't know when, I felt truly alive and complete." She stood up and leaned down so that they were eye-to-eye. "I look at you now, you pathetic pile of shit, and I can't believe that I told myself that I even had to consider my options."

Despite her level of anger, Lindsay helped Martin to his feet. "Well, that girl's had some sort of effect on you, Lin," he conceded. "You wouldn't have done this to me last Friday."

"If you're expecting an apology, you won't get one, Marty. I should have decked you years ago."

Although Martin was actually fearful of Lindsay's state of being, at that moment, the excruciating pain of his jaw took priority. "I really need to put something on this at the very least," Martin said. "It's swelling," he added as he left the room feeling crushed and discomfited.

Lindsay sat back down on the couch and looked over at her overnight bag resting on her bed. She then walked over to her bed, dug into her coat pocket and pulled out her truck keys.

In an instant, a decision was made.

CONTINUED IN CHAPTER NINE...