



## Act I

The warm breeze of the late August day had turned surprisingly cool as the sun began to dip below the horizon. The sunlight cast colors throughout the room as it shone through the glass. Olivia watched the colors change as each minute passed marvelling at the fact that only four short years ago she was ready to give up. With her failing heart, her failing hope wasn't far behind. Emma had been her only bright spot and the only reason she held on, but even that hadn't been enough anymore. Like a miracle created especially for her, Natalia swept into her life and into her heart, changing everything for the better.

As the words and emotions came to her, Olivia made quick notes on her phone to add to her vows later. With the wedding only a week away, she had been panicked that she'd never find the right words for her vows, but sitting here in the place Natalia loved the most, only second to the farmhouse, the words flowed easily.

She smiled at what she'd written thus far and decided that she had enough for now. Standing, she walked as quietly as possible on the wood floors in her heels, careful not to disturb an elderly woman praying a few pews back. She had one more stop to make, one more place of inspiration to visit, before heading home.

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Natalia stretched her legs out after sitting down on the bench. She had walked the long way around the park to the gazebo - their gazebo - to get in the right frame of mind for writing her vows. Looking around the small space, she smiled remembering the surprising snow that had fallen that fateful day, how gorgeous Olivia looked standing in the snow with her

eyes bright and hopeful, and the nervous shiver she felt as Olivia pushed her to return to the church and the way she couldn't hold back her feelings anymore.

This gazebo had seen their lives irrevocably changed in an amazing and wondrous way. It held a special power to her - mystical and beautiful like their love. With a contented sigh, she looked down at the notepad and began to write.

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From across the park, Olivia smiled as she leaned against a tree trunk. For the last few minutes, she'd been watching Natalia excitedly scribbling on a notepad and taking breaks occasionally to look up, deep in thought, a pen tapping against her chin.

"She's so adorable," Olivia muttered seemingly to herself.

"You always had wonderful taste," Josh quipped behind her.

Olivia whipped her head around at the familiar sound of her ex-husband's voice behind her and smiled. "And you are living proof," she teased the handsome man. "How are you?"

"Very well. Thank you for asking." Josh smiled back fondly and stepped up next to Olivia. "You'll be glad to know I have everything ready for the ceremony, just as we discussed."

"Wonderful. Thank you," Olivia said sincerely. She hoped Natalia would be pleased with her plan.

Noticing the pensive and slightly nervous look on Olivia's face, Josh set her mind at ease. "She's going to love it, Olivia. Stop worrying."

Turning her head back around, she watched her wife longingly for a moment before nodding in acquiescence. She shifted the subject away from her temporary concerns. Every time she and Natalia tried to move forward it seemed like something was always slowing them down. "How's Reva?"

Josh couldn't help but chuckle. Olivia was so not interested in knowing how Reva was doing so he ignored the question. "You are such a goner. Love looks good on you, Olivia, but not the worry. Just enjoy the anticipation! It's all going to be fine."

She was unable to help the blush that spread up her neck and into her cheeks at being read so well. Quirking a smile at Josh, she admitted, "That obvious?"

He nodded his head and leaned over to kiss her cheek. "This love...this day is well-deserved." Olivia gave him a look that said she doubted that summation, but he stopped her before she could speak. "I need to get back to my girl. It seems I have this wedding to attend in a couple of days for a really good friend, and I need to get a new suit."

"Yes, you do." Olivia patted his cheek fondly. "A haircut may not be a bad idea either."

He stepped back. "Oh, nice! I love you too, Liv." He shooed her with his hand and said, "Go surprise your wife."

Olivia mocked him with a salute and he laughed before walking off in the direction of the parking lot.

Spinning around with a smile and a hop in her step, Olivia made her way over to the gazebo and snuck behind where Natalia was sitting. With a mischievous smile, she tiptoed closer until she was right behind the brunette's ear.

"Saying nice things, I hope," Olivia husked out, surprising Natalia.

The brunette squeaked in shock, the notepad in her hand getting tossed in the air and falling to the ground. Quickly, she grabbed it before Olivia could see anything and sat back. "Olivia! You scared the daylights out of me!"

Olivia leaned over the railing and kissed the younger woman's cheek. "You're so cute when you're flustered." When Natalia huffed, she chuckled and pointed at the notepad. "What do you have there, hot stuff?"

"Nothing," Natalia answered too quickly, shifting uncomfortably on the bench. Usually, she was the prepared one with every detail well-planned out. To wait this late to write her vows was not like her at all. She hated to admit that she hadn't written them yet. "It's just a grocery list."

Reaching over the railing, Olivia tried to take the pad. "Oh, I want to make fettuccine Alfredo tonight. I'll add the ingredients to the list."

Natalia pulled the pad away. "I've got it. I know what to get."

"Uh huh," Olivia murmured, watching her wife shift her eyes. Realization dawned and she walked around the gazebo to go inside and sit down by Natalia. "If it makes you feel any better, I just started writing mine too. In fact, that's why I came here. For some inspiration."

Relaxing back into the bench, Natalia smiled softly at the beautiful woman next to her. She put the notepad aside and reached over to take Olivia's hand, twining their fingers together, remembering some of the words on her notepad. "This is a pretty special place for us, huh?"

Olivia nodded, a sense of comfort and peace enveloping her. "We had some big moments here to say the least."

For a long moment, Natalia was quiet, looking down at their joined hands and tracing Olivia's fingers with her own. "What do you say to having another big moment here? Not that I don't love the farmhouse, but..." Olivia quirked an eyebrow as dark brown eyes glanced hesitantly up at her. "You want to get married here?"

Natalia nodded and hurriedly spoke, "It's crazy, I know. We already have everything lined up for doing it at the farmhouse. Greg has everything in order, but..."

"Consider it done," Olivia agreed even as Natalia tried to talk both of them out of it. "We'll do the reception at the farmhouse. That way all of Greg's prep won't go to waste."

"Yeah?" Natalia smiled giddily at her. When Olivia nodded, she threw her arms around the older woman's neck, kissing her soundly.

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The look of panic in Greg's eyes as Olivia and Natalia told him they wanted to switch the location of the ceremony from the farmhouse to the gazebo was priceless. Olivia knew she should feel guilty, but that's what Natalia was for. When she whispered her idea of incentive for Greg into Natalia's ear and got a giggle and nod back, Olivia knew why she loved her wife so much.

Olivia waved a hand in front of Greg's face, which had turned a strange shade of green. "Greg, I have two words for you that will make it all worthwhile."

It took Natalia brushing his arm to bring him back to the present. "Huh?"

"Shopping trip," Olivia beamed. Greg was still non-verbal so she emphasized her next words, "A one thousand dollar shopping spree...in New York City. I'll cover the travel expenses, too."

The words finally sunk in and he squealed like a little girl getting a pony. Both women laughed at him as he perked up. "Oh my God, Mrs. Spencer! I'm...I'm...oh my God!" He paused, turned from them as if he had a thought, then swung back around. "I need some new decorations. Ohhhh, I have the perfect idea."

Olivia and Natalia giggled at the prim man being completely discombobulated as he walked away mumbling. Natalia turned back to her wife who was grinning goofily. "Quick thinking, querida."

Olivia shrugged and pulled Natalia close. "That's why I get paid the big bucks." She winked and pressed a sweet kiss to Natalia's lips. "Mmmmm, you know, the best thing about letting someone else plan the wedding is that we have plenty of free time for more...pleasant activities."

Her body hummed from the kiss Olivia gave her and she desperately wanted more. She asked breathlessly, "What did you have in mind, Mrs. Spencer-Rivera?"

Smirking, Olivia leaned in and brushed her lips tantalizingly over her love's neck before coming up to nip at her earlobe. "Meet me in Suite 403 and find out."

Natalia shivered at the erotic rush that ran down her spine. "Give me an hour."

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The minutes seemed to tick slowly by as Olivia put the final touches on Suite 403. Stepping back, she bit her lip and looked around at the room.

"Perfect. Just like you," she whispered into the empty room. Pleased that she had everything in its place, Olivia went to the bathroom to change.

Natalia checked her watch again as she waited for the elevator to arrive. She knew vaguely what Olivia had planned, probably something romantic and sexy like the woman herself, and her body practically vibrated with anticipation. It didn't matter how many times they made love it always felt like the first time. Stepping into the elevator, she checked her watch once again and noticed her hand shaking slightly. She took a deep breath and tried to relax.

The feelings Olivia gave her were wondrous and frightening. When Olivia whispered the suggestive encounter in her ear, Natalia had to resist the urge to race her up to the room. After all, the anticipation between them was as addictive and amazing as the actual encounter.

As the elevator came to a stop, Natalia shook her hands and cleared her head. In a couple of days, she would marry Olivia again in front of their family and friends. While it was already legal between them, even if the state didn't think so, the idea of marrying in front of the most important people in their lives was more frightening than the step they'd already taken.

Somewhere in Natalia's head and heart, she had felt married to Olivia already, even long before the trip to New York. As soon as Olivia had told her that she was in love with her, standing next to Gus's grave, Natalia had the image emblazoned on her heart of Olivia being her wife. That day in the church should have been their day. It never should have been wasted on Frank. At the time, the feelings had shook her to her core. Now, though, she was excited about the future -- the future she had with Olivia and their children.

The rightness of it settled her as she slid her pass key through the lock and the door clicked allowing her entry. The lights were dimmed as she walked in and closed the door behind her. A huge smile broke out on her face as she looked around the suite. She loved this sensual and romantic side of Olivia that no one but her got to see.

Taking a calming breath she looked around, rose petals in a multitude of colors - most the rich, deep red and creamy white of their ceremony colors - were scattered in a path on the floor to the king size bed. Across the bed, the covers already pulled down, were more petals caressing the soft sheets. At the end of the bed was a white shirt box, the name of the shop scrawled in gold across the top.

Natalia walked slowly over to the bed and ran her fingers along the gold script. "What have you done, Olivia Spencer?"

Lifting the top off the box, Natalia breathed in a shocked gasp, "Oh my God!" She ran her fingers along the edge of the soft lace of the vintage cream-colored lingerie until it reached the clasp at the dip. Tucked under the edge of the delicate fabric was a note card with a gold "O" embossed on it. She pulled it out and opened it, a smile teasing her lips as she read the note aloud:

*A beautiful classic for a classic beauty. I can't wait to see you in this on our wedding night.*

Putting the note to the side, Natalia gently scooped her hands under the arms of the material and lifted it out of the box. The sheer silk and lace flowed out below her and she raised it high. She shook her head in amazement. "Oh, Olivia, what am I going to do with you?"

As she took in the shimmer of the gorgeous negligee, a glimpse of something else in the box caught her eye. Carefully setting the gown aside, she noticed something dark hidden behind sheer paper. Lifting the paper, she chuckled and picked up the other note already open for her to read: *For Tonight*.

With not nearly as much care, Natalia picked up the purple silk negligee and held it to her body. Another shimmer of excitement ran through her body and she suddenly realized that it was now a few minutes past the hour they had set aside to meet. Olivia should have been there by now.

Shrugging her shoulders, she replaced the first outfit in the box, carefully folding and tucking it in before taking the purple one in her hand to the bathroom. "I guess I get to surprise you this time."



A few minutes later, Natalia emerged from the bathroom.

The sensual, lilting voice of Enya was playing, and Natalia knew that Olivia had to be there. Walking out further into the dim room, Natalia adjusted her eyes to the darkness and looked for her wife.

"I take it you like your wedding gift." Natalia spun around at Olivia's voice behind her.

"Sneaky! What is with you sneaking around today? You've been here the whole time?" Olivia smirked mischievously at the brunette, her eyes dancing over the voluptuous curves barely hidden underneath the sheer silk. Olivia nodded in response to Natalia's question.

"I love it. Both of them, actually," Natalia's voice was nervous but tender. "And I love you."

Olivia walked out a little further where the light was better. "Considering we're getting married soon, that's a good thing."

For a moment, Natalia had a hard time breathing. She had never seen Olivia look so gorgeous. "A very good thing. God, Olivia, you're absolutely breathtaking."

Walking over to her love, her bare feet sinking luxuriously into the thick carpet and feeling decadent, Olivia reached for Natalia and took her hand. She pulled the younger woman into her arms and to the beat of the music began to gently sway. "I know our wedding is in a couple of days, but I couldn't wait. I don't want to wait. I want to give you so much. I want to give you everything."

Natalia leaned back until she was looking into intense green eyes. "You have given me everything, querida. You've even given me things I didn't realize I wanted and yearned for."

Feeling Natalia's hands roam up and down her back, she smirked down at her playfully. "What have you yearned for?"

Natalia smiled and leaned in, kissing Olivia on the cheek. "This. This moment, this feeling, right here and right now. This deep sense of blessing and gratitude that my one true love is in my arms. You gave me your love. That's all I ever needed or wanted."





"Wow," Olivia's choked out through her tears. She pulled back and looked at Natalia again, not bothering to hide the tears in her eyes. She brought her hands up to caress Natalia's face. "You know, the vows were supposed to be saved for the wedding, right?"

Natalia chuckled, then gave her love a serious look. "I love you, Olivia Spencer. Until my last breath."

A tear fell down Olivia's cheek as she glanced down feeling surprisingly self-conscious. "Damn, you're good." Natalia tucked a finger under her wife's chin and tilted it upwards. "You have no idea," she whispered, her voice husky with desire as she leaned in to kiss Olivia.

It was slow and tender, full of love and meaning. When Olivia moaned and tilted her head, inviting Natalia in, all bets were off. Natalia pushed against Olivia, edging her toward the bed. Her nails dug in against the silk fabric along Olivia's hips and the older woman hissed at the erotic sensation, breaking the kiss.

"Natalia," Olivia whispered with a whimper as Natalia reached up to caress her breast, taking a swollen nipple between her fingers and tugging until Olivia moaned again.

"I love the feel of your breasts covered in silk," Natalia said as she bent down to bite playfully at the engorged nipple, leaving a wet mark as she broke away. "But I love it more without the silk."

Quickly, Natalia pushed the negligee up Olivia's sides and over her breasts, returning again to suck at the puckered flesh. She moaned at the soft feel of Olivia's nipple in her mouth and

the smell of her skin. Desire clenched painfully between her legs, but she wanted to take Olivia to the brink more than she wanted to pleasure herself. She knew that sometimes Olivia liked to be suckled hard so she increased the pressure. When she felt Olivia's fingers dig in at the base of her skull and heard a deep, needy groan above her, Natalia knew she'd reached the ideal spot.

Olivia couldn't get her negligee off fast enough. Natalia's mouth was needy and incessant, demanding more of Olivia, as the younger woman sucked greedily at her breast. A sudden sharp tug and Olivia grabbed onto Natalia's head, holding her in place as she gladly offered herself to her wife.

They must have been moving, getting closer to the bed, but Olivia didn't realize it, distracted as she was, until she lost her balance and fell backwards.

Natalia moved with her, well aware of what she was doing. Her mouth let go of one nipple long enough to move to the other. Without letting Olivia go, she worked to push Olivia's underwear off, deftly spreading the other woman's legs as she did so and settling between them. A thrust of her hips had Olivia clutching at her shoulders, tugging at the silk lingerie that Natalia still wore.

"Get it off," Olivia husked out as she looked down trying to find the hem of the top.

Natalia chuckled as she sat up. "But you wanted me to wear it. It's such a shame to take it off now."

Olivia sat up a little, reaching for Natalia and kissing her soundly. "Take it off or I'll rip it off. Your choice."

"There's no need for violence." Natalia smiled as she sat up straighter and pulled the sleek material up and over her head.

With her lover not able to see for a couple of seconds, Olivia took advantage of it and slipped her hand inside Natalia's underwear causing Natalia to squeak in surprise before she pushed down against Olivia's hand in welcome.

Natalia's insides clenched at the feel of Olivia's fingers against her. She adjusted her position slightly to give Olivia better access and the other woman got the message loud and clear as she pushed two fingers inside.

Natalia let out a sigh of appreciation at being filled by her wife. She closed her eyes and simply enjoyed the feeling, losing herself in it. "So good."

Her eyes opened as she felt Olivia scoot closer to her and began kissing along her collarbone, nipping at her hypersensitive skin. She braced her hands on Olivia's shoulders and swung one leg over the other woman's so she could straddle Olivia's thigh for better access. She wanted to give Olivia the same feeling she had. She wanted to feel it with her. Reaching down, she slipped her hand between Olivia's soaked thighs.

In moments both women shook as ecstasy overtook them. Olivia was pretty sure she screamed, but she was too far gone to care. Natalia curled into her side, her fingers playing across the sensitive skin of Olivia's stomach. As the younger woman drifted off to sleep, Olivia was sure she heard, "Waiting's for the birds."

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For the first time that week, Doris's schedule was clear for the remainder of the day. Given that it was only 11 a.m., that was a rarity and she was determined to take advantage of it before all hell broke loose again. Stretching her arms above her head, she closed her eyes and sighed.

"Hmmm. Now that's a sight I like to see; preferably on my bed though," Blake said suggestively as she approached Doris, startling the other woman in the process.

"What the -," Doris exclaimed as her eyes popped open. "Are you trying to give me a heart attack?"

Blake smirked. "No, I have better plans for you." The red head leaned against the desk. "But for now that will have to wait. Are you free for lunch?"

"You're in luck. My schedule for the rest of the day is pretty clear," Doris smiled, standing to move closer to Blake. "I need to drop some paperwork over to my law office, but other than that, we can head off." She grabbed a couple folders from her desk drawer and stuffed them into her briefcase before linking her arm around one of Blake's.

Heading down to Blake's car, "Everything all ready for Olivia and Natalia's wedding?"

"Pretty much. I got a slightly panicky email from Greg letting me know about the change of venue for the actual ceremony at the gazebo in the park." Doris smiled over at her partner.

When Olivia and Natalia decided on romance, they never spared any detail. "For a conference planner, he really doesn't do last minute stress well."

It took Blake a moment to realize that Greg would have needed to get municipal permission for a ceremony on public property, and who better to give that than the mayor. And when the mayor happened to be best friends with his boss, it was best for him to go the most expedient route.

"Oh, hey, I forgot to mention, my mom's flying in for the wedding. She said she wouldn't miss this for the world." Blake smiled. She and her mother had an odd relationship because of personality differences, but things had certainly improved in the past several years.

"Any chance she can look after Clarissa after the reception?" Doris asked with a smile.

"Shouldn't be a problem. Ross has the boys that evening as they've got no interest in attending the wedding."

"All right. Off we go. We will need to come back at some point and get my car," Doris said as she climbed in Blake's van. "Where did you want to go for lunch?"

"There's that new tapas place just up the road from The Beacon that I've been meaning to try." Blake smiled as she reached over and put her arm on Doris's arm.

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As was the custom every Tuesday after dinner, Hector Rivera took the garbage to the curb for pickup in the morning and checked the mail. He rifled through the mail paying little attention to what was there because Carmen always paid the bills for them. However, he stopped at the front door when he saw the familiar name of his oldest daughter. The envelope was thicker than usual and off-white, the calligraphy script giving the appearance of a wedding invitation.

Scoffing, Hector moved the envelope to the back and continued looking through the mail as he opened the door. He pulled out the sales ad for the local hardware store as he walked into the kitchen where Carmen was cleaning up from dinner.

Glancing up at her husband, Carmen smiled and asked her standard question, "Anything important?"

He hesitated and almost said something about the invitation from Natalia, but he remembered just in time that he wasn't supposed to speak of her anymore. Shaking his head, he said, "No. Just more bills."

Carmen wasn't fooled. She saw the strange look on his face and something in her gut twisted. She instinctively looked around for Rafe and caught a glimpse of him in the study sitting at the computer. Drying her hands on a towel, she walked over to the table where her husband had haphazardly tossed the mail and began to look through it.

Bill...bill...letter from the church...bill.

She froze when she saw the invitation. "Mija," she whispered. With reverence and a touch of sadness, Carmen traced the fancy script of Natalia's name.

Shaking her head to break the spell, she quickly found the letter opener and deftly opened the envelope. Inside was an invitation as she had expected, but also something else inside of it - a letter. She glanced at the invitation and realized it was for Natalia's wedding, "*For real, this time*" as the invitation jokingly stated, to Olivia. Leyla had told them what had happened with the first wedding. While Hector had sneered that it served Natalia right for breaking God's law, Carmen saw the sadness and loss written across her husband's face. He hardly believed his own words, but he was too stubborn to cross his own line in the sand and accept Natalia.

Carmen put down the invitation and picked up the letter, assuming it was from Leyla or maybe Natalia. She found her reading glasses and pulled out a chair. Sitting, she opened the letter and was surprised to see it was actually from Olivia.

*Mrs. Rivera,*

*I know you weren't expecting a letter from me, and Natalia doesn't know that I'm doing this. However, I wanted to ask two favors of you.*

*First of all, I would like to ask you to come to your daughter's wedding. As you know, because you raised her this way, Natalia is all about family. Family means everything to her and she gives her all to those she loves. I know she misses you and her father, but especially you. Not having my own mother around, I can speak to this personally. A daughter really needs her mother around when she gets married. She's never had that, and I know it would make her so happy to have you here. If you could convince Mr. Rivera to come as well, that would be a bonus.*

*Second, as with most wedding couples, Natalia and I will be taking a honeymoon after the wedding. I have something special planned, but I could use some help with the details...*

Carmen read Olivia's honeymoon plans and found that by the time she finished, she was smiling. She mumbled quietly to herself, "You got a good one, mija."

"Who did?" She looked over in surprise to see Rafe watching her. "What has you smiling so big?"

Carmen picked up the invitation and held up both it and the letter to Rafe, who took it with a hint of hesitation. "This," she said still smiling.

A few moments passed as he looked it over. When he didn't respond right away, Carmen couldn't stand it. "Well?"

Rafe scratched at the back of his head and handed the papers back to his grandmother. "Are you going?"

She looked at him incredulously. "The more important question is, are you?"

He shrugged and mumbled, "She didn't invite me."

Carmen slammed her hand down on the table. "Ay ay ay!" She stood and began going into full-on Latina mother rant with her hands flailing out in front of her in frustration. "Eres tan terco como ese burro de marido que tengo en el otro cuarto! No puedo creer que no vayas a hablar con tu propia madre o ir a su boda! Qué pasa contigo? Tu mama te quiere, y es así como le pagas? Estos muchachos hoy en día..."

She wandered off muttering in Spanish as Rafe stood there stunned. "I would ask her to repeat it in English, but I don't think I want to." Instead, he ran his fingers over the ink on the card, tracing his mother's name. With a sigh of determination, he turned to go find his abuela.

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Stretching out on the lounge chair in her hotel room at The Beacon, Holly Reade contemplated Olivia's marriage to Natalia. Only two years earlier, she'd sat in a similar room listening as Olivia told her about how Natalia had hurt her by leaving her, only to have her return but very pregnant. She recalled how heartbroken her friend had been, but she'd seen the love and resolve in Olivia's eyes that Natalia was the love of her life.

Hearing stories from Blake in the time she'd been away, Holly was thrilled when they'd tied the knot in New York, and when she'd heard that they were reaffirming their vows with family and friends at home in Springfield, she made sure to clear her schedule so that she could come back for the wedding.

She'd sent an email to Olivia earlier asking if she had time to meet her later that afternoon and now she was just waiting. She had a small present for the younger woman that she knew Olivia would love. It wasn't long before Olivia appeared, knocking at her door.

Giving the older woman a prolonged hug, Olivia smiled. "It's good to see you again, Holly." Separating, she waited for Holly to choose where she was going to sit, and Olivia sat opposite her on one of the chaise chairs. "So, how's life been treating you?"

"Not bad; a little of this and a bit of that," Holly said with a smile. "Can I get you some coffee? Or maybe a martini?" she added as she noted Olivia's nervousness.

"That bad, huh?" Olivia asked at the second offer. "Okay, so I'm a little nervous. When we got married in New York it was fun, surprising and a little nerve wracking at keeping it from Natalia until the time came." Olivia grinned. "This time it's with our friends and family...Natalia's family, if they come, that is. Our track record with her parents hasn't been the smoothest. Natalia's really missing Rafe; I know she would want him here for that. I wish we had some idea where he is."

"You'll be fine, Olivia. Once you see Natalia, things will work out just the way they should."

"We're getting married at the gazebo in the park," Olivia said with a big smile. Noticing the raised eyebrow from her friend, Olivia rolled her eyes. "I know. I'm a big sap when it comes to Natalia."

"Being in love suits you, Olivia. This is the happiest I've ever seen you." Holly stood and went over to her suitcase. "I have something for you." Removing a small jewelry box, she handed it over to Olivia. "A little unorthodox, but since when have either of us really followed any path but our own?"

Taking the box with reverence, she opened the lid to find a fine silver necklace with pewter pendant inlaid with an amethyst stone, and surrounding it were the birthstones of her three daughters, along with Natalia's and Rafe's. Olivia's voice caught in her throat, overwhelmed with emotion. "Holly, wow. This is beautiful. I don't..."

"Yes, you do deserve this. You have this life full of love that you've found with Natalia and your family." Holly took Olivia's hand, and smiled at her. "You deserve this."

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## Act II

Approaching the gazebo, Blake and Doris took in the decorations that Greg had hastily adorned around the wooden slats and the railings. Shaking her head, Blake headed toward the gazebo and tapped the anxious man on the shoulder.

"Need some help?" Blake asked, grinning at the other man's comic relief. "I've got it," she noted as she went to work fixing some of the bows and banting. "Go on with whatever else you need to do."



"Do we need to add wedding decorator to your list of jobs?" Doris joked as she leaned over and whispered into Blake's ear. "You know, Olivia joked about me being a wedding planner when I set things up for them in New York. Who knows, if this legal business goes awry, we could go into business as wedding planners for the LGBT community." On seeing an excited gleam in Blake's eyes, she stopped for a second. "Okay, that wasn't a definite plan."

"No, think about it. You could use your legal practice to get things set up for legal and medical power of attorney arrangements, and other legal agreements for the LGBT community." Blake grinned as a myriad of things crossed her mind. She was always up for



new challenges and opportunities. This would definitely be something in which she could wrap herself for some time to come.

With the gazebo decorations finished, Blake stood back and admired her handiwork. At Doris's press of hand against her side, they turned and headed over to the side of the park where other attendants had gathered. Over the course of the next half an hour, most of Olivia and Natalia's friends had arrived, taking their seats, leaving the first two rows for family and immediate friends. Doris had to grin, as four out of five of Olivia's ex-husbands were in attendance, three with their now spouses.

A blur of movement on one side caused Doris to turn to witness an excited Emma and Francesca arrive with Leyla and Ava. Doris smiled at the Spencer and Rivera family. Emma moved closer to Blake and Doris as Clarissa and Holly also joined in the small group gathered. As Josh headed up to the Gazebo to sort through his notes, Reva headed over to Blake and Doris's little group.

"Reva, come to join in on the fun?" Doris quipped with a grin, knowing the other woman's sometimes friendly, sometimes antagonistic relationship with Olivia.

"Oh, I'm just making sure it's all for real," Reva joked back before turning serious. "I'm glad Olivia's found her happiness. She deserves that."

"That she does," Holly responded. "Now, I think as the limousine is pulling up that Olivia and Natalia are here, we should take our seats."



Emma returned to where her sisters and aunt were standing as she waited for their mothers to emerge. Collective happy gasps rose from the guests as Olivia and Natalia walked up the aisle, side by side, arms interlinked, preceded by their daughters and sister. Reaching the gazebo, they stepped onto the platform and smiled at each other and out at their guests.

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Looking out over the large gathering of townsfolk, Josh lowered his hands indicating for everyone to be seated. Everyone took the cue except for Ava, Emma, and Leyla with Francesca by her side who continued to stand before him. "We gather together on this glorious day to celebrate the joining of Olivia Spencer and Natalia Rivera in holy matrimony."

Behind Josh, Natalia scrunched her eyebrows together. She thought they had agreed to something non-religious. She looked at Olivia with confusion mouthing silently to her, "Holy?"

With a knowing smirk and a coy shrug, Olivia feigned being completely innocent. Natalia wasn't fooled. She bumped the older woman with her elbow not believing it for a moment. She leaned over slightly, whispering to her love, "You amaze me."

"I hope to...always," Olivia whispered back before tuning back in to Josh's words.

Josh glanced at the younger women as they stood nearby ready to give their approval in unison. "Who gives these women in marriage?"

"We do!"

The loud voices from the rear of the gathering made Olivia and Natalia look up in surprise, searching quickly for the source. When Natalia's eyes landed on the familiar, smiling faces of her son and her mother, she gasped.

Rafe smiled, glancing at his grandmother seated beside him, before speaking loud enough for the crowd to hear him, "I couldn't miss your wedding, Ma."

Natalia couldn't stop the happy tears as they burst through. She lifted the train of her dress and ran down the three steps of the gazebo toward her son. She noticed her mother stand up as Rafe remained seated and the surprised crowd parted to make way for her. She stopped short when she saw the wheelchair beneath her son.

More tears burst forth as she shook her head in shock, "No," she mumbled as the tips of her fingers quivered over her top lip. "Oh, Raphael. Mijo."

He pushed his chair forward with his hands. "I know, Ma, but I'm okay. No sadness today, okay?"

She nodded quickly but silently before stepping forward to hug him as best she could with the chair in the way. Natalia peppered him with kisses and ran her fingers in the thick hair that was growing back from his military buzz cut. "I'm just so glad you're alive. So glad. I was so worried."

"Me too, Ma," he whispered close to her ear as she held on tight. "I came here to do something though."

Natalia could feel him trying to pull back and she stepped away to give him room. She watched as Rafe motioned to someone nearby and a set of braces were handed to him. Murmurs surrounded them as it became apparent what he was going to attempt.

Pulling himself up and into position after a little struggle, Rafe smiled charmingly at his mother. "Mind if I walk you down the aisle?"

With a watery smile, Natalia smoothed his uniform then touched his face with the palm of her hand. She kissed his cheek and slipped her arm through his. "I would be honored," she said, smiling up at the handsome young man that still looked like her little boy. Turning, Natalia wiped at her eyes, careful not to smudge her eyeliner, and walked down the aisle with her son on her arm to marry the woman she loves.

As Natalia passed Olivia, who had followed her out of the gazebo, she noticed her wife's reddened face and something else she couldn't place. It almost looked like gratefulness. She'd have to remember to ask her about that later. She brushed her hand over Olivia's as she continued to make her way back to the gazebo. Behind her, she heard hushed voices. Turning she saw Olivia and her mother sharing a hug before Olivia offered her arm to the older woman.

With a smile of joy, Natalia ascended the steps to stand before Josh again, while Rafe took a chair at the end of the front row. Turning to the side, she watched as Olivia guided Natalia's mother to a newly vacated chair in the front row next to Rafe, then climbed the stairs to stand in front of her again.

"What did my mother say to you?" Natalia whispered as the crowd settled back down for the ceremony.

Olivia shrugged dismissively and took her hands again as they were before Rafe and Carmen had arrived. "She just thanked me."

"For what?" Natalia furrowed her brows together.

Olivia shook her head, not really knowing what to say. She had hoped someone from Natalia's family would come, but she had never dreamed it would be this wonderful of a surprise. Today, numerous prayers were answered. If life kept up like this, Olivia may just have to start believing in Natalia's God after all.

When Olivia didn't answer, Natalia knew her wife had a part in it. She smiled in complete adoration of this amazing woman. "You had something to do with this."

Seriously, Olivia looked up at her. "No. Something bigger was definitely at work here."

A look of understanding passed between them. Natalia squeezed Olivia's hands and took a shaky breath, feeling suddenly nervous. "Ready?"

"A million times over," Olivia whispered in reverence as she looped Natalia's arm through her own and turned them in Josh's direction.

Amazed at the events that had transpired, Josh could do little but acknowledge the obvious. "Blessings. That's what today is all about. An abundance of hope and love that is so overflowing that it brings joy to those around us. That, my friends, is what we have here today in this joining of Olivia and Natalia...a blessing."

Josh looked out over the gathering of friends and family, people he had known all his life. Some he had loved. Some he had fought. All he shared a special bond with, especially the two women standing behind him. With a happy sigh, he launched into the ceremony.

"Dearest friends and family, we are gathered here today before our Creator to witness the joining in holy matrimony of Olivia Spencer and Natalia Rivera." Josh smiled out at the crowd before continuing the formalities, "If any person can show just cause, why these women may not be joined together, let them speak now, or forever hold their peace."

When silence greeted his request, he turned to Olivia and Natalia and said seriously, "I require and charge you both, as you will answer to God, that if either of you know any impediment, why you may not be joined together, you now confess it."

Natalia looked to Olivia and smiled as she held back the tears that threatened to fall. She just knew she was going to look like a raccoon from the tears by the end of the ceremony. She had never been so happy as she was in this moment. She turned back to Josh. "Just get on with it, okay? I'm ready to kiss her."

Everyone in hearing distance chuckled. Josh raised his hands. "Hey, who am I to get in the way of two women kissing?"

"Joshua," Olivia warned but there was still a tinge of joking in her voice.

"Just sayin'." He couldn't help but smirk before continuing on, "The celebration of marriage has been a part of human society since the beginning of time as we know it. All cultures have their own unique views and ways of celebrating committed love. The Druids, for instance, supported and celebrated the union of any two people who felt drawn to and compatible with each other. It was a freely made choice that was as much a private promise as a public commitment. Long before European settlers tainted Native American beliefs, individuals who felt drawn to both their feminine and masculine spirits, and the unions of those individuals to each other, were not only held in high esteem in the community but

were regarded as uniquely blessed by their Creator." Josh paused as he looked at the two women cheating glances at each other.

Smiling, Josh changed course slightly. "Our more current marriage traditions, however, as you are both aware, have a strong Biblical basis, but they are no less relevant to the union we're witnessing today. Of all the exhortations that Jesus gave His followers, the most important above all others was to love our brother as we love ourselves. Love is all that truly matters. True love frees us all from the shackles of sin. In fact, Corinthians 13 tells us plainly that if don't have love, we don't have anything. We can have all of the wealth in the world," Josh tilted his head in acknowledgement of Olivia's status, "but without love we have nothing. We can have faith that moves mountains," he smirked at Natalia, "but without love we have nothing."

Natalia couldn't help but smile with joy through her tears. She never thought she'd be able to stand before Olivia, their family, and even God having Scripture spoken as an exultation of their love. This was a dream come true and so much more than she ever hoped for.

From around the two women, the voices of their family spoke.

"Love is patient and kind," Emma started, her voice catching slightly.

"It is not envious or jealous," Ava added as a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Love is not proud or seek its own reward," Leyla smiled proudly at her sister. She then nudged the toddler beside her. "Remember what we practiced?"

Francesca piped up with a bright smile, "Oh yeah! Love never fails!"

The crowd chuckled at the absolute adorableness of the little girl as her dark ringlets bounced around her face. Olivia and Natalia were overwhelmed by the surprise that neither of them knew about and brushed away their tears carefully.

"Olivia and Natalia," Josh spoke, bringing their attention back to him, "this town...these people have watched your love bloom and grow right before their, our, very eyes. While some of us were surprised by it, most of us expected nothing less. You're two halves of a whole, perfectly complimentary, beautifully and wonderfully made by God and destined for the other. While my pearls of wisdom are not in a book somewhere, I can speak to what I have seen between you two and what I know. Olivia, my friend, your heart was so battered and broken from a lifetime of hurt and neglect that you needed a new one. Thank goodness

that Natalia was there for she had so much love to give. There was enough to fill up all of your empty spaces, Olivia. So much that it's flowed over into your family. You two exemplify what we all seek - faith, hope, and love. But, the greatest of these is love."

With a big sigh, Josh leaned back and smiled jokingly. "Well, enough of that, you ladies ready to get on with the vows and such."

Olivia rolled her eyes. She knew her ex-husband could never stay serious for long. "Yes!"

"Wonderful! I believe you two have some things you want to say first." Josh stepped aside.

Olivia took a long, shaky breath before looking up at adoring brown eyes. The words she'd written and managed to memorize suddenly vaporized. A rush of panic hit her with such force that she felt lightheaded. Natalia must have noticed something was wrong, since Olivia was rarely speechless, because she squeezed her hands slightly, immediately bringing Olivia back to the present.

"You...are a miracle, Natalia," Olivia suddenly spoke. "My miracle. I never believed in anything greater than what I could create myself, with money or power. I thought that was all I needed, but you changed all of that. At the moment I was ready to give up. After I had exhausted all of my hopes and dreams, tried every tactic of self-preservation, and failed miserably, you were there. Like an angel sent from heaven, just for me. Why me I'll never understand, but I am blessed every moment of every day that God, or whomever, grants me to have with you and our family. Your love and your faith saved me, and I want to cherish this life and love I've been given for as long as I'm breathing. I love you, Natalia Rivera. Forever."

Natalia bit her bottom lip to stop new tears from falling. "Wow! I think Charming should be your middle name." It wasn't what she intended to say, but she needed a moment of levity to keep from blubbering like a love sick fool.

Recognizing the attempt for what it was, Olivia rolled her eyes. "Welllllll," she drawled out before pretending to buff and shine her nails in a move of cool intention.

A light chuckle surrounded them as Natalia shook her head and settled in to say her vows. "Yes, Olivia, you are charming and beautiful and so incredibly smart. You're so much more than that though. In spite of the walls you put up around yourself, I saw past the anger, fear, and pain. Underneath the power suits and money is a beautiful soul and a tender heart. I saw it in the way you loved your children and in the selfless way you loved me. I saw your

soul open and bare in this very gazebo, spilling your...our secrets to the cold, winter air. You were willing to break your own heart to save mine, and I knew in that moment that I could never be without you. Soulmates always find each other, and I know you're mine. I want to not only travel with you in this life together, but the one beyond as well. For today and every day afterward, for all eternity, I am bound to you, my love."

A soft silence settled around them as the moment stretched out, shimmering green eyes locked on their brown companions.

Josh joked as he stepped back up to stand before them again. "Well, I don't know how I can follow that! Oh yeah, I know! Emma, may I have the hand fasting cord?" Josh gestured toward the young girl who reverently handed over a long cord made from twined ribbons.

He held it up where it could be seen above his head by the crowd. "This cord represents an ancient Celtic tradition in the marriage rites called Hand Fasting. This cord was lovingly made by Olivia and Natalia's family. Emma, Ava, Leyla, and Francesca chose a ribbon that they felt represented Olivia and Natalia's love and their family. Leyla, as representative of the Rivera family, told me earlier that she had added an extra ribbon for her nephew Rafe. So, five cords of love have been joined together in honor of this marriage, to represent the joining of their families and their hearts."

Josh lowered his hands and spoke to the two women, "Olivia and Natalia, will you face each other and join hands?"

With a shaky breath, Olivia turned to fully face Natalia. Tears streaked the brunette's face and Olivia reached up quickly to brush the wetness away. "Are you okay?"

Natalia smiled and shook her head a little, not in negation but to clear her head. "I'm just so happy. You make me so happy."

Olivia brushed her fingertips over Natalia's cheek before dropping it back down to take her hand. "That's my job," she said with a wink.

As Josh draped the cord over their joined hands, he spoke, "Olivia Spencer, will you take Natalia Rivera to be your wedded wife to live together in holy matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor her, and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only to her, so long as you both will live?"



Olivia could feel her whole body shake as the enormity of the moment took hold. While their marriage was already legal, and she had taken great lengths to make their wedding in New York amazing, it didn't even compare to how this made her feel. It was completely different, and Olivia knew now, more than ever before, that their marriage was about so much more than a piece of paper. Nothing, no legal document, no paper, no words could contain this feeling. It was spiritual.

With a reverence that came from deep in her soul, Olivia whispered her promise to the only person that mattered in that moment, "I do."

Natalia closed her eyes as new but happy tears dripped past her eyelashes. She squeezed Olivia's hand as she opened her eyes again, watching as Josh wound one end of the cord underneath their hands and drape it over the top.

Looking up at the brunette with a tender smile, Josh continued the vows, "Natalia Rivera, will you take Olivia Spencer to be your wedded wife to live together in holy matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor her, and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only to her, so long as you both will live?"

Natalia squeezed Olivia's hands emphasizing her words through action. She had waiting for this moment for so long, and she wanted to stretch it out. But waiting and delaying with Olivia was never a good thing. "I do." Then she whispered for only Olivia to hear, "With all of my heart and soul."



Josh wrapped the other end of the cord over the top of their joined hands so that one end rested across the other. He placed his hand on top of the two ends. "As you two have already

exchanged rings and have been legally joined in marriage, you are now joined spiritually with each other, with your families, and with your community. May this union that has been brought together by a force greater than ourselves never be torn apart in this life or the next."

He removed his hand and tied the ends of the cord together. "I now pronounce you wife and wife." He stepped back with a smile. "You may now kiss your bride."

"Finally," Olivia breathed out with relief. She pulled Natalia to her by their joined hands and leaned in to kiss her. She intended the kiss to be chaste, but she lingered a little too long. Eventually, Natalia opened her mouth slightly and gently tugged on Olivia's bottom lip, making her moan. Knowing they had to stop, Olivia pulled away reluctantly, but they stayed connected as they held hands and rested their foreheads together. "I love you so much, Natalia."

"And I love you," Natalia whispered and gave Olivia a quick kiss before standing up straight.

Josh untied the cord, loosening their hands, before bringing the ends back together and handing it to Olivia. "Congratulations."

She lifted her free hand to brush his cheek. "Thank you."

Turning to the crowd, Josh announced, "May I present Mrs. and Mrs. Olivia and Natalia Spencer-Rivera."

Friends and family rose to their feet clapping as Olivia and Natalia wrapped their arms around each other, smiling at everyone.

Olivia looked down at her wife. "Ready, Mrs. Spencer-Rivera?"

Natalia couldn't help it. She giggled happily and pulled Olivia into another kiss. "I'm ready to go anywhere with you, querida."

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### **Act III**

The front lawn in front of the farmhouse had been laid out with long tables, covered in white tablecloths and anchored by flower bowls. The light warm breeze ruffled the edges of the cloths but did not disrupt them. A tent had been set up by the Beacon catering staff to

serve the guests, and the last of the decorations were being applied by the crew just as the first cars began to arrive following the ceremony.

Arriving first, Olivia and Natalia rushed into the house to ostensibly check to make sure everything was going according to plan, but Natalia's plans were temporarily postponed as Olivia drew her into the living room and kissed her. The passionate kiss, however, was interrupted as one of the catering crew entered the room, blushing at the two women's actions. In his attempt to back out quietly, he nearly tripped over the coffee table, causing the glasses on the tray in his hand to fall to the floor and break.

"Oh, God, I'm sorry," the young man blustered, seeing the death glare coming from his boss. "I'll just go get something to clean this up." Hastily, the young man retreated to the kitchen.

"Olivia, that was bad," Natalia looked up at her wife, noting the glare.

"What?" Olivia mock pouted. "He's in our house. We just got married. We should be allowed to make out wherever we want in here."

"Really? Did you have to scare him?" Natalia started to pull away from Olivia to head into the kitchen, but she leaned in to place a quick kiss on her wife's lips. "Be good. We can't traumatize all the catering staff before they feed the guests."

"You're no fun," Olivia said, sticking out her tongue.

"You do that again, and I'll show you what kind of fun I can be." Natalia grinned wickedly, then added a quick, "later," as she disappeared into the kitchen to talk to the young man.

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In the gathering crowd on the lawn, groups of Springfield's citizens gathered in discussions as the wet bar tent started serving the guests. At the forefront of the lawn, Doris noted a familiar car pull up. Dressed in a smart black pant suit and red dress shirt and blazer, Detective Anna Li approached Doris and Blake's group.

"Hey, Anna. It's time?" Doris asked, noting the detective's determined expression.

"Time?" Blake asked, feeling slightly off that she was missing something about a conversation.

"I'm going to try to find my father. See if I can bring him back here to face justice for the murder of Edmund Winslow, among others. I got a few leads from Jeffrey and Mallett to go after with their Interpol connections."

"Good luck with that. I'm not sorry the bastard is dead; for real this time," Blake said with disgust.

"Thanks, Blake." Anna sighed. "Doris, can I speak with you alone for a few minutes? I need to sort some paperwork."

"Sure. Let's go into the house." Doris turned to Blake and let her know she'd be back shortly before following the detective up the lawn to the house.

Noting the nervous apprehension in her daughter's face, Holly placed a hand on Blake's arm. "So, what's that look about?"

Burying her face into Holly's shoulder, Blake turned to wrap her arms around her mother in a hug. "It's a long story."

"I've got time," Holly said comfortingly.

Blake pulled back and then led her mother over to some chairs, separate from others. "She's an ex-girlfriend of Doris's. When everything was going to hell in a handbasket when Ross returned and I didn't know which way was up, I pushed Doris away, and I think she may have been interested in getting back with Anna." She let out a long sigh. "God knows I wouldn't have blamed her. I can't say that I was the most understanding person at the time."

Holly placed her hand over her daughter's. "Doris is with you. And from what I can tell seeing you two together, that is where she wants to be. Don't overanalyze things. Take it for what it is, and appreciate it every day. But don't suffocate it."

Blake smiled up at Holly, looking at her through wet eyes. "How did you get so wise?"

"I've had my share of relationships -- some good, some bad, like most people." Holly shrugged. "I've just learned to be happy with what I have with life and love, and not to give a damn about what others think about me. People are going to think what they're going to think. That's their problem."

"Thanks, Mom."

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Directing Anna into Olivia's home office, Doris initially waited for the other woman to start talking. Despite the initial self-assuredness that Anna had displayed out in the lawn full of guests, Doris noted some doubt plaguing the other woman in the privacy of the office.

"Anna?" Doris asked. "What's wrong?"

"Am I doing the right thing, Doris?" Anna sighed. She leaned forward, resting her hands on the back of the leather chair.

Unused to seeing uncertainty in her friend, Doris asked, "So, what's brought this on then?"

"I don't know. I mean, I do know that bringing him to justice for Edmund and for a whole lot of his other crimes is long over-due. I've been fighting against him and his ideals for most of my life. We've got enough evidence to get him for Edmund's murder. I just wish he could be punished for the rest." Anna lowered her head. "Maybe I'm just too close to the situation to be impartial; he is my father."

"A father who's committed pretty damned despicable crimes, Anna. Yes, he is your father, and on some level you do love him. I get that." Doris stepped closer to her friend and lifted her hand under Anna's chin to raise the other woman to face her. "What does your gut tell you?"

"I want justice. For all of his victims, but especially for Olivia. We can't prosecute him for his part in the aftermath of her rape but there will be some sense of justice."

Doris nodded and after a moment asked, "What can I do?"

Taking a set of legal documents out of the inside of her blazer pocket, Anna handed them over to Doris. "First, this is an updated copy of my Last Will & Testament. Just in case something happens to me, I want this on record." Anna noted Doris's worry. "Doris, I don't know where this investigation will take me. I have a few locations where he might be according to Interpol. But if he moves, he's not going to be flying commercial. Private jets have some official flight paths they need to file, but passenger lists can be faked. Since he's probably using faked passports, this might be more futile, but I need to try."

"Okay," Doris said solemnly. "I'll notarize and file it in my office safe," sighing heavily as she placed the legal document in her purse. "What else?"

"I have my files with regards to my father secured on my computer, but I also have full backups on discs." Pulling a couple cases of DVD discs from her front blazer pocket, she handed them to Doris. "I'm giving them to you to put with the will. Just in case. I don't trust that my father won't try to have someone try to find them. He's already broken into my apartment twice. I can't take the chance that he won't try to destroy evidence." Anna stopped a moment. "Olivia also has a copy." At Doris's glance, Anna smirked. "One can never be too careful when my father's involved."

"Very true." Doris sighed. Sensing the conversation was coming to an end, she asked, "When do you take off?"

"In about two hours. Flight to New York, then London, then Jakarta. I have a contact there that has some more information for me. I'll keep in touch."

"I shouldn't keep you then," Doris said with a wan smile. "Be careful, Anna."

"I will do my best." Standing up to her full height, which was still shorter than Doris, Anna leaned in and kissed the other woman. "I never really stopped loving you." She placed a hand on Doris's cheek. "Take care."

Anna walked out the office door, leaving a stunned Doris in her wake.

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"Did you see Natalia's face when she realized it was Rafe?" Emma laughed, tugging her light blue blouse down and tucking it into her khakis. "It was priceless."

Olivia glanced over from where she was applying fresh makeup in the mirror in Emma's room as she tried to hurry the girl along. Francesca had already been changed and disappeared with Leyla back outside, leaving just her and her mom to finish up. It would certainly be a more comfortable way to spend the afternoon.

"Yes, it definitely was, Jellybean." Olivia's cell phone chimed and she paused in the reapplying of eye shadow and glanced into the mirror at Emma. "Is that Natalia?"

"Yeah," Emma grabbed the BlackBerry from her bed spread. "It says 'Talking to Rafe and no it's not later yet.'" Emma frowned, handing the cell phone over to her mom. "Whatever that means." Olivia just smirked, and double-checked that her lipstick was no longer smeared.

"Never you mind," Olivia straightened and stood next to Emma, mother and daughter looked into the mirror together. Similar eyes and slope to the nose, long gangly arms and a figure just starting to bloom, Olivia couldn't deny that her daughter was looking more and more like her every day. Her gaze landed on Emma's old bear, still standing guard on her bookshelf. She turned to Emma and tucked a blonde strand back behind an ear, marveling not for the first time at how quickly her baby was growing up. "We look amazing as usual! Time to get back to the party, don't you think?"

Emma nodded and then paused, glancing up at her mother, her face suddenly serious.

"Before we go, Mom, I just wanted to say thanks," Emma smiled shyly all of a sudden at Olivia's confused face, and shrugged her shoulder. "For a long time it seemed like we were just the two of us against the world. And now, well, you found us a home and someone who loves us both and we have this big family around us. I couldn't have wished for anything better." She wrapped her arms around Olivia's waist and held on tight. "I'm so happy for you and Ma."

"Oh, sweetie," Olivia dropped a soft kiss to her daughter's head and sniffed. "I love you so much. I'm happy for all of us. We really are one big family now." Emma squeezed her tighter and then leaned back to grin up at her. Outside her bedroom window, they could hear the band start to play, the music drifting up on the warm breeze.

"Come on, the party is starting! You're slowing me down!" Emma teased and pulled away, opening the door for her mother. Olivia shook her head and headed out of the bedroom.

Entering back into the living room of the farmhouse, Anna turned as Olivia and Emma came down the stairs, noticing that the girl had changed into more comfortable clothes for the rest of the festivities.

"Anna! You came! I didn't see you at the wedding," Emma rattled off as she approached the detective at something resembling mach speed. Crushing into the woman, she wrapped her arms around her.

"I got there late, but in time to see your mommies say, 'I do,'" Anna grinned down at the girl then up at Olivia. "Congratulations, Olivia. You must be over the moon."

"Just glad it came and that we all survived." Olivia grinned and held up crossed fingers, the meaning clear that the day wasn't over yet.

Anna nodded then pulled back from Emma's hug. "Hey, Emma, I need to tell you something, okay?"

"Is something wrong?" Emma asked, worried.

Guiding the girl over to the couch, Anna sat her down then she sat beside the girl. "In a way, yes. You know that my father did bad things to people, right?" Anna started and waited for Emma to acknowledge her. "Well, I need to go to find him. But I don't know where he is right now?"

"Can't other police find him?" Emma questioned. She was tired of people leaving her and Anna had been helping her deal with a bunch of stuff she couldn't tell her moms. "Maybe. They'll be helping me. But I know some things about my father that they don't that might help me find him. It's kind of hard to explain."

"Like intuition?" Emma asked, her head quirked to the side.

"Yes, a bit like that."

Anna smiled.

Emma sighed and pulled her bottom lip in with her upper teeth. Looking up at the detective, she asked, "How long will you be gone?"

"I don't know right now." Anna saw the girl's shoulders deflate and her eyes sadden and she thought of something. "I have an idea though," she said to try to brighten Emma's spirits. "What if every place I visit to find out information, I send you a postcard? You can put them on that map you have in your bedroom."

"Really? Can I send you letters?" Emma asked hopefully. If that was possible, she could still tell the detective things that bothered her.

"Not physical letters, but I'll send your mom an email with contact information. You can send me emails. Okay?"

Emma nodded. She was still unhappy that the detective was leaving, but at least there was still going to be some contact. "Do you have to go now?"



"I do." Anna gave the girl a big hug and whispered into her ear. "You take care of your moms for me. Make sure they're safe and happy." Standing, Anna turned to Olivia.

"You sure about this?" Olivia asked as she took Anna's hand.

"As sure as I'll ever be," Anna replied. "Look, I've given Doris all the pertinent documents to keep safe, and I've left a copy on your desk in the office here. And as I said to Emma, I'll give you a contact email and phone number to use when I get to London."

"Be careful, Anna." Olivia drew Anna into a hug. "Have a safe trip."

"Thanks. Okay, I've got to go. Talk to you gals soon. Give Natalia a hug for me, will you?" Anna said as she turned towards the front door.

"Will do." Olivia moved closer to her daughter and gave the girl a hug, knowing how Emma had developed a bond with the detective and how much the girl was going to miss the other woman. As the door clicked shut behind Anna, she dropped a soft kiss to Emma's head.

"I guess we have a bigger family than we realized, huh Bean?" Olivia felt the girl nod under her chin and together they quietly made their way outside.

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Ava stepped out of the shade of the tent where the bar was set up with her white wine in hand and checked out the proceedings. Even though he had been a pain in the ass about the whole thing, Greg had truly out done himself this time.

The tables were set immaculately, with white gauze wrapped around everything. A small stage had been set up to the side, where a band was setting up and doing a short sound check. An area had been cleared as a dance floor for later. Even after Olivia and Natalia left for their flight, the guests were more than welcome to stay and celebrate into the night.

Ava took a sip of her wine and sighed. She was happy for her mother, finally seeming to find happiness at long last. Had it only taken how many marriages and a string of men for her to figure out what she truly wanted? Ava sighed again, unsure. She could only hope that in time she would figure out what she truly wanted someday too.

Leyla's laughter drifted across the yard on the breeze over the growing chatter of the guests assembling. She smiled in response, the warmth of it washing over her. It made her wish

she could make the other girl do that more often. Ava noticed that Leyla's whole face lit up when she laughed, her dark hair flowing around her shoulders with a life of its own. Her dress clung to her in all the right places, its hem stopping above the knee, exposing well muscled legs beneath.

Their eyes met for a moment across the lawn, before Leyla nodded and turned back to continue her conversation with Josh. Ava let out a slow breath and then took a deep swallow of her cool drink. She nearly jumped out of her skin as a voice spoke beside her.

"So beautiful, si?" Carmen said, her dark brown eyes seeming to soften as she glanced up at the willowy young woman.

"Oh, Mrs. Rivera, I-I didn't see you standing there," Ava tore her gaze away from Leyla's fine form and met the knowing eyes of the older woman. She swallowed hard and smiled. "Uh, yes, everything looks absolutely stunning."

"Yes, the decorations are pretty, but I don't think that is what we are talking about here, is it?" Carmen tilted her head and fixed the other woman with a hard stare, an awkward silence stretched out between them. She noticed Ava's eyebrows shoot up, almost off her forehead before taking another quick gulp of her white wine. Carmen's hand slid across her forearm giving the taller woman a reassuring squeeze. "I think perhaps the apple doesn't fall so far from the tree, no?"

"Uh...well..." Ava's mouth gaped open slightly as she did a very passable imitation of a fish out of water. She was so not ready to talk about this, especially with Leyla's mother!

"It is still soon, I see," Carmen's eyes twinkled with mirth, as she gently patted the young woman's arm. "Your secret is safe with me."

"Uh...I..." Ava blinked and shifted, not wanting to deny that she was having these feelings and yet Carmen was not who she ever expected to have this conversation with. She averted her gaze and bit her lower lip.

Carmen just chuckled softly at the girl's discomfort. Ah, youth was wasted on the young.

"My Leyla, she is young and impetuous, still rough around the edges and stubborn like her father, And blessed with his temper too," Carmen leaned a little closer. "But beneath the bluster is a good soul, with a deep passion for life. It is a gift to see behind the mask, something that they share with only a chosen few, but when they open up and show you

what is inside..." The old woman shook her head, words not able to truly express it, but the emotion shone from her eyes. A deep abiding love reflected there, a love that had lasted a lifetime.

It was the same look Olivia had when she spoke about Natalia.

Ava's gaze lifted and she turned in time to see Leyla laughing and talking with some friends from work now. Their eyes met and locked and she felt like she could see forever.

"It is worth it my dear, when you are ready. Trust me." Carmen squeezed her arm and smiled as Ava looked back at her again, mouth still opening and closing in surprise. She winked at Ava and then wandered out to find her eldest daughter. Matchmaking was always fun at a wedding, even if this had been a little different than what she was used to.

Ava blinked after the old woman, and turned to find the younger Rivera daughter headed her way, a fresh glass of white wine in her hand.

"Hey, was that my mom you were talking to?" Leyla asked, carefully handing over the wineglass, her voice low and intimate. "She didn't say something freaky to you did she? You looked a little shell shocked there for a bit."

Ava stared at Leyla for a moment. She really did have the most gorgeous brown eyes.

"Uh...she actually gave me some really good advice," Ava said, finally finding her voice. Deep inside something seemed to shift into place. Maybe she was finally figuring out what she wanted after all.

"Oookay..." Leyla frowned and cocked her head. Ava's hand slid down along her arm, fingertips tickling across her wrist until finally their fingers tangled together. Ava leaned in closer, their eyes locking and holding. "Remind me to tell you about it some day," Ava grinned and tugged her hand, pulling her along beside her. "Right now though, we need to find Emma and work on our family toast."

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"...and I have physiotherapy now three times a week," Rafe said, taking a pull from a bottle of beer and glancing out over the familiar fields. It was funny, before shipping out the farmhouse had never really felt like home. Now though, there was nowhere else he would rather be.

Natalia stared at her son, still not quite believing that he was here, battered and torn, but alive and at her wedding. She reached out and swatted him hard on the shoulder.

"Ow, hey Ma!" Rafe ducked and rubbed his shoulder. "What was that for?"

"Don't ever do that to me again," Natalia frowned at her son, her heart aching for all he had been through without her there to help him. Tears welled and threatened to fall and she choked out her words. "Promise me, Rafe. Never again..."

"I'm sorry, Ma," Rafe swallowed hard and pulled her into his strong arms. "I didn't want you to worry about me, and then as I started to improve, I don't know..." Rafe shrugged, his own tears welling. "I just couldn't...it's hard to explain."

"I told you to call her, mijó," Carmen's warm voice cut through the heavy tension hanging in the air as she came up and interrupted the intense conversation. "But you are stubborn." Her fingers cupped his face and she shook her head. "It seems to be a Rivera curse."

"Tell me about it," Natalia smiled, wiping the tears from her eyes. "I'm so glad you were able to come, that both of you could make it to the wedding. I can't tell you how much it means to me."

"That Olivia, she's a keeper," Carmen said, wiping a tear from her own eye. "I tried to get Hector and Leo to come, but you know what they are like. I thought that Hector might change his mind at the last minute, but..." Carmen shrugged, the old irritation at her husband rising deep inside. The old goat had stubbornly refused to even acknowledge she was leaving, staring at the television set as she quietly left. There were days that she didn't know what she would do with that man.

"And Leo was just being a jerk, like usual" Rafe grumbled under his breath, as he slowly sank back down into his wheelchair. Enough standing for a bit, between the heavy emotions and the strain of staying upright, he was worn down. He shrank as both his mother and grandmother turned to glare at him with identical looks of irritation. It was kind of eerie and definitely terrifying.

"Rafe!" Natalia admonished with a frown. True though his words may be, she would not let him disrespect his elders that way.

"Mijo!" Carmen said at the same time, frowning at her grandson's tone. At the same time she was oddly pleased with Natalia's defence of Leo. She turned to Natalia She could reassure Natalia though not to give up on him.

"Raphael Augustine Rivera, you are in such trouble, mister!" A familiar voice came from the small group of guests mingling nearby. Natalia and Carmen crossed their arms and exchanged knowing looks as Rafe turned to see who had called his name.

"Ashlee?" Rafe's eyes widened as Ashlee Wolfe emerged, definitely not happy with him. He glanced up at his mother and mouthed 'help' but she only grinned back at him and shook her head.

"Oh, I think you have some more explaining to do, son." Natalia teased, turning his chair towards the upset girl and patting his shoulder. "Good luck with that."

"You are such an asshole," Ashlee grumbled and sat down on a chair next to him and swatted his shoulder.

"Ow! Why do people keep doing that?" Rafe rubbed his shoulder before he was enveloped in a huge hug from the girl.

Natalia chuckled and slipped her arm into Carmen's and together they moved away from the young couple, and slowly headed to where Jonathan was sitting and playing with Francesca and his daughter.

"You know, your Papa and Leo, they will come around. They just need some more time..." Carmen sighed softly. "And I'm sorry I took so long to see what truly matters. I spoke with Father Ramirez at my church, and he was very good at helping me understand. And Rafe has helped as well. He said he had a hard time at first too, but now he speaks so highly of your Olivia." She placed her hand over Natalia's, their eyes meeting and holding, so much left unsaid, the pain pulsing beneath the surface, and yet hope was there too. "I just want you to be happy, mija."

"I am, Mama. I am." Natalia said, wiping a tear from her eye. "I can be patient, Olivia and I are not going anywhere. Leo and Papa know where to find us. And you're here now, and going forward that's what we need to focus on," Natalia said softly. Neither woman could change the past, but the future was a lot brighter than it had been. She smiled, her soul feeling lighter in the afternoon sunshine. "Now come meet some of your new family."

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The afternoon seemed to fly by as guests mingled and greeted each other. The sun slowly began its long trip towards the horizon as servers went around with large trays of food and fresh drinks. Olivia stood on a small rise by the side of the house, overlooking the crowd and glanced around, trying to take it all in. All of Springfield seemed to be in their yard and it was as if the farmhouse was the center of their little world for this brief shining moment.

Philip and Beth sat laughing with Rick and Mindy, as if the world had never changed since they had been teenagers growing up together. Lillian and Buzz played with Francesca, the girl standing on Buzz's good dress shoes as he held her wee hands high and tried to teach her how to dance on the small makeshift dance floor. Sister Anne and Brooke Tremain were in some intense discussion if the waving of Brooke's hands were any indication. Beside her was Callie Jennings, Emma's old teacher who was laughing and smiling at whatever Brooke said. Matt Reardon was chatting with Remy, who was holding his squirming son, and Christina. Chief Thorne stood with his arms crossed and a beer in hand, clearly talking shop with Mallett, while poor Dinah looked extremely bored. She perked up and smiled as she noticed Olivia and waved hello. Olivia smiled back.

So many lives intermingled with each other. The threads were all woven together today, a tapestry of their special day. Olivia felt truly blessed.

Suddenly small white twinkle lights blinked to life, hidden within the miles of white gauzy material Greg had draped everywhere. It was if a fairyland had come to life. Servers began to busily light tea lights next to the bowls of red gerbera daisies and babies breath found on the tables.

It was beautiful.

"There you are," Strong arms slid around her waist, clasping together over her stomach. The scent of vanilla and something all Natalia enveloped her, and Olivia smiled.

"Here I am," She leaned back into Natalia's embrace, before slowly turning to find warm dark eyes full of love watching her. She didn't even realize she was dipping her head to steal a kiss until she was scant inches away. "This looks like later to me..."

"Oh, really?" Natalia teased, her eyes flicking down to stare at Olivia's mouth. The very air around them seemed to still in anticipation, as Olivia drew slowly nearer and she waited breathlessly for the touch of Natalia's sweet lips on hers.

Instead though, a round of giggles and a discreet cough came from somewhere behind them, breaking the mood. Olivia growled in annoyance, before bumping her forehead to Natalia's, feeling the warm skin press against her own with an accompanying frustrated sigh. It was just like old times, they just needed Frank Cooper to come bursting in and ask Natalia for a date for it to be complete.

Olivia didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Hey, save it for the honeymoon," Leyla's teasing voice broke through the haze and Olivia's eyes blinked open. The disappointment of being interrupted didn't last long as she glanced over to see the biggest grins on the two young women standing there watching them. She lifted her eyebrow and glared at them, but that only produced more giggles.

"Nice try, Mom. We were wondering where you two had disappeared," Ava said softly, one hand resting in the small of Leyla's back. "Clearly there was no need to worry."

"We just needed to...talk." Olivia glanced back at Natalia, her heart beating faster at the tender look on her wife's face, meant for her alone. The honeymoon couldn't come fast enough as far as she was concerned.

"Right, is that what you're calling it now? Funny, there didn't seem to be a whole lot of talking going on," Leyla sassed back, earning a snort and an appreciative elbow poke from Ava. Olivia smiled and it suddenly hit her how close the two girls had grown over the last few weeks. Spending quality time together had been good for both of them it would seem.

"You are so bad," Ava chuckled and gazed at Leyla indulgently. Olivia cocked her head and frowned slightly, recognizing the look. A hand slid down her arm and Natalia's fingers tangled together with her own, squeezing gently and breaking her from her musings.

"I'm guessing that we are needed for some speeches and toasts," Natalia said, glancing up at Olivia and smiling warmly. A peace settled over Olivia, as she realized that she had been waiting for Natalia to come claim her all along. "You ready?"

"As I'll ever be," Olivia said, pulling her wife closer. Slowly they all started towards the gathered guests. She took a calming breath, feeling the energy crackling between them. She couldn't wait to be alone with her once more.

The band began to play an old familiar tune, and Olivia looked up to meet Natalia's bright eyes staring back at her. On the small dance floor, several couples were slowly swaying on the dance floor and Olivia took a sip of her wine.

"Dance with me?" Natalia's voice was soft and low, intimate and for her ears only.

As Springfield's most popular, and only, lesbian power couple they had been invited to many events this year, once the word had gotten out that they had been officially married in New York. Part of it was curiosity to some degree, and Olivia could understand that. The other part of it came down to plain, old-fashioned friendship. It was heartening that so many of their friends and co-workers were supportive, embracing their relationship and just treating them like normal.

However, as a couple they had never really been blatantly in your face about their relationship either, holding hands about as risqué as it got. Olivia knew that dancing together now would be taking it to the next level of acceptance for a lot of people. But none of that really mattered to her now.

"I thought you'd never ask," Olivia murmured, leaning close, her voice dropping a register and promising naughty things Natalia only prayed she would follow through on. A smile lit up Olivia's face with delight and she nodded, pulling Natalia closer to her with a tug of her hand.

"Speeches and toasts will have to wait, girls. I want to dance with my wife," Natalia said as she turned to a grinning Ava and Leyla and smiled softly. She squeezed Olivia's hand gently again.

Together they made their way through the swaying guests to the small dance floor. Every eye was watching them now, as the guests realized that the happy couple were about to hit the floor. Natalia swallowed hard, but Olivia's hand squeezed hers and the simple act made her lift her chin. *This is your wedding and these are your friends, who the hell cares what anyone thinks?* She had finally got the girl and now wanted nothing more than to feel her swaying in her arms.

Doris turned in time to see the gorgeous duo step onto the small dance floor together, joining the few couples already there. She elbowed Blake who smiled widely at the sight. Across the lawn, Josh and Billy Lewis grinned at each other. Reva Shayne paused mid-sentence while telling her latest story about her son, as they watched Natalia slide her



hands up along Olivia's arms to lock around her wife's neck, absently twisting soft strands of her honey blonde hair.

The band played a wonderful cover of Unforgettable, the lush voices of the singers merged together, very similar in sound to Nat King Cole and Natalie Cole's version of the song. Tucked away near the buffet table, a sheepish Father Ray looked up from the hors d'oeuvres tray, and shook his head, a little shocked as Olivia's hands wrapped around Natalia's small waist, and possessively pulled her closer as they started to sway to the song.

"I love this song," Natalia breathed against Olivia's shoulder, glancing up shyly into the intense green eyes staring back at her. While she felt the eyes of the entire room watching them, Olivia only had eyes for her. The rest of the room seemed to fade away, and she got lost in the motion of her lover's body against her.

"I love you," Olivia said tenderly, the velvety layers to her voice saying so much more. "I'm so glad we finally got here. Alone, together."

"There's no where else I'd rather be." Natalia looked down and then back up, ignoring everything around them except the woman in her arms. Too soon the song ended, and they simply swayed together to the beat of their hearts, waiting for the next one to start. Taking a moment to glance around the dance floor, she noticed that they were the only ones left on the dance floor.

Natalia snuggled closer to Olivia, breathing in her scent, enjoying the moment. She could hear Olivia humming the chorus again softly in her ear. They had come such a long way this year to arrive at this moment.

"I love you too, Mrs. Spencer Rivera." Natalia murmured as another song started, taking pleasure in the surprised chuckle from her wife as they began to sway together again. "And you know what?"

"What?" Olivia dipped her head and nuzzled into the warmth of Natalia's neck.

"It's later now." Natalia grinned, flashing her dimples for added effect.

Olivia's breath seemed to hitch at the words, and Natalia watched entranced as she raised her head to look at her. Soft green eyes took in the features of her face as if memorizing every inch before her gaze flicked down to her lips. Natalia moved impossibly closer, her eyes fluttering shut, both hearts thundering in anticipation.

And then there was the soft tentative touch of Natalia's lips against hers, before Olivia responded in kind, pressing and moving as one; mind, body and soul searing together, at long last.

They didn't even notice the cheer from their friends and family.

It was perfection.

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## **Act IV**

The ride to Springfield's small airport was short. Olivia still refused to tell Natalia what their honeymoon destination would be. The older woman simply insisted that Natalia pack a variety of clothes because no two days would be the same.

When they arrived, Phillip's jet and pilot were waiting for them. The limousine driver loaded their bags and handed over instructions to the pilot that Phillip had written up at Olivia's insistence. She didn't want anything to go wrong on this trip, and she had every intention of giving her wife a honeymoon she'd never forget.

The pilot nodded to the women. "Good evening, ladies. Are you ready?"

Natalia rubbed her hands together. While it was no longer her first flight, it didn't stop her fidgeting. "As ready as I'll ever be. I just wish someone would tell me where we're going." She gave Olivia a pointed look.

Olivia wrapped her arm around the smaller woman and smiled down before kissing her pout away. "A surprise isn't much of a surprise if I tell you what it is."

Sighing in defeat, Natalia rolled her eyes and pulled herself up into the small jet. With the seats along the walls of the plane instead of in rows and small round tables in the middle, Natalia assumed this was one of Phillip's business jets. It gave them plenty of room to stretch out and after the long, tiring day, she was ready to do exactly that.

She turned to Olivia and, in spite of wishing she knew what the older woman had up her sleeve, kissed her wife. "I love you so much. You drive me crazy, but I absolutely love you."

Olivia smiled happily and wrapped her arms around Natalia's trim waist. "Well, I guess it's a good thing you married me then."

"Definitely." She kissed Olivia tenderly, allowing a few moments to linger before they had to buckle up. She hummed with pleasure into the kiss then pulled back. The hum turned to a yawn and Olivia laughed, getting drawn into the contagious yawn as well. "How long is the flight?" Natalia asked.

"Hmmm," Olivia pondered if she should say and possibly give away the destination. "Why?" Natalia threw her head back in frustration. She wasn't getting any information out of Olivia. "Fine. Is it long enough for me to take a nap?"

The blonde couldn't help the chuckle that bubbled up at her wife's frustration. "Yes, and you are so going to need the rest, Mrs. Spencer-Rivera." She wagged her eyebrows in fun. "I like the sound of that." Natalia giggled and playfully gave Olivia small nips and kisses to her lips and face before sliding into one of the leather seats.

"Me, too." Olivia said as she went along with the silly behavior.

The pilot opened the tiny cabin door. "We're all clear, ladies. Buckle up!"

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When the plane touched down, Natalia was roused from sleep. Bleary-eyed, she sat up and looked out the window. In the growing darkness, she could see the silhouette of palm trees swaying in the breeze. She looked over at Olivia who had been watching her reaction with a faint smile. Natalia considered all of the possible places they'd talked about honeymooning, and she was guessing by the foliage that this either had to be Florida or California since they'd have to stop for a passport check to get out of the country.

It wasn't until the door of the jet was lowered and Natalia was assisted down the few short steps to the tarmac by the pilot that the warm breeze gave away their true location.

She turned to Olivia, confusion and surprise apparent in her voice, "Florida? We didn't talk about Florida."

Olivia smirked. "Who said the trip's over? We're just getting started."

"Oh." Natalia was thinking it over. Trying to puzzle out where they were headed. "So, if we're in Florida, but we're going further, then we must be heading south."

Olivia laughed at the unexpected innuendo and raised an eyebrow. "You could say that."

Natalia ignored her wife's dirty mind for the moment. There were people around and there was no time for such things right then. "So, we've already been to San Cristobel."

Olivia had walked toward the pilot then turned back to her wife, laughing. "Oh my God, Natalia! Would you stop trying to figure it out and just enjoy the trip?" She pulled out some money and handed it over to the pilot with a handshake. "Dinner for you and your family is on me, Bob."

He nodded his head, taking the unexpected tip. His eyes got big when he saw at least three twenty dollar bills. "Thank you, Mrs. Spencer-Rivera. I hope you ladies have a wonderful honeymoon." He seemed to hesitate then said, "My niece and her wife just got back from their honeymoon. They were together twenty-two years before tying the knot. Congratulations to you both." With an awkward nod to his head and a slight blush, Bob walked past his plane to the terminal to wait for his plane to be refueled.

Olivia and Natalia smiled at each other then turned around. They were swiftly greeted by a young man in a crisp black suit and hat. He tapped the heels of his shiny dress shoes together and bowed slightly. "Mrs. and Mrs. Spencer-Rivera, I assume?"

"Yes," Olivia answered.

"I'm Derek, your chauffeur. I'll get your bags, and I'll have you on your way in a jiffy." Derek didn't wait for approval, quickly assuming his role. He efficiently gathered their suitcases and placed them in the trunk of the waiting limousine behind him. Before Olivia could reach the door to open it for Natalia, Derek raced to beat her.

With a flourish, the door was opened and he assisted both inside. Olivia slid in beside Natalia and took her hand. "He's good."

"Will he get a big tip, too?" Natalia had noticed the thick group of bills that Bob had received.

Olivia shrugged. "It's looking like it. I remember what it was like to struggle. If I can help out those who are working hard, I like to try."

Natalia raised the hand in her own and kissed the back of it lovingly. "I know. That's one of the many reasons I love you."

"And I'm really freakin' hot!"

Natalia rolled her eyes in exaggeration. "So freakin' hot!"

After only a few minutes in the limousine, Olivia turned to Natalia. "Okay, I need you to close your eyes."

"What?" Natalia asked in surprise as she was pulled away from her window watching of people as they jogged along the boardwalk or walked hand-in-hand leisurely.

"Trust me. It's part of the surprise."

The way Olivia smiled made it impossible for Natalia to deny her. She closed her eyes and patiently waited as the car took several quick turns before parking. "Can I look now?"

"Almost. Just wait here. I'll come around."

Natalia heard the door open on Olivia's side, slam shut, and then her own door opened. She felt the soft skin of Olivia's hand take her own and help her out of the back of the limousine. Olivia's arm wrapped around her waist and she was guided a few feet down what seemed like some steps. She could smell the salt of the ocean and feel the light breeze billow her hair out.

"Okay, you can open them." Olivia stepped aside as she waited for Natalia to realize where they were standing.

Slowly, Natalia blinked her eyes open and it took her a moment to put it all together. There sitting in the harbor was what looked like an old-timey ship with white, billowy sails snapping in the wind and high masts. If the time had been a few hundred years earlier, Natalia would have easily confused it for smaller version of a pirate ship. A banner hung from the side of the ship saying simply: Welcome aboard, Mrs. & Mrs. Spencer-Rivera.

"Olivia, what is this?" Natalia asked breathlessly as she glanced to her wife, who was biting her lip expectantly.

Olivia bowed and gestured grandly at the ship. "Your ship, m'lady." Then muttered quickly, "Literally."

"Excuse me? Olivia, please tell me this is just chartered." Natalia couldn't help it. She was in awe. No matter what, Olivia always seemed to outdo herself. When Olivia didn't answer right away and instead looked down shyly, Natalia gasped, "Oh my God! Olivia, you didn't!"

Olivia shrugged. "Everyone does cruises. But, not everyone does them on their own boat."

"I can't believe you did this! You didn't have to." Natalia was still in shock as Olivia took her in her arms, holding her close.

"I wanted to," Olivia whispered.

Once the shock had worn off, Natalia raced up the ramp onto the ship to look around. Below deck, the quarters were larger than they'd seem from the outside. A full kitchen was at one end of the ship along with the captain's cabin. At the other end of the ship was the master cabin.

Olivia followed behind her wife as the brunette stopped in the doorway. The pictures the seller had sent didn't do it justice. Even she was impressed. It looked nothing like a typical ship's quarters, but like a grand suite in a luxury hotel.

"Wow!" Natalia looked around the surprisingly massive space before stepping further into the room.

The room looked like they'd stepped back in time and were living in a castle on a cliff. On the opposite wall stood a massive king size bed with four elaborate posters, which rose from each corner and were draped with rich tapestries of maroon and gold. The tapestry was pulled back to each corner post with gold rope exposing the matching bedding. The bed was so tall, thick, and luxurious that a foot stool sat to the side allowing the occupants easy access.

Natalia walked up to the bed and ran her hand down the twisting mahogany of the bed post, while her other hand hovered over her lips. She was amazed by the beauty of the room, but even more so by the loving detail Olivia had given their honeymoon. She turned to look at her wife. Olivia was standing just inside the doorway, leaning back against the wall, with her hands in the pockets of her dress slacks.



"Do you like it?" Olivia asked hesitantly.

"No," Natalia said, shaking her head. Seeing the sad scowl take over Olivia's face, she smiled and walked over to her, reaching down to tug Olivia's hands from her pockets. Natalia raised Olivia's hands between them and tenderly kissed the back of each. "I love it, and you." She brushed the back of her fingers over Olivia's cheek. "You amaze me...every...day. I'm so blessed."

When the relief of Natalia's words sunk in, Olivia smiled happily and kissed her. "And I'm just getting started." She loosened Natalia's hold on her hands and wrapped the smaller woman up in her arms, kissing her again with more intent.

Natalia breathlessly leaned her head back as the kiss broke and Olivia laved her neck in tortuous detail. The brunette spoke haltingly with what little of her synapses were continuing to fire. "Shouldn't we, ahhh, um...oh God...what about the captain?"

Olivia pulled back and grinned at her wickedly, her voice a husky drawl. "I am the captain."

"Oh? Ohhhhh," Natalia whispered. A mischievous glint lit her eyes as she realized where this was going. "I guess that means we can set sail whenever we want then."

Olivia nodded and walked her wife backward toward the bed. "Uh huh."

"No rush?"

Olivia shook her head as Natalia's hips came to rest against the side of the bed. "Nope. I even allowed a couple of extra days before we're expected back here."

Natalia kissed the taller woman as she reached for the buttons on Olivia's white vest. She spoke between kisses as her fingers worked lower, "Beautiful and smart." Finishing the last button, she pushed the material aside to admire the full round breasts encased in a white lace bra. "God, I'm the luckiest woman ever!"

"Next to me," Olivia amended, shrugging the vest off her shoulders.

Leaning forward, Natalia kissed Olivia's naked shoulder allowing her teeth to slightly graze the tender skin of her collarbone as she worked her way closer to Olivia's neck. A sharp bite followed by a tender lick was enough to propel Olivia into motion. Quickly, her bra and pants were discarded as she set to work on Natalia's white dress. She brushed her hands up Natalia's thighs, her nails leaving a light trail behind causing Natalia to hiss and pull back from her ministrations on Olivia's neck.

The break in contact allowed Olivia the chance to pull the dress over Natalia's head and toss it behind them. Natalia's bra was soon added to the pile along with their panties. Olivia ran her hands over taunt nipples and a slightly round stomach, dancing close to the tight curls further down. She could hear Natalia's breathing increase and small gasps escape her lips.

"Get on the bed," Olivia's voice was huskier than usual, desire dripping from each word.

She watched as Natalia used the stool to climb up. As Natalia's hip rose past her, Olivia couldn't resist reaching out and running her fingers over the firm curves. Following her wife, she climbed up next to Natalia, helping her push down the covers, until they lay next to each other on cool, white sheets.

Propping up on an elbow, Olivia took in the sight of her beautiful wife stretched out on the bed completely naked and vulnerable. Soft curves, full breasts and hips, strong thighs. She sighed in contentment and pleasure. This would be their first time to make love after



becoming in every respect a married couple. She wanted to make this special, different, from all the other times they'd made love.

Natalia noticed the faraway look. She rolled over and hooked Olivia's chin with a finger, drawing their eyes together. "What are you thinking?"

Long fingers came up to brush over Natalia's neck and collarbone and Olivia sighed. "I want this to be special."

A sweet and loving smile was Natalia's answer. "Every time you make love to me is special, Olivia. Every time is unique and beautiful. I just want you close to me, touching me. All I need or want is to come apart in the safety of your arms. Don't you know? You have every part of me, every inch, any way you want it. You have all of my trust and all of my faith. That's what makes every second we love each other so amazing."

Olivia's heart fluttered in her chest and a joyous smile erupted on her face. There were so many things she wanted to say, but she didn't want to ruin the moment. Instead, she ran her fingertips over Natalia's full lips before leaning in to kiss her reverently. The slow, tender kisses turned raw and needy quick as Natalia nestled in close, bringing the full length of their bodies together.

They lost themselves in their kisses; arms wrapping around each other to get impossibly closer. There was no need to hurry. No kids to feed. No job to get ready for. All they needed was to touch and feel and kiss. Tomorrow, they could begin their trip. Tonight was all theirs.

Olivia dipped her head, placing kisses along the long column of Natalia's perfectly tan neck. Small sighs of pleasure and encouragement echoed in her ears as she drifted lower taking a dark, tight nipple into her mouth. She could feel Natalia's blunt nails caressing and then tugging the hair at the base of her neck, making her needs well-known. Olivia had no intention of disappointing her, but she did have every intention of getting drunk on Natalia's body as the younger woman's heady aphrodisiac permeated her senses.

With a quick glance up, Olivia caught dark hooded eyes looking back at her. The raw look of desire in Natalia's eyes always had an delightful effect on her and this time was no different as she moaned at the tight clenching low in her belly. Olivia took the fingers tangled in her hair, sliding her lips over the palm before kissing the center and lightly teasing with her tongue. She pushed Natalia's hand, palm down, onto the sheets encouraging her to hold on as she slid her body down between Natalia's thighs.

No requests had to be made or explanations given. Natalia's thighs opened willingly to accept her wife. The delicious ache of expectation and arousal strengthened as Olivia settled between her legs, opening her wide for easier access.

Olivia teasingly brought a finger up to play in the copious juices at Natalia's entrance. She never ceased to be amazed at the wonder of her wife's body and the effect their lovemaking had on her. She brought the wet finger up in wonder before succumbing to the desperate need of tasting her love and she sucked the delicious liquid off her finger.

A sharp, shaky moan made her look up the length of Natalia's body. Again, dark eyes connected with green and Olivia realized that Natalia had been watching her taste her arousal. Maintaining eye contact, Olivia returned her finger to Natalia's center, this time sliding in to the knuckle. Natalia groaned harshly at the sudden penetration then gasped as Olivia removed her finger. She watched Natalia shiver as she licked the entirety of her finger.

"Olivia," Natalia whispered harshly. Her fingers twisted the sheet beneath her. She wanted...no, needed, so much more. "Please."

Desire shot like lightening to Olivia's core at the need in Natalia's voice, and she whimpered at the sudden wetness on her thighs. With effort, she pushed aside her own needs and focused on the woman now writhing beneath her mouth. She sunk into the wetness, savoring the sweet yet salty taste of her wife. She moaned at the assault on her senses and the reaction of her body. Gone was the goal of being patient. All she wanted was to make Natalia come undone just so she could put her back together, one swipe of her tongue at a time.

Gone as well was the deliberate precision. Greedily, Olivia raised Natalia's knees to open her further as she impaled the beauty on her tongue over and over again, the slightly metallic tang of Natalia's opening was surprisingly intoxicating.

"Oh God, Olivia," Natalia groaned as she felt herself penetrated again and again by Olivia's warm tongue. She couldn't help it. She pushed down, opened up more, trying to take more of her inside. "Don't stop." She was so close, and she wanted desperately to come this way. Her body bowed taut as Olivia changed angles to go even deeper. If this went on much longer or got any more intense, Natalia knew she was going to rip the nice sheets beneath her. The little more that Olivia gave her was all she needed as her body jerked

once...twice...and then held for a third time as she had to remind herself to breathe or pass out.

Olivia had felt the spasms start on her tongue just as Natalia urged her to continue. The brunette was so close all she needed was a little more. Olivia gave it to her, tilting her head slightly for a better angle. In a sudden rush, Natalia opened more and her tongue was deeper inside than ever before. A quick flick of her tongue and she felt the muscles contract around her as Natalia's entire back rose from the bed.

As Natalia came down from her orgasm, Olivia took advantage of her disorientation and cleaned her with long swipes of her tongue, being careful to avoid the bundle of sensitive nerves nearby. She discreetly wiped her face on the sheet before sliding up beside Natalia and draping an arm over her waist.

Natalia glanced at Olivia out of the corner of her eye and saw the weak attempt at hiding her Cheshire cat grin. She couldn't help but chuckle herself. "Feeling a bit cocky?" Olivia lifted an eyebrow. "It's not cocky if it's true."

The brunette guffawed at her over-confident wife. "I guess I should feel cocky too. I seem to recall more than once making you lose control."

Olivia made a show of tapping her chin in thought. "Hmmm, maybe you should refresh my memory."

It was Natalia's turn to lift an eyebrow, though it wasn't nearly as effective as Olivia's, and all Olivia gave her in return was a cheeky grin. Natalia rolled over on top of Olivia and gently pinned her wrists above her head. "I accept that challenge."

With little preamble, because she knew how wet Olivia was, she could feel it against her stomach, Natalia sat back on her heels and spread Olivia's thighs. She briefly ran her fingers through the wetness to ensure they were well-coated then slipped in two fingers.

"Oh, fuck, Natalia!" Olivia blurted in surprise as she reached behind her head for something to grab on to and found the top of the wooden headboard, her eyes slamming shut at the intensity. Her body arched and pushed against the invading digits. No one really had the honor of taking and claiming Olivia, except Natalia. The knowledge and awareness that Natalia had not only laid claim to her body but also to her very soul was terrifying and

exciting. She couldn't imagine giving herself this way with anyone else, not anymore. Natalia was it, the only one for her.

"You like this?" Natalia whispered heatedly as her fingers continued to move, driving harder, faster, and deeper with each thrust. Olivia's wetness increased with each stroke, and Natalia found she wanted more. Olivia nodded quickly in silent agreement. Natalia smiled. "Do you want more?"

Olivia opened her mouth to speak but nothing came out. She swallowed and opened her eyes taking in the dominant and powerful image of her wife, steadily fucking her. "Dear God...yes. Yes."

With her free hand, Natalia spread Olivia's folds wider and sunk a third finger into her. After a few strokes to make sure her fingers were coated, she added her pinky. Rolling her fingers together into a semi-circle, Natalia embedded her fingers to the hilt and leaned over Olivia's arching body. Dipping down, she took a dusky nipple into her mouth, sucking and biting gently, before moving up to nuzzle beneath Olivia's ear.

"Is this better, querida?" She whispered hotly. Olivia nodded frantically but didn't speak. "Am I hurting you?"

Olivia shook her head. "No," she grunted as Natalia thrust into her. There was a little pain. She felt stretched and full and amazing. She loved this feeling, and she loved it even more that it was created by Natalia. "You feel so good. This feels so good."

Natalia murmured in agreement, "Yes, it does." She sighed in contentment, nuzzling further along Olivia's neck. "I love being inside of you, Olivia. I want you to come for me, like this." She rose up on one arm, her hips thrusting into Olivia, and pushed her fingers deeper. "Can you do that?"

Frantically, Olivia nodded. She wanted to come like this. Desperately. She reached down and tugged at Natalia's hips, setting the pace for them. With a few more strokes, her body went rigid as her nails dug into Natalia's ass making her hiss. After a few seconds and more than a few aftershocks, Natalia slumped against Olivia's body, still buried deep inside, the light flutters against her fingers the only movement.

When the flutters stopped, Natalia pulled out and rolled to her side, curling up against Olivia's body. The last thing she remembered was a soft kiss to her forehead and mumbled affirmations of love as both of them fell into contented and exhausted sleep.

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The gentle roll of the ocean made it difficult for Natalia to get out of bed. After a full day of sailing and a long night of lovemaking, Natalia didn't have to be told twice. She had rolled over and burrowed back under the covers. Glancing over at her watch on the night table stand though, she realized it was midmorning and she was sure by now that Olivia was hungry as she had risen early to get started on their second day of their journey. A good idea for brunch came to mind for her beautiful captain as she stretched and then climbed out of bed to get dressed.

Up on deck, Natalia walked across the cool planks on bare feet feeling Olivia's eyes on her the whole way. She stepped up to the large wheel where Olivia stood and wrapped her arms around her waist.

"I love that you can sail," Natalia murmured as she nuzzled into the light strands of Olivia's hair as it blew in the breeze, the scent of the salt and sea mixing with Olivia's unique smell. It was decadent and exotic, like the woman herself.

Olivia hummed in pleasure at the warm voice in her ear. "Perhaps I was a pirate in a previous life."

Natalia giggled. "And I was what? Your first mate?"

Chuckling, Olivia freed one hand and wrapped it around Natalia's shoulders, pulling the brunette into her side as the boat bounced on the waves gently. She glanced down with a saucy grin. "More like my wench." She grinned even more lecherously and wiggled her eyebrows.

Natalia playfully slapped her on the stomach. "You're terrible!" Then she leaned up and kissed the full lips of her wife. "But I love you anyway."

"Good thing," Olivia agreed.

Changing the subject, Natalia pulled away. "I assume you haven't eaten, right?" When Olivia nodded, she continued, "In that case, I'm going down to the kitchen to make us something."

"Coffee?" Olivia inquired.

"That's not food," Natalia corrected.

Olivia smiled. "It is to me."

Rolling her eyes, Natalia bounded down the steps to start on their brunch. Thirty minutes later, she reappeared above deck carrying a tray with frittatas, grilled pineapple, and coffee.

Olivia watched as Natalia placed the tray on the flat part of the wheel housing. "That looks scrumptious!"

Using a fork, Natalia broke off a piece of the frittata and fed it to Olivia. "Let's find out."

A low hum of appreciation was her answer and it made Natalia smile. Over the next few minutes, Natalia continued to feed bites to Olivia, interspersed with her own, as the boat maintained course in an unknown direction.

Looking at the various dials and buttons, Natalia finally located the compass pointed in a southeasterly direction. To the eastm what appeared to be a land mass barely broke the horizon. Natalia tried to picture what she knew of the Caribbean islands, which was obviously where they were if they were heading southeast of Miami, in her mind.

"Is that Cuba?" She pointed with realization to the east.

Olivia shrugged. "Maybe it is. Maybe it isn't."

Natalia was not amused. "Really? You're still not telling me where we're going." When Olivia gave her a cheeky grin, the brunette turned on her heel and marched to their cabin, returning quickly with a rolled up piece of paper. She rolled it out on the deck next to Olivia, who glanced down at her in shock. Natalia had pulled out the map of the area.

"No, no, no! No cheating!" Olivia fussed at the younger woman from her spot at the wheel.

"Olivia Spencer-Rivera," Natalia warned.

"Oh my God! You're worse than a kid before Christmas!"

Natalia pouted. "Just tell me...plleeaassee."

"Augh! Fine!" She growled in fake frustration. Actually, she loved teasing Natalia. "Puerto Rico. We're going to Puerto Rico."

A bright smile broke out across Natalia's face. "Really?"

Olivia shrugged. "It's only fair, right? You got to see San Cristobel. Now I get to see Puerto Rico."

Before she realized what was happening, Natalia jumped up from the deck where she'd sat down to look at the map and took Olivia in a grateful kiss. The pleasant shock of the kiss was broken by the vision of the map fluttering up off the deck. She jerked away suddenly. "Quick! Get the map!"

It took a split second but Natalia came to her senses and spun around. After a short chase, she caught the map and brought it back to Olivia. Handing it over to the older woman, Natalia breathed a sigh of relief. "That was close!"

"Yeah, we don't want to lose that because there are a couple of stops we'll be making before we actually reach the island," Olivia said as she tucked the map safely in a cubicle next to the wheel.

"Oh really," Natalia mused.

With a chuckle, Olivia shook a finger at her wife. "And you're not getting anything else out of me, woman!"

Natalia put her arm around Olivia's waist and looked out over the ocean with her. "We'll see about that."

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The sun was dropping low in the sky making the horizon harder to see; however, Olivia pressed on. Their first destination was just under an hour away, and she wanted to make it before the sunset.

Natalia had taken a break from sunbathing, an activity that Olivia found highly distracting because of the nearly nonexistent bathing suit Natalia was wearing, to get a drink from the kitchen. When she reappeared, Natalia walked up to stand next to her.

When disappearing down into the galley, Natalia hadn't noticed the other ships dotting the ocean's surface. But now a noise drew her eyes to the cloud-dappled sky and she watched as a small twin-engine jet passed overhead. Stepping behind Olivia, she kissed a sun-warmed shoulder before doing the same to the back of her neck, thankful that Olivia had pulled her hair up in a ponytail giving her easy access. She rested her chin on her wife's shoulder as she wrapped her arms around her from behind. "It looks like we're close to the island."

Olivia nodded then glanced over her shoulder, her eyes unreadable behind the aviator glasses she wore. "We are, but we're making another stop first. Actually, two stops before we get to the main island. I think you'll like it."

This time, Natalia didn't even try to coax the secret location out of her love. Instead, she decided to let Olivia have her fun and surprise her. Honestly, she was truly enjoying this extended alone time with her wife. Ever since they'd first met, they'd never really been alone - a child or an ex or someone - was always close by, and as much as she loved their family, she didn't have nearly enough moments like this. It was like falling in love all over again.

Natalia kissed the bare space left by Olivia's tank top between her shoulder blades as her hands played underneath the hem of the shirt, teasing the skin beneath her fingers. They seemed to make love constantly and still she couldn't get enough of the other woman. Being as they were coming near some busy ports though, she tucked her desire away and put her hands back over the top of Olivia's clothes.

"You didn't have to stop," Olivia said, her voice thick with renewed desire.

Natalia nodded. "Unless I want you crashing into another boat, yes, I do." She sighed then asked, "How much further to our destination?"

"Probably about thirty minutes," Olivia said looking at the sky and knowing she was going to be cutting it close. She had planned a surprise, but decided that time was of the essence. "Can you do me a favor?"

"Of course," Natalia quickly responded.

"You probably saw in the refrigerator a box marked Culebrita, right?" Natalia nodded and Olivia smiled, surprised that the younger, curious woman saw it and didn't ask about it. "Can you open it and get what's in it out, then bring it up?"



"Sure." Natalia patted Olivia on the hip and left.

After a couple of days, Natalia had become used to the motion of the ship and was now taking the stairs down to the galley with bounding steps. She moved smoothly around the small island counter that served as a food prep area and the dining table as well and opened the large stainless steel doors of the refrigerator. On the far right toward the back was the box that said Culebrita. She had wondered what was in the box, but assumed it was some exotic dish that Olivia had pre-bought for the trip. She placed the heavy box on the counter and found the scissors to slice through the tape holding the top flaps closed. Opening the box easily, she flipped the top back and peered inside.

"Oh my gosh!"

Inside was a large wooden picnic basket. Pulling it out, she opened the lid. An assortment of meats, cheeses, crackers, and fruit was nestled among the packing of napkins, small plates, glasses, and condiments. Angled across the basket was a bottle of expensive champagne. Shaking her head, overwhelmed at the thoughtfulness of her wife, she carefully carried the heavy basket up the steps to the deck.

Up on deck, Olivia had her headset on and was speaking on the radio frequency to other passing ships. She had no idea what any of the nautical words meant, but she assumed it was for navigation purposes with other captains. The island of Puerto Rico swelled from the ocean to Natalia's right, the westward setting sun casting the seaside homes in an ethereal glow. She smiled at seeing her family's home and looked forward to touring the island once she and Olivia had completed their other two stops.

The seas were a little rougher as the ship made its way around the northern side of the island causing Natalia to reach for a nearby rail to remain steady. Once they'd cleared the main island, the waves settled again. Soon, another island appeared in the distance.

"That's where we're going," Olivia stated as she pointed then paused, glancing with a smirk over at the other woman. "Sort of." When Natalia gave her a quizzical look, Olivia chuckled. "The big one is Culebra, but there are a couple of smaller islands, Culebrita and Vieques, on the other side we'll be visiting."

Natalia glanced down at the basket at her feet. "Always planning ahead."

"Always."

In a surprisingly short few minutes, Olivia was slowing the boat down as the water became noticeably shallower. Eventually, she cut the engine and turned to her wife, propping her arm through the handles of the wheel. "So, m'lady, shall we picnic here or blow up the emergency raft and take it to shore?"

Natalia looked at the deserted stretch of beach adorned with a lighthouse, much like the one back in Springfield, probably only a hundred yards away as the setting sun cast it in a soft pink hue, and shook her head in amazement. Offhandedly, she realized it would make a great location for a new hotel, and she wondered if Olivia had even considered it. They'd talked about expanding, but with the kidnapping and other madness in their lives, franchising the hotel got pushed to the back burner. "Is it deserted?"

"In the daytime it's a magnet for tourists who want to snorkel and scuba dive, but according to some locals that run the catamarans, it's virtually deserted at night. Though there can be some stragglers like us hanging around," Olivia answered, then waited anxiously for a response.

Natalia thought about it for only a few seconds. While a moonlight picnic on a deserted beach with the love of her life would be incredibly romantic, her naturally protective instinct didn't want to chance fate after the adventures and tribulations she always seemed to experience around Olivia. "I vote for here."

"As you wish." Olivia leaned over and ghosted a kiss over the soft lips of the younger woman. "I'll drop the anchor."

Sighing at the teasing touch, Natalia smirked, thinking of an added benefit to being on a boat in the middle of the ocean away from prying eyes. "I'll get the blanket and set up the food."

By the time Olivia made her way back from the bow to drop the anchor, Natalia had nearly everything set up. A large navy fleece blanket was spread out over the deck with the basket as its centerpiece. At one end of the blanket were several pillows from the bed, and at the other a couple of lanterns on each corner to hold the blanket down and provide some much needed light so they could see what they were eating.

Olivia walked over and kneeled down on the blanket opposite from Natalia, who was busily removing the last items from the basket. She picked up the champagne from beside the basket and began to open it. Natalia handed her an opener and grabbed the two flute

glasses. With a pop, the bubbly liquid poured out of the bottle and Natalia quickly caught what she could as they both giggled.

"What is it about champagne that makes people laugh when they open it?" Natalia said smiling happily.

Olivia licked off some of the drink that had spilled over the back of her hand. "I think they put something in the bubbles."

Natalia was mesmerized by Olivia's pink tongue darting out. She took a sip of her champagne, allowing the tang of it to tantalize her taste buds before swallowing it completely. The warmth of the alcohol quickly spread through her body, even into her toes. "You have no idea what you do sometimes, do you?"

A dark eyebrow angled up as Olivia reached for a piece of smoked Gouda. "And if I did, what would you do?" She took a slow sensuous bite then reached out with it toward Natalia, offering the remaining half.

Understanding the challenge, Natalia leaned forward bracing her hands on the deck as she wrapped her lips around not only the food but Olivia's fingers. She noted the sharp intake of breath and pulled back smiling. "Does that answer your question?"

"Keep that up and we'll never finish eating," Olivia said, her voice rough with arousal.

With a coy shrug, Natalia nipped the end off a strawberry, smirked then teasingly licked the curved indentation of the fruit, emphasizing the meaning of her words, "We could just skip straight to desert, querida."

Olivia enjoyed their teasing playful games, and she decided to make it last. After all, they had all night. She looked overhead and back down with a pout. "But we'll miss gazing up at the moon and stars."

Natalia followed the other woman's eyes with her own. When she looked back down and saw the twinkle of mischievousness in Olivia's eyes, she chuckled. "Not if I have you on your back, you won't."

The image of Natalia loving her under the stars seared into her mind's eye and sent a jolt of arousal southward. She watched the brunette for a long moment gauging her seriousness. When Natalia's dark eyes glanced down to her cleavage then took her bottom lip between

her teeth, she knew Natalia was equally aroused at the mental image she'd created for them. With no more hesitation, Olivia crossed her arms and reached down to take the hem of her tank top in her hands. She pulled it over her head, along with her sport bra, then tossed it aside.

"Would this be more pleasing to your palette?" Olivia teased.

"Almost. I think you missed something," Natalia said as her eyes flicked down to Olivia's shorts.

Olivia swallowed. Natalia's lack of inhibition surprised her, and she couldn't help but feel a little like the appetizing prey to Natalia's predator. Standing, she unsnapped the button of her tan shorts and allowed them to fall with a light whoosh to the deck with her panties quickly following suit. "Is this better?"

Natalia looked up at the beautiful woman before her - shapely legs supporting curvaceous hips, a light sheen of moisture topping the curls between those thighs. Instinctively, her mouth watered already anticipating the taste and texture. Standing, she walked around the blanket covered with food until she was standing only an inch from her lover's body. She ran her fingertips up along bare arms, making goosebumps rise along the creamy surface, over shoulders then down between full, round breasts. With the lightest touch, Natalia brushed over dusky nipples that hardened immediately. She couldn't resist pinching each one lightly then tugging a little harder than necessary, just the way she knew Olivia liked it.

Olivia responded with a shaky moan as her eyes fluttered shut. Her knees became weak as she stood there and allowed Natalia to play with her nipples. She felt the flush of arousal between her legs and opened her eyes locking onto their darker counterparts. "Take your clothes off."

The brunette smiled wickedly. It was a look that Olivia thought at one time was impossible for the woman to create. She was eternally grateful to be wrong too.

Stepping back slightly, Natalia slipped the sheer wrap off her shoulders and deftly ridded herself of her bathing suit.

Olivia moved forward and in one fluid movement pulled the younger woman into a passionate kiss. For long moments, they stood there wrapped in each other's arms kissing

under the darkening sky with the only light casting shadows over their naked forms coming from the moon above and the lanterns nearby.

Breaking the kiss, Olivia moved back to her previous position on the blanket and pushed the food aside, careful to not knock over the champagne. She leaned back against the pillows and hooked a finger in Natalia's direction. "Come here."

Natalia went to her knees at Olivia's feet. She raised one of Olivia's legs until her calf was eye level. Moving tortuously slow, she kissed her way up the inside of Olivia's leg, pausing to relish attention on the sensitive spot behind her knee.

Olivia fought the urge to squirm as her wife edged higher. Her hands were already gripping the blanket, and she felt like her body was going to fly apart with the sensations. The brush of Natalia's long hair against her legs drove her nearly as crazy as her mouth. Hands that had been inching up her thighs moved lightly over her stomach and further up to her breasts, again softly grazing the hard nipples then tugging. Unable to stand it anymore, Olivia's body arched into the touch as Natalia's hot mouth settled over her.

The low moan was music to Natalia's ears as she settled between Olivia's thighs, the wet heat welcoming her. Over and over again, she lightly flicked and teased, taking her wife just to the edge before pulling back and slowing down. She wasn't nearly done with Olivia yet. Instead, she put her shoulders under Olivia's thighs, opening her to Natalia's questing mouth and giving her complete access to the rich wet heat. Pressing forward, she entered Olivia as deep as possible with her tongue. A new rush of wetness followed a sharp gasp from above and Natalia felt Olivia's hand grip the top of her head.

Glancing up, Natalia was treated to the wonder of Olivia in the throes of passion - her free hand holding the pillow behind her head in a death grip and her white teeth digging what looked to be painfully into her bottom lip. Tired but determined, Natalia moved up to take the bundle of nerves into her mouth, sucking steadily as her fingers replaced where her tongue had been. Olivia's other hand reached for purchase on the other side of the pillow, her hips beginning to roll frantically as she neared the edge. Curling her fingers, Natalia sent Olivia over with a scream of sheer ecstasy.

Olivia's orgasm was so powerful that her whole body continued to shake long after the aftershocks passed. She knew she was saying something but it had to be gibberish. It didn't even make sense to her own ears.

Natalia slid up next to Olivia. She brushed some hair out of Olivia's eyes. "Are you okay, querida?"

"Huh?"

The brunette chuckled at her disoriented wife. "You're muttering."

Olivia breathed out with a huff and tossed a playful glare at the younger woman. "I think you broke me."

Giggling, Natalia nuzzled along the other woman's jaw to her ear. "I certainly hope not because I am turned on so much right now, and only you can take care of it."

"Well, never let it be said that I'd ever deny my beautiful wife anything," Olivia said and rolled over, bracing herself over Natalia, more than happy to take care of all of her needs.

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The next morning, the two women slept in late since they were in no rush to get to their next destination. In fact, they took their time making breakfast and planning their day. Natalia wanted to walk on the beach and visit the lighthouse before leaving.

What had been deserted last night teemed with life in the daytime. The beach was dotted with couples and families playing and picnicking. Others dove off the side of boats to snorkel and a few cast fishing lines. It was so busy that Natalia even wondered if it was safe to get in the water to swim to the beach with all the boats and catamarans in the water. Olivia though was undeterred. She zipped up a change of clothes, towels, and shoes in a waterproof bag and sealed it before tilting her head to the side.

"Ready?"

Life with Olivia was nothing if not an adventure. She nodded and they dove in. A few short minutes later, they emerged from the surf and began walking to dry off. Some of the other tourists seemed to be following a path into the dense vegetation so they did so as well. It was a well worn path to the lighthouse. When they reached the base of the lighthouse, they covered up in some dry clothes and put on their shoes. A sign nearby told of the history of the lighthouse and even though it was now deserted, that it was still open as a tourist spot.

Remembering the last time they'd been this close to a lighthouse, Olivia glanced at her wife with reservation. "Are you okay?"

Natalia breathed out long and slow before nodding. "Yeah...I think so." Another moment passed and she turned to look at Olivia. "I want to go up."

"Really?" Olivia asked uncertainly.

The brunette nodded again, her jaw clenching in determination. Remembering the myriad of conversations she'd had with Sister Anne, Natalia made her final decision. "Yes. Besides, it's probably a great view. Why should I deny myself that because of what Marina did? If I do, the fear wins, right?"

Olivia took her hand, so proud of the younger woman's courage. "Right." She leaned in and gave Natalia a quick kiss. "I love you."

"Love you, too." Natalia smiled. "Come on, let's go see this view."

At the top, Olivia and Natalia found a spot that was free of people and looked out over the sparkling blue ocean. From their vantage point, they could see Puerto Rico gleaming in the sunlight. It really was an incredible view, and neither could resist wrapping up in each other's arms and simply taking it all in.

"I think this would be a great spot for another Beacon. Don't you?" Natalia said suddenly.

Olivia looked down at her incredulously. "We're on our honeymoon and you're thinking about work?"

Natalia tilted her head to the side. "And you didn't?"

The older woman opened her mouth to respond but seeing the look on Natalia's face, basically telling her not to bother denying it, she snapped it shut.

"That's what I thought," Natalia murmured.

"It would be a great spot," Olivia finally agreed and Natalia smiled.

Another hotel down here would give them the excuse to visit often and bring the kids. Maybe make it a regular vacation for their family. "I miss the kids," Natalia admitted quietly, still tucked under Olivia's chin, not caring that other people milled around them.

Olivia smiled secretly and agreed, "Me, too. Does that mean you're ready to cut the trip short?"

The younger woman pulled back in shock. "No way! I have no idea what you have up your sleeve, but I plan on seeing all of it."

Leaning down, Olivia whispered in her ear, "You saw way more than what was up my sleeve last night."

Natalia slapped her on the stomach in mock shock. "Olivia!"

Olivia couldn't help but laugh, and she pulled her wife in closer, kissing the top of her head. "Are you ready to go?"

Natalia agreed to leave as long as they walked on the beach a little more. As they walked along the shore, Natalia reveled in the feel of the warm sand between her toes, reminding her of the day she and Olivia had first been out as a couple at the joint Cooper-Lewis wedding, and the sense of happiness and freedom that came at being open about her love for Olivia. Next to the birth of her children and her own wedding to the woman at her side, it was the happiest day of her life.

Olivia felt Natalia's hand tighten in hers as they walked. She glanced over to see her wife staring out into the distance. "What's going through that beautiful head of yours?"

"Babies," Natalia answered quietly.

"Excuse me?" Olivia snorted.

Natalia pressed her lips together, wondering if she should bring the subject up, but feeling that a honeymoon was as good a time as any to talk about it; she dove in head first. "I know we kind of talked about it a little, but nothing ever came of it. But...I want to...," she stopped and turned to look at Olivia. "I want to have another child with you, Olivia. I want to have one together, that we both plan for and shop for clothes for and pick out names for. Just the two of us." She emphasized the last point, knowing how important the lack of it had been



with Francesca. There was no fixing what had been done, but she could do better going forward. She determined to do it right this time.

A witty response was on the tip of Olivia's tongue, but the earnestness in Natalia's voice and eyes made her reach up and cup her wife's face instead. She placed a soft kiss on her forehead then down further to the tip of her nose and finally her lips. It was sweet, tender, and full of the overwhelming love she felt for Natalia. "I would love nothing more than for you to have my baby."

A huge grin erupted on Natalia's face. "Really?"

Olivia kissed her again. This time lingering and teasing conveying something more to come. "Really."

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The next morning Olivia pulled the boat into a much busier harbor, but far too remote still to be the main island. She watched Natalia brace herself on the railing as the boat bumped the rubber guards. Several bags sat by her feet filled with necessities they'd need for their two night stay.

An old man on the dock muttered "Welcome to Vieques," quickly in Spanish as he jumped on deck, with more nimbleness than his age implied possible, to get the ropes to secure the boat to the dock. After climbing back onto the dock, he spun around and gestured wildly to Natalia.

She glanced back to Olivia uncertain, but the older woman smiled. "Go ahead. I just need to close up everything here."

Even though he spoke quickly, Natalia understood most of what he was saying. She reached down and picked up a bag, handing them to him one by one, before taking his gnarled and calloused hand to be pulled up to the dock.

"Muchísimas gracias," Natalia said with sincere appreciation. She reached into her pocket and found a twenty dollar bill. "Por favor."

The old man's deep seated brown eyes twinkled. "Bueno, como no? Es usted muy bonita, señorita." [[Translation](#)]

Charmed, Natalia couldn't help the blush that rushed to her cheeks. "Gracias."

"No running away with Prince Charming here," Olivia teased from behind her. Natalia looked at her in surprise. She didn't even hear the other woman come up.

Natalia laughed lightly. "As tempting as that may be, I'm afraid you're stuck with me, querida."

Olivia jokingly snapped her fingers. "Darn!" She looked at the old man still standing nearby and asked for directions to their hotel. After some more mutterings and grand gestures of his arms, Olivia picked up two of the bags and began walking. She looked back at Natalia, tipping her head. "Come on, slow poke."

After a short but strenuous walk up a hill away from the harbor, the ground flattened out and the two women walked a few more blocks past restaurants, hotels, and stores with cheap memorabilia common to tourist traps until they reached their destination.

"Here we are," Olivia said, smiling at her wife. She enjoyed the look of wide-eyed surprise that slowly overtook the younger woman's tired features.

A low whistle escaped Natalia's lips as she took in the elaborate marble façade and massive chandeliers that hung from the overhang of the circle drive where limousines waited for their guests and expensive sports cars parked awaiting valet service.

"Wait until you see inside," Olivia teased as they made their way up the sidewalk to the front door.

The interior looked nothing like the outside. The ceiling gave the place a rustic feel with wooden beams but the white and cream walls dispelled the dark weight of the ceiling to give it an openness appropriate to a seaside resort. Low, wide couches and glass tables adorned the common areas, dotted by colorful pillows and accent pieces. Lights with multi-colored shades hanging from the ceiling at different lengths gave the space a sense of carefree abandon. While the decor was decidedly contemporary, it felt surprisingly warm and homey.

Natalia followed Olivia to the front desk as the older woman introduced herself to the manager on duty. From what she could overhear, Natalia could tell they were talking about the hotel. And Olivia chided her yesterday about talking about work! It served them well

though because the manager picked up a phone and called the restaurant giving strict instructions for a honeymoon special to be delivered immediately to their suite.

Even though it wasn't necessary, a bellman took their bags and guided the women to the elevators. Inside, he slid a card through a reader and pressed the button for the top floor.

Natalia looked askance at the other woman.

"What?" Olivia declared with wide eyes.

Natalia just shook her head and tucked her arm through the other woman's, leaning in close as the elevator climbed higher. She wasn't sure what she expected when the elevator dinged and the doors opened, but for the elevator to open up on the actual suite itself was not it. Before her were massive French doors that opened onto a large balcony overlooking the ocean and large plates of floor to ceiling glass dotted the wall, allowing sunlight to stream into the space. In the distance, she could clearly see Puerto Rico.

A hand went to her mouth, overwhelmed again by what Olivia had done. "Oh my God...Olivia. This is...I don't even have words."

Olivia quietly tipped the bellman handsomely and walked over to where her wife was standing in front of the windows. She wrapped her arms around the younger woman's trim waist and pulled her close. "I'm glad you like it."

Natalia rested her head back on Olivia's shoulder and held onto the hands around her. "I'd be crazy if I didn't."

"Well, you were crazy enough to marry me," Olivia joked. She could feel Natalia shake her head before the woman turned in her arms.

"Don't put yourself down like that. You, Olivia Spencer-Rivera, are the most amazing woman I've ever met, and I'm lucky to have your love and to spend my life with you." Natalia punctuated the claim with a kiss, one that promised many more to come.

Natalia tipped her head to deepen the kiss when a bell made her pull back. She looked up at Olivia who was looking a little flushed and frazzled.

"That must be our honeymoon special." Olivia cleared her throat and broke away to open the elevator doors.

A large cart filled with champagne, several wines, fruits, cheeses, and other goodies was rolled into the room. In the middle of the cart was an envelope. Natalia picked it up and looked at Olivia, who told her to go ahead and open it. Inside were two cards for unlimited, complimentary spa use signed by the owner of the hotel.

"Very nice!" Natalia smiled, handing the cards over to Olivia to look at. "I guess it makes sense considering our affinity for spas."

Olivia chuckled as she read. "I bet Mr. Parrilla changes his tune when he learns that I may set up shop on another island."

Natalia couldn't help but smile. As much as she loved the homey, mothering side of Olivia and the way she was with their kids, she had missed the take-no-prisoners business tycoon that she'd fallen in love with over three years ago.

She pulled the cards from Olivia's grasp and dropped them on the cart. "How many nights do we have here?"

Olivia looked at her warily. "Two. Why?"

"Well, since this is the honeymoon suite, we better get to honeymooning. Don't you think?" The look in Natalia's eyes as she spoke made clear her intentions of how she wanted to spend their first night on the island.

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Natalia sighed as she leaned into Olivia's strong back, feeling muscles move beneath her as the other woman steered the boat through the choppy waters as they headed north and east of Puerto Rico to the old city of San Juan.

"This has been so amazing," Natalia murmured over the wind and waves before kissing a sun-warmed shoulder. "It's almost a shame to go home, but I do miss the kids."

Olivia smirked fighting hard not to say anything. "I'm sure they're fine." Feeling her phone buzz in her pocket, Olivia distracted her wife. "Would you mind bringing a fresh cup of coffee? Someone kept me up the last two days." She made a show of yawning and Natalia slapped her arm before reaching for Olivia's empty mug and heading to the kitchen.

With the brunette out of eyesight, Olivia pulled her phone from her pocket, read the text message, and smiled. She radioed in to the dock and got the slip number for her boat, then sent the information in a reply. She smiled broadly to herself, knowing she'd have a hell of a time outdoing this trip in the future. To see the look on Natalia's face though would be so worth it.

Pulling into the marina at San Juan was more harried than Olivia anticipated. There were boats and ships of all sizes from speed boats to cruise ships, skiers, fishermen, and even planes that landed on the water. She had boated and sailed many times in her life and her father had even been a fisherman, but the massive coming and going of the San Juan port was overwhelming. Never in her life had Olivia been so glad to see their boat slip come into view.

Seeing a familiar sight on the dock, Olivia called down to Natalia from where she'd sent the younger woman earlier when the stress of coming into port had made her frazzled. "We're here, Natalia!"

She slowed the boat down easing it into position. She waved toward the dock but also put a finger to her lips in a shushing gesture.

Natalia emerged from the galley with a relieved sigh. "I'm glad that's over! Are you sure we can't just fly home?" She looked past the huge smile on Olivia's face and gasped. "Oh my God!" Running to the side of the boat, Natalia scrambled to the dock and enveloped Emma, Leyla, Francesca, and Ava in a huge hug.

"Hey, what about me?" From behind the group, Rafe stood proudly on his braces.

Natalia broke away from the rest of her family to go to her son, pulling him into a fierce hug. "My baby."

"Surprise!" Olivia called behind her.

Natalia turned and looked at her wife in wonder. "You...I can't believe you did this. All of this. Everything about this trip has been amazing, but this..." She took Olivia's face in her hands, simply staring at her in awe. "I love you so, so much."

Olivia took Natalia in her arms and lifting her slightly, spun her around. Putting her back on the ground, she warmed at Natalia's childlike giggle. "And I love you."

Their kiss was met with groans from their family and both of them laughed, breaking the tender moment.

Olivia leaned back and pulled something out of her back pocket. Looking closer, Natalia could see it was a map with writing on it. She held it up and smiled. "Would you like to see home? Your mom was very forthcoming with information on where she and your father grew up, where they met, where they went to church. Stuff like that. If you're interested."

Natalia opened her mouth, but she was speechless at the lengths Olivia went to in order to make her happy. She said a prayer of thanks, one of thousands she'd prayed since first meeting Olivia and only one of the thousands more to come. She linked her arm through her wife's and reached for Emma with the other. "Wherever you go, I'll follow."

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*To all the OVS fans,*

*Everyone on Team OVS extends our warmest appreciation for giving us three amazing years with you! While it hasn't always been easy or we haven't always been timely, the enthusiasm of the readers to continuously come back and ask for more kept all of us going. We couldn't have done it without you! Your love and passion for Otalia's love story made it all possible.*

**Thank you!**

*Calliope's Muse & Geekgrrllurking*

**Executive Producers**

