

Title: **Expectations**

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Author: kjwrit

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Chapter 1: Responsibilities

Responsibilities

SPOV

I glanced at the clock on my nightstand and saw that only ten minutes had passed. I looked at the man lying beside me and his snoring confirmed that he was already out for the night. I readjusted the pillow under my butt and settled in for at least another twenty minutes until I could finally get comfortable and thought about my life up until this point.

Bill and I had been high school sweethearts. His parents had 'old money' and my parents loved him along with the fact that he was ambitious even at a young age. He knew he wanted to eventually get into politics so he tailored his lifestyle with that goal in mind. He was two years older than me, so when he went to LSU for college I followed him after him as soon as I graduated high school.

I thought I was in love with him, but when he proposed to me after I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration my first reaction wasn't to jump up and down screaming "Yes!" I hesitated because I was unsure. He had proposed in front of my parents and when I looked over at them I could tell that they wanted me to accept, so I did.

My mother along with Bill's mother planned the entire wedding. They even picked out my dress, who the bridesmaids would be, and what they would be wearing. And...it didn't bother me one bit. I had a role to fulfill, so I did what was expected of me.

Bill was my first and only lover and he could be very gentle and sweet when he wanted to, but more often than not I'd have to take care of 'business' on my own to get the release my body needed.

And now here I was, lying in bed with a pillow propped up under my butt after another unsatisfying round of sex with Bill in an effort to get pregnant. We've been married for five years now and Bill decided that we needed to have a child (preferably two) to represent the perfect family because that's what the public wants to see in their elected officials. Bill had become a town council member and had his eye on the mayoral election two years from now. He figured that if we had a baby by then and I was pregnant with another one he'd be a shoo in.

I, however, wasn't ready to have a baby now. I'd gotten a job at Northman Industries right after I graduated and was lucky enough to have bosses that recognized my potential. I was on the fast track to being the youngest VP of Acquisitions in the company's history. It was ironic that I gave in so easily in my personal life to whatever everyone else wanted me to do, when at work I had a fierce reputation. Maybe I just took out my frustrations there. Much to Bill's dismay, I had chosen to hyphenate my last name with his. I told him it was because I had already started my career as a 'Stackhouse' and didn't want to lose the recognition that came with my name. I secretly did it because I felt that by giving up my name I would be giving up myself entirely, and I wasn't prepared to do that. Everyone at work still used just the 'Stackhouse' portion of my name as well, and I never corrected anyone.

A baby now would only derail my career. Bill expected me to stay home once we had children saying my days would be filled with the luncheons and committees I'd have to attend as the wife of the mayor. My mother wholeheartedly agreed and they all just looked at me working as a passing fancy that I should be happy to be done with once I got pregnant.

I was a late bloomer as a teenager and my periods only came sporadically. My mother had put me on the pill as soon as Bill and I became girlfriend and boyfriend, even though we didn't have sex for the first time until the end of my senior year in high school. I had stopped taking it six months ago when Bill tossed them out deciding we would start trying then. I had only gotten my period once since then, but many negative pregnancy tests later we were still trying. Everything had become so mechanical that the majority of the time I made mental lists of things I needed to see to at work while Bill did his two whole minutes of pumping into me before shoving a pillow under my butt and going to sleep. I couldn't remember the last time I had an orgasm from him.

I had just sat down with a cup of coffee the next morning and while waiting for it to cool off enough for me to take a sip Bill threw me for another loop.

Without bothering to look up from the newspaper in front of him he said, "We've been trying to make a baby for six months now and you're still not pregnant. If it doesn't happen soon it's going mess up my timeline in order for you to be pregnant a second time when the elections come around in two years. I took the liberty of making an appointment with a fertility specialist for you on Friday morning at 8 a.m. You're not to eat or drink anything that morning so they can take some blood samples. Hopefully they'll be able to tell us what's wrong with you and can fix it."

I sat there in disbelief trying to stare a hole through the newspaper in front of him to bore into the center of his skull. Of course, I thought, there must be something wrong with ME. Nothing could possibly be wrong with Mr. Perfect and his perfectly planned life. I huffed out loud as I checked my calendar on my blackberry.

"Sorry, " I said, "but I have a staff meeting at 10 on Friday morning and I don't want to chance being late. "

He lowered the newspaper then and stared me down as if trying to will me into submission with merely a look. I stared back and just waited him out. When he picked up his phone, I internally high-fived myself for winning that battle. My celebration was short-lived when he took my

blackberry and made me an appointment for this morning seeing that I had nothing scheduled. He took the coffee cup out of my hand before I ever got my first sip saying I'd better hurry because they were expecting me in 45 minutes. When I still didn't move he played his trump card saying, "I wonder what Mother Stackhouse would say if she knew you were pouting like a petulant child instead of doing whatever is necessary to give her a grandbaby."

My mother was my greatest weakness. She knew how to push every button I had and I'd discovered early on in life that it was much less traumatic to just do what she wants when she wants. Sighing, I got up and got dressed to go to the appointment. I didn't miss the look of smug satisfaction on his face when I got up either.

Two hours and 5 vials of blood later I was sitting at my desk going over the files I had been compiling on an investment firm in Australia that had a solid foundation but needed more capital if they were going to succeed. I had been following their progress for months now and thought Northman Industries would do well to either merge with them as a financial backer or acquire the firm outright. I had a meeting scheduled with the owner of Northman Industries, Andre Northman, this afternoon and I planned to give him the formal proposal then.

I heard a knock on my door and looked up to see my assistant, Amelia Broadway, standing there. We'd grown close after she had started working for me and was the only person I was comfortable enough with to know the real me. She knew the real relationship I had with Bill as well my parents. She couldn't understand how I was tough as nails at work, but would roll over so easily at home. She told me daily to just say to hell with them all and leave. As much as I would like to, I knew I wouldn't be able to withstand the hurricane force that is my mother.

Amelia came trotting in my office with her whole face lit up with a secret she was dying to spill. I'd seen that look many times on her. She waited until she was right in front of my desk before letting loose with, "You'll never guess who's going to be at the staff meeting on Friday!"

I gave her a look that said 'Who cares?', but I secretly was chomping at the bit to find out. The look in her eyes told me she didn't buy my faked indifference for one minute. "Come on! Guess!" She waved her hands at me like she was on fire and trying to fan the flames away.

"Ugh, I don't know Amelia, so why don't you just tell me!"

She let the moment of suspense build up once more and then leaned over my desk whispering, "The Prodigal Son."

What, I thought? Why in the hell is HE going to be there? I guessed that I must have thought out loud because Amelia answered both questions.

"Mr. Playboy European Jet set Party Boy is going to be at the meeting! Mr. Northman is making some big announcement, but no one knows what it is." She slumped in the chair in front of my desk coming down off of her gossip high and just grinned at me.

Mr. Northman's son, Eric, was well known within the company. He was well known all over Europe and several gossip magazines as well. There were many times that Amelia and I read about his exploits online and looked at pictures of him going in and out of parties and bars all over the world with a different floozy, celebrity or otherwise, on his arm. According to the ragmags he had turned 30 last month and had a huge party in Monaco hopping from yacht to yacht in the Mediterranean Sea.

I didn't know much about him other than what I had read, but they say pictures are worth a thousand words. And the pictures I had seen seemed to back up the stories that went along with them. He was very nice to look at, eye candy even, but I had no respect for anyone that never worked a day in their life and had been giving everything without earning any of it. Mr. Northman never discussed his son with me, and I never asked. I honestly could care less, but a part of me thought it must be nice to not have any responsibilities and be able to do whatever you wanted whenever you wanted.

Looking back to Amelia I said, "Well, I guess we'll find out in four more days."

A few hours later I was sitting across from Mr. Northman as he was looking over my proposal. I had already given him my verbal assessment and was waiting on his response. While he was looking over the figures I had compiled I took the opportunity to glance around his office. There were some beautiful, and I'm sure expensive, pieces of artwork adorning the walls surrounding his beautifully carved mahogany desk. A floor to ceiling glass wall behind him looked out over the city of Shreveport. I took a closer look at the framed pictures on the credenza behind him and noticed one was of the playboy as a child. It appeared to be a school photo and he was wearing a blue blazer with some sort of crest on the pocket.

It figures, I thought. He probably had the best education money could buy and what does he do with his life? Parties like it's his last day on earth every day.

The sound of Mr. Northman clearing his throat brought me back from my musings. "Well, Ms. Stackhouse, you certainly have done your homework. I knew you were something special when we first hired you but I must say you've certainly exceeded the expectations I had for you." I blushed at his words of praise before he continued. "Now you know Mr. Dearborn, our former Vice President of Acquisitions, retired unexpectedly last month. I have several big announcements that I'll be making at the staff meeting this Friday concerning that position and I certainly hope you'll be pleased when you hear them. I'll also have a decision for you on your proposal here by then."

I could barely keep myself from jumping up and down before I left his office. I pulled Amelia into my office and told her what Mr. Northman had told me about the VP spot and we both squealed like two school girls at a Justin Beiber concert. She hugged and congratulated me and I relished in it while I could. I knew better than to mention any of this news at home. History has proven that Bill would only use the opportunity to mock my decision to work citing my responsibilities at home as his wife and my mother would be there cheering him on. They didn't care about my successes, so I didn't care to tell them.

On my way out of the office that evening I took a detour passed Dearborn's old office and peeked inside. It was a corner office with two walls of floor to ceiling windows and much larger than my current one. I mentally pictured where I would put my desk and thought of maybe buying a plant or two to liven it up since there would be so much sunlight. I skipped out of the building and into my car counting down the hours until the staff meeting on Friday.

Chapter 2: Misconceptions

Misconceptions

EPOV

I woke up to the sound of the phone ringing next to my head. I'd had a long night out at the club with...*what was her name?* I took a peek at the naked girl sleeping to me and decided I'd call her 'Red' since that was the color of her hair. I'd also call her a cab as soon as I got up because our "date" officially ended as soon as I fell asleep. I buried my head underneath the pillow and sighed with relief when the ringing finally stopped, but my relief was short lived when it immediately started ringing again. Reaching out I picked it up and growled out, "What?"

"Is that any way to greet your father?" Ugh.

"I'm sorry father. I had a long night and you woke me up. It's..." I looked over at the clock on the nightstand and saw it was already 2:30 in the afternoon. Picking up where I left off I said, "early for me."

I heard him take a deep breath and braced myself for the inevitable. "You know why I'm calling Eric. It's time for you to start living up to the Northman name and your obligations. I saw you had quite a celebration for your birthday. I let you have your fun once you graduated from Oxford so you could sow your wild oats, as they say, but now it's time to come home. I have big plans for you and they start with you being here in Shreveport on Friday morning for the staff meeting. Tell me where you are and I'll send the corporate jet to pick you up."

Home. Well *that's* a new concept. I was sent away to boarding school at the age of 5 and hadn't spent more than a week or two at a time with either one of my parents since then. I was only trotted out for family photo opportunities with the press. While father travelled around the world forming the Northman Empire, mother travelled back and forth between fashion shows and rehabs. I knew who I'd gotten my party gene from and it certainly wasn't the man at the other end of the line.

"I'm still in Monaco."

"Fine, I'll have the pilot call once they land. I have the perfect assistant in mind for you to help you get your feet wet. You're going to represent me and this company and I expect nothing less than perfection." He ended the call as soon as his little speech was over.

I threw the phone down on the bed and it bounced up and hit 'Red' in the head waking her up. She looked over at me and purred, "Hey baby. Are we going on your yacht today?"

All of them were the same. They all wanted the same thing, the lifestyle I led and the money I had. I know I'm good looking enough without it, but they wouldn't be trying to hang on to me beyond the first few fucks without the rest.

"I'm not your *baby* and *we* aren't doing anything today. You're getting dressed and getting out. I have work to do." I left her glaring after me as I went into the shower and made sure to take my time so she'd be gone once I got out.

I felt a little more human once I was clean and got a cup of coffee in me so I pulled open my laptop and started looking at the financial trends for the last few days. My father would probably shit a brick if he knew I kept up with them, but I've grown up knowing exactly where I'd end up and I didn't want to look like a fool once I got there. I certainly didn't want to embarrass him, but I didn't want to embarrass myself even more.

I'd been keeping tabs on an investment firm in Australia that I thought would be a good fit with the company. I jotted down a few notes so I could talk to my father about it once I got in. I had no idea how to explain our relationship. He wants me to be just like him, but he acts like he doesn't think I'm capable. I graduated at the top of my class at both boarding school and Oxford, but he just attributes it to the 'Northman' name and his generous donations. He gives me credit for NOTHING.

In return, I give him what he expects to see. I party hard and live the playboy life because he has expected nothing more. He was even gracious enough to fund it all. I know on some level I DO want his approval, otherwise I would tell him to fuck off and do what I want to do. I had entertained thoughts of becoming a writer, but that was shot down immediately by dear old dad so economics it was.

With a heavy heart, I stood up and started packing my things. By the time I had finished I had decided to just try and make the best of it. There was no sense trying to avoid it and maybe if I showed him that I was capable he would finally see the real me.

The next day I was being driven up to the front door of my parents' home. I guess it's more like a mansion than a house, but this would be my temporary home for now. I definitely needed to start looking for my own place. There was no way I was staying here any longer than necessary.

I was greeted by the house staff and told my parents were in the study. I walked in to find them ignoring each other and each with a glass in their hand. Why they were still married was beyond me. It made me feel a little better though, knowing I wasn't the only one that was miserable.

Looking up at me my mother held her hand out towards me saying, "Eric. You look well. Come and give your mother a kiss." When I bent down to kiss her cheek I could smell the booze on her. Scotch I think. Standing back up I walked to my father and shook his hand. His eyes narrowed as he assessed me, but I had no idea what he was assessing me for.

I decided to break the silence by saying, "Father, you look well. How's business?" I knew he could talk for hours about the company so I settled into one of the wing back leather chairs in the room knowing it would be a while. I was right. He talked for two hours straight on all of the different things the company had expanded into over the last couple of years. When he finally paused long enough for me to get a word in I told him about the investment firm I'd been watching and handed him my notes. He looked shocked at first, but as he read over my notes a sly grin came across his face.

It was my turn to be shocked when he said, "Well, well...it appears the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." He actually smiled at me continuing, "I'm impressed son." I felt myself actually sitting up a little taller at his compliment. Maybe this wouldn't be so bad after all.

The next morning I walked into the office behind my father wearing a much dreaded suit and tie. He showed me where my office would be which turned out to be nicer than I had expected. It was a corner office with two whole walls of nothing but window so I hoped it would help me not feel as confined as I'd feared. I'd gotten used to getting up and going wherever and whenever I wanted and worried at being stuck behind a desk feeling like the four walls would close in on me. This would definitely take some getting used to.

It needed furniture so I wouldn't be using it today, but father had said that I would just be introduced to everyone today. I would officially start on Monday, but I wouldn't be going into the office. I had already phoned the investment firm I'd been tracking and had an appointment to meet with them on Tuesday to see if we could come to an agreement. I'd be flying out on Monday along with my new assistant.

I stood outside his office door giving his secretary the travel times so she could make the hotel arrangements when I saw the most beautiful woman I had ever seen walking towards the conference room. Her long blond hair fell in waves passed her shoulders and she was wearing a tailored white dress shirt that fit her curves perfectly. She had tucked it into her black skirt which highlighted her slender waist and curvaceous ass. I watched her eyes glaze over as they traveled over my body before she saw me looking back at her. She immediately dropped her eyes to the floor and went into the conference room.

I heard my father chuckling next to me causing me to look over at him. He smiled like the Cheshire cat saying, "She's very pretty isn't she? "

"Yes." It was all I could say because it was true, but I couldn't help but wonder why he'd brought it up. We walked into the conference room and I sat off to the side as my father started the meeting. I caught myself staring at her, but she kept her eyes trained on my father and for some unknown reason I was jealous she wasn't looking at me. I started wondering if maybe she was my father's mistress and he had been gloating over her beauty. It wouldn't be the first time he had one. I wondered what position she held and whether or not she'd gotten it on her merits alone. Maybe I could find out her name and check out her personnel file.

I vaguely heard my father saying my name when she finally looked over at me and then everyone started clapping. I looked up at my father and he gestured for me to get up so I did.

While I was standing there he announced that I would be the new VP of Acquisitions and I heard a faint gasp coming from the group. I looked over and saw that it must have been the beautiful blond because she was the only one that looked shocked.

My father got my attention once more and told me to fill everyone in on what I'd come up with on the firm in Australia and as I cast my eyes around the group I noticed the more I talked, the more she seemed to turn red and it appeared from anger by the way her eyes were shooting daggers at both me and my father. *What the fuck?*

The meeting finally ended and as the group got up to leave my father said, "Ms. Stackhouse, would you stay behind please?" I looked over and saw that it was the blond that turned back. *Was she crying?* I looked over to my father for some sort of clue. When she came to a stop in front of us he gestured for her to have a seat and said, "Ms. Stackhouse. I can see you're upset and I think it has to do with that firm in Australia?" He paused and she nodded her head so he continued, "I know you approached me with the same proposal but my son had the same research when he came home and since he's going to be the new VP of Acquisitions I thought it was only fair that he be given this task."

What was he talking about? She'd been following the same company and gone to him with the same information? He hadn't mentioned any of that to me. I could tell she was holding back her emotions and I felt bad because she looked as though she didn't believe a word he said. What he said next shocked us both. "I've decided to create a position for you Ms. Stackhouse. I haven't decided on a title yet, but it will come with a significant salary increase. Essentially you will be working directly under Eric. You're very well versed on the many holdings within this company and Eric could use someone like you to support him. He will eventually take over my position so you would slide right into his vacated slot. Is this agreeable with you?"

We both looked at her as she just stared at us with no emotion left on her face. I briefly wondered if she was in shock, but she hesitantly nodded her head.

My father concluded with, "Good. Eric will fill you in on your trip next week. If you'll excuse me I have another meeting to attend."

As soon as he walked out I couldn't help but ask her, "Are you okay? You seemed pretty upset." I was about to apologize and explain to her that I'd had no idea she had pitched the same proposal to him, but no sooner had I spoken the words than the daggers appeared in her eyes again. She spat out, "I'm fine. Perfect. Why don't you just tell me whatever it is you need to say so I can back to work."

I immediately felt my blood start to boil. "What's your problem? If you're having some sort of lover's spat with my father, there's no need to get nasty with me!"

"LOVER'S SPAT?" she yelled. "Where do you come off accusing me of having an affair? I'll have you know that I'm a married woman! Just because YOU seem to sleep with every female that crosses your path doesn't mean EVERYONE does!"

Married? I looked down at her left hand and sure enough there was a rock on her finger that was big enough to choke a horse. *She's one of those* I thought to myself. She must have reeled in a whopper to get a rock that size. I briefly wondered why she was even still working if she married into money. The thing I didn't understand was why I suddenly felt disappointed that she was already taken.

I shook the thoughts out of my head and said, "It's no concern of mine WHAT you do so what I do should be of no concern of YOURS. We're flying to Sydney on Monday. Be at the airstrip where the company jet is stored by noon. We'll be returning on Friday."

She was still glaring at me when she said, "Fine!" And then she stood up and left.

"FINE!" I barked back at her retreating form. I sat there with my head in my hands wondering what in the hell had just happened. Something about her got under my skin. I rarely lose my cool like that, but she had me so worked up I wanted to either fight her or fuck her. Probably both.

I grabbed my laptop and logged into the company's database. I had been given access to every system this morning and I immediately pulled up her personnel records. I skimmed through them and saw that her married name was Compton. *Why does she still go by Stackhouse?* She had a degree in Business from LSU and all of her annual performance appraisals were outstanding. It almost seemed as though she walked on water from the way some of her former managers sung her praises.

I decided that I would cool off over the weekend and try to start over with her on Monday. We were spending the entire week together so I should be able to get a better feel for her then.

Chapter 3: Odds

Odds

SPOV

To say I was dumbstruck as I rounded the corner heading to the conference room and saw Eric Northman would be putting it mildly. I'd seen him plenty of times in pictures in magazines and online, but they didn't do him justice. He was incredibly tall and lean. He was wearing a gray suit with a blue shirt that was the exact same color as his eyes and a matching tie. It must've been tailor made because it clung to his body in all of the right ways. When I finally looked into his eyes I was mortified to see him looking back at me with a lustful gaze. I immediately dropped my eyes to the floor and practically ran into the conference room in embarrassment at being caught ogling him.

What was I doing? I'm a married woman. No matter what problems Bill and I may have it wouldn't excuse acting out on all of the fantasies that popped into my head the moment I saw him. I should know better anyway. His reputation with women is legendary and I'm sure that

smoldering look of his has been used on plenty of them. If I were to give in to that, I would just be another one of many.

When he walked into the room I made myself focus strictly on Mr. Northman. He gave the expected "Welcome my son into the ranks" speech and when we began to clap I looked over to see him looking at me. I felt a flutter in my chest looking into his eyes again but he thankfully stood up and looked around to everyone else, breaking me from his temporary spell. He began to speak and I couldn't help focusing on his lips as they moved. They looked soft and his bottom lip was begging to be sucked in between my teeth.

Ugh! *FOCUS STACKHOUSE!* I shook the thoughts from my head and concentrated on what he was saying. He was talking about MY proposal and taking credit for it! I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I looked over at Mr. Northman and saw him beaming with pride at his liar of a son! He must have memorized my entire proposal because he was detailing it practically verbatim. *Son of a bitch!* I didn't know who to hate more, Mr. Northman or his son, so I glared at them equally.

I couldn't stop the gasp from leaving my lips when Mr. Northman announced he would be putting his son in the VP position that I had earned. I was crushed inside. Mr. Northman hadn't said the words, but he'd definitely insinuated that the position was mine. Thinking that he had so much confidence in me had boosted my self esteem to the point where I seriously started thinking of ending my relationship with Bill. But now? Maybe all I WAS good for was being a dutiful wife and future mother.

As the meeting drew to a close I could feel my calm façade crumbling and the traitorous tears filling my eyes. I stood with the others and hoped to get out of there quickly as I felt them begin to fall when Mr. Northman asked me to stay behind. I willed them to stop as I turned to face the two of them but I couldn't hide the streaks that had already made their way down my face.

When Mr. Northman told me Eric had pitched the same proposal as mine I had to clamp down on the 'HA!' that was trying to escape my throat. Did they really think I'd believe that? I doubted Eric could do a simple math equation more complicated than keeping track while playing quarters in a frat house much less research and track the financial trends of an investment firm. From everything I've read he's done nothing but flit all over the world in one seemingly endless party.

I was in total shock when I was offered the position of a glorified flunky to Eric. The rational side of my brain kicked in before I could tell them to shove it where the sun doesn't shine knowing that I should think about it all before acting out. All I could do was nod my acceptance in fear of the slew of curse words I was biting back being able to escape.

But when Eric feigned interest in me being upset I felt my temper rise again and snapped at him. He didn't even have the decency to apologize for stealing my work! And then to accuse me of sleeping with his father? I don't think I'd ever met a bigger egotistical jerk than him. Just because HE'S a whore, everyone else must be too?

I couldn't wait until I was finally away from him. I strode to my office and slammed the door tossing the plants I'd brought in with me for my, *now HIS*, new office into the trash. I wasn't sure I'd be able to work for him. He was somehow able to bring out the worst in me and at the same time just looking at him made me feel like I was on fire. I'd have to think long and hard about whether or not I should just resign like Bill wanted me to. At least with him I knew what I was in for.

When I got home that night Bill informed me that the fertility specialist had called and we had an appointment to get the test results back on Monday morning at 10. He gave me a look that told me he wasn't too thrilled that I was leaving for a week so I was surprised when he didn't try to convince me not to go as he had done before. When he'd been unsuccessful in the past he always made it a point to clear his schedule and come with me as if he couldn't trust me to go alone even though I had never given him a reason not to. His position on the town council wasn't a full time job so he still worked at his father's law firm taking whatever cases he felt would be beneficial to him in terms of political clout. He had seemed distracted all weekend but I attributed it to the upcoming appointment on Monday morning. I certainly wasn't going to question why he wasn't giving me a hard time and a thought crept into the back of my mind that maybe a part of me wanted to get to know Eric better. Then I thought of what a jerk he was and that pushed the more lustful thoughts out of my head.

As we sat in the doctor's office waiting for him to come in I thought about everything that was going on. I knew Bill wanted children but he really wanted them for all of the wrong reasons. Would I be able bring a child into the world knowing that? Would I be able to love the child unconditionally or would I resent it because I don't think I'm ready yet? Would Bill be willing to make the same sacrifices he was asking of me in giving up my career to be a stay at home parent?

Would I repeat the cycle and treat it as my own mother treated me? I knew she was never happy with her 'station' in life and always wanted more of everything. The grass was always greener in her eyes so she tried to live vicariously through me.

Turning to him I asked, "Do you love me?" I wasn't sure if I loved him anymore so I thought it was only fair to find out how he felt.

He looked at me and his first expression seemed to be one of a kid caught with their hand in the cookie jar before it changed to indifference. "Why would you ask such an asinine question? I married you didn't I?"

"We're here to see if we can be parents so I'd like an honest answer from you before we go ahead with anything the doctor says. You're expecting me to give up my career that I've worked really hard for to raise your children and be the dutiful wife. Would you do the same for me?" I already knew the answer but I wanted to hear him say it. He didn't disappoint.

His nostrils flared as his anger rose when he said, "You are being ridiculous. You've know all along what our plan was. It makes no difference whether or not I would do the same thing because it's not part of the plan." The doctor walked in before he could say any more.

I'm guessing the tension was palpable in the room because the doctor looked apprehensive before he spoke. "Mrs. Compton, the blood work we had performed indicates that you have a high prolactin level. This is most commonly caused by a micro adenoma of the pituitary gland. Basically it's a small benign tumor on your pituitary gland and it affects the hormones that signal your eggs to mature and ovulate. I see here in your medical history that you've had a very irregular menstrual cycle since puberty except when you were on birth control pills which would've chemically induced your body to have your monthly cycle. I'd like to schedule you for an MRI of your brain and then we can go from there."

I was too stunned to say anything at first. I guess Bill wasn't.

"Is there any way to fix her?" he asked.

The doctor shot a glare at Bill and responded, "She's not broken Mr. Compton." Looking back at me the doctor continued, "If we can confirm this is indeed what's going on it IS treatable. Many times the tumor more or less burns itself out and corrects the problem on its own over time, but more than likely you'll need medical intervention in order to be able to conceive. We'll get an MRI now and another one in six months to gauge whether or not it's grown in size. There are drugs you can take to help alter the effects of the tumor so you would have a better chance of getting pregnant, or you could try IVF if the drugs aren't enough. Surgery would be a last result because of the pituitary gland being located in the center of your brain. The only way to access it would be to enter through your nasal passages and it can be risky. But I don't want us to get ahead of ourselves. Let's just wait and see what the MRI shows us."

I had to know. "Are you saying there's a chance I might never be able to have a child on my own? What are my odds of conceiving?"

His eyes softened when he said, "Nothing in life is guaranteed. Your odds of conceiving without help are slim to none, but please try not to worry about it for right now. We'll have a better idea of what's going on after we get your MRI results back."

He ushered us out of his office and before we left I had an appointment scheduled for the following week for the MRI. Bill was uncharacteristically quiet as we walked to the parking lot. We had each driven there on our own since he would be going to his office and I was headed for the private airstrip that housed the company's jet. When it appeared he was going to leave without saying a word I said, "I'll call you once we land."

When he turned his face towards mine his expression was a mixture of anger and pity. "Are you happy now?" he spat out. He got into his car without saying another word and drove away.

I couldn't stop the tears from falling as I drove to the airstrip. I'd never felt so alone. I hadn't really wanted a child right now, but after being told that I might not be able to have one at all made me feel so empty inside. A part of me felt like I wasn't a whole woman. As Neanderthal as it sounds, women were on this earth to procreate. I know that's not ALL we're here for and not everyone is meant to be a mother, but it's what we do. *It's what they do* my hateful inner voice chimed in.

I got to the airstrip at 11:45 and took the pack of tissues out of my car and stuck them into my purse. I really didn't want to spend the next 20 hours stuck on a plane with Eric Northman right now. I was always nervous flying anyway, but with everything on top of it I didn't have to strength to raise my shields and pull my big girl panties up. I just wanted to curl into a ball and cry.

After drying my tears and fixing my make-up I got my bag and headed for the plane. I'd never flown on it before and I was thankfully distracted by the luxuriousness of it. It had several leather captain's chairs that appeared to swivel so you could face the other passengers as well as a leather couch in the center of the compartment and additional captain's chairs in the rear. I could make out a small galley in the back of the plane and another door that I assumed was the bathroom.

I was met by a perky blond flight attendant that took my bag and stowed it in the rear of the plane. She explained that we would be stopping briefly at LAX to top off the fuel tanks before the 15 hour flight to Sydney and then asked if I'd like anything to drink. When I declined she said that she would be preparing a light meal for us after we were in the air and if I changed my mind to let her know. I chose to sit in one of the captain's chairs towards the front of the plane hoping that Eric would sit in the back. I took a book out of my bag and opened it up. I wanted to lose myself for a little while in the story but while my eyes stared at the words my brain was busy cycling through everything the doctor had said.

When I felt the need to shift in my seat I noticed that I was still on the first page of the book. I checked my watch and saw that it was already 12:30 and we still hadn't left. I looked around saw Eric hadn't come on board yet. My emotional roller coaster climbed straight up to anger.

Isn't it bad enough that his daddy put him into a job that he's nowhere near qualified for? He doesn't even have the decency to show up on time? Is THIS what I can expect from him? I refuse to be his goddamn keeper. I'll be damned if he thinks I'm going to run around after him making sure he's on time for his appointments or any other stupid thing he expects me to do. God help him if he thinks I'll be getting his coffee or picking up his dry cleaning for him.

I heard someone stomping up the stairs into the jet. As soon as he came into view I felt my breath hitch in my throat. He was wearing a tight t-shirt that showed every sculpted muscle underneath it and low slung jeans with black motorcycle boots. The t-shirt had ridden up in the front and a hint of blond hair on his abdomen and a well defined V trailing downward was on display. When my eyes travelled up to his face the glare in his eyes brought my anger right back. *Screw him! He has no right to be mad at ME!*

"Nice of you to FINALLY show up! I guess you feel like you don't have to be on time since it's daddy's plane."

I do believe if looks could kill I'd be dead right now based on the look he was giving me. Before he could say anything the flight attendant bounced up to him, and yes she did *bounce*, saying "Welcome aboard Mr. Northman." Reaching for his bag she said, "Let me take this for you. Is there *anything* I can get you?"

It figures. There was no mistaking that she meant *anything*. He just shook his head and followed her towards the back of the plane. I didn't bother to turn around to see where they went because just a moment later she was back in front of me handing me the obligatory safety card indicating where all of the emergency items were kept and then she zipped back to the rear of the plane. I'm sure she probably buckled Mr. High and Mighty in herself. He probably even expected someone to do that for him. *Jerk!*

I took a cursory glance at the card and before I could think of any more hateful thoughts the door was closed and the plane started taxiing towards the runway. This was the part I hated the most as my white knuckles would attest to. Well this and landing. I was okay once we were in the air, but it was always a tense few minutes at the start and end of every flight.

I tried my best to read for a little while but my thoughts kept wandering between what I learned this morning and what Eric was doing in the back of the plane. I had to keep myself from turning to look at him and then would chastise myself for even thinking about him. When I heard the bouncy blonde giggling in the back my decision to not turn around was made for me. I didn't want to see whatever it was he was doing to make her giggle.

I did my best to immerse myself in the trashy romance novel I had brought along and the flight attendant I had named "Bimbo" brought me a snack and a bottle of water. After a tense (for me) landing and subsequent takeoff from LAX I thankfully drifted off to sleep.

I was startled awake when the plane hit turbulence and it bounced around in the sky. The pilot came on telling us to make sure we were fastened into our seats and I was grateful that I hadn't removed the seatbelt before I went to sleep. The turbulence caused the plane to jump up and down in the sky and I was starting to feel sick when I heard one of the engines sputter to a stop. The plane started veering downward and the captain was yelling for everyone to assume crash landing positions. I immediately tried to recall where everything was on that damn safety card but my mind was a complete blank. I could feel the panic rise in my chest and when I turned to look back at Eric I didn't see him anywhere. I faced forward once more and stuck my head between my knees thinking *What are the odds this day could get any worse?* Then the pilot yelled out, "BRACE YOURSELVES!"

Chapter 4: Floored

Floored

EPOV

I found myself plagued by thoughts of Sookie Stackhouse, *or Compton?*, all weekend long. Even while asleep, she invaded my dreams with each one more erotic than the last. I had been with more women than I can even recall, but none of them had ever intrigued me like her and I couldn't figure out why.

Was it because she didn't come on to me like almost every other woman I had encountered since I was a teenager? *No, I'd come across a few lipstick lesbians that I couldn't convince to let me join in on the fun.*

Or was it because she was married and therefore forbidden fruit? *Again, no since I had been a party to more than one affair.*

While she was very beautiful I've had plenty of starlets and models over the years, so it couldn't be just for her looks.

It continued to eat away at me and by Monday morning I had decided to try to get to know her better so I could somehow figure out what it was that enabled her to crawl under my skin.

That morning I was packing the last of my things when father's secretary called saying he wanted to see me before I left for the airport. The office was only 10 minutes from there so I arrived at 11:15 to give myself enough time to make it to the plane by noon. I hated being kept waiting so I always made sure I was on time, if not early, whenever I had to be somewhere. Apparently my father had no problem keeping others waiting because he was in his office behind closed doors when I arrived. His secretary said he was on an important call so I was left to wait it out.

When 30 minutes had passed I stood up to tell her I was leaving for my flight and that I would speak to my father later when his door finally opened. He motioned for me to enter and had me take a seat.

"I've been in negotiations with the LeClerq Corporation and we agreed that a partnership would be very beneficial for everyone concerned." The LeClerq company was very similar to Northman Inc. and combining forces would be the equivalent of Microsoft combining with Apple, simply unheard of. What he said next completely floored me. "In order for LeClerq and I to have faith that each party will be completely forthcoming with the other it has been decided that you will be marrying his daughter Sophie-Ann."

I sat there with my mouth gaping open while trying to process his words before I could finally speak. "You can't be serious!"

"I assure you I'm quite serious," he countered. "You've known Sophie-Ann for years, what's the problem?"

Steam had to be billowing out of my ears by that point. "My problem? I'm not going to marry Sophie-Ann LeClerq! We've run into each other over the years at parties or clubs, but I'm certainly not in love with her. We've never even dated. She's a lesbian!"

He wasn't bothered in the least. "Yes, her father mentioned something about that. Well, even if the two of you don't share a bed you can still share a last name. When the time comes for children there are other ways of getting the job done. Love has nothing to do with it. You can each still have your dalliances so long as they aren't public knowledge. We have an image to uphold."

I would've sworn I was in a nightmare were it not for the fact that Sookie was nowhere in sight so I couldn't possibly be dreaming. "No!"

"Yes." He was still completely calm. "You'll have some time to get used to the idea. The two of you will be going out on several high profile dates once you return so we can leak your location to the paparazzi. After a couple of months we'll announce your engagement followed by the wedding of the year." His eyes took on a more stern edge when he said, "End of discussion."

"No, it's not, but I'm already late for my flight so I'm leaving." Giving him my own stern look I said, "I wouldn't go making any announcements if I were you because THIS isn't happening." I stormed out without saying another word and seeing that it was almost 12:30 I floored it all the way to the airport.

I was still in a foul mood as I stomped up the stairs into the plane. I was lost in thought about the audacity my father had to think I would go along with his little fantasy when I heard, "Nice of you to FINALLY show up! I guess you feel like you don't have to be on time since it's *daddy's* plane."

Sookie quickly became the focus of my anger as I fixed my stare on her. Before I could tear into her some bottle blond flight attendant was in my face and taking my bag. I didn't hear anything she said and just shook my head wanting to be left alone and went to the back of the plane.

I sat in my seat silently fuming for a while until bottle blond knelt down in front of me making sure her surgically enhanced cleavage was on display. I, personally, didn't care for anything fake. Fake tits, fake hair color, fake interest in me. When I finally looked at her she purred, "Are you sure there isn't *anything* I can *do* for you Mr. Northman? Your father is always *quite pleased* with my *hospitality*," she ended with a giggle.

Was she fucking serious? I arranged my facial features into pure disdain, which wasn't difficult at all, and leaned back as if I might catch whatever disease she might be carrying and said, "The likes of you does nothing for me. My father obviously has MUCH lower standards than I do, now leave me the fuck alone."

I didn't care when she abruptly stood up and ran to the galley looking like she was about to cry. All I cared about was that she left me the hell alone. A little while later I saw her bring Sookie a snack and some water before she retreated to the back again completely ignoring me.

After refueling at LAX I was finally able to drift off to sleep where Sookie invaded my dreams once more. I had been standing next to Sophie-Ann somewhere with camera flashes blinding me over and over. I managed to look into the crowd around us and saw Sookie standing there watching us with tears streaming down her face. I wanted to run to her and wrap her up in my arms but my body wouldn't move. It didn't matter how hard I tried, it was like I was physically glued to that spot. I saw Sookie break into sobs and she turned and ran into the crowd. I woke up with a start yelling, "NO!"

It took me a minute to realize where I was, but I could still feel the turmoil inside me from the dream. I had to check on her. I stood up and walked towards her seat and found her asleep with a book in her lap. I marked the page she had left it open to and placed it on the seat next to her and went back to get a drink. When bottle blond saw me coming towards her she quickly averted her eyes and practically ran to the front of the plane to get away from me. I turned to make sure she wasn't going to disturb Sookie and watched her go into the cockpit closing the door behind her.

I found myself a bottle of water and drained it dry before going into the bathroom. I was standing at the sink splashing water on my face when the plane unexpectedly bounced causing me to lose my footing. I fell hitting my head on the edge of the sink on my way down. I didn't blackout but I was dazed enough that I continued to lie there until I felt the plane starting to nosedive. I heard the pilot on the overhead speakers telling us to prepare for a crash landing and I dragged myself out of the bathroom. I had just made it into a seat and buckled up when he said, "BRACE YOURSELVES!"

The plane hit the water with a deafening roar. I could feel it as we cart wheeled nose over tail ending upside down as the water came rushing in through the cockpit door that had blown open. Every muscle in my body was screaming but the adrenaline took over as I unlatched the seatbelt and fell to the ceiling of the plane. I made my way forward and found Sookie strapped in her seat unconscious with a gash above her right eye. I was tall enough that I could easily reach her seatbelt and caught her body as she fell into my arms. The water had reached my waist at that point so I held onto her as I opened the compartment that housed the life vests, emergency survival kit, and inflatable raft. I quickly secured a vest onto Sookie and then myself, grabbing 3 more for the two pilots and flight attendant along with the kit and raft and pushed it all into the cockpit in front of me.

The water was already reaching my chin but the vest helped keep Sookie in the air pocket that hadn't been filled with water yet. I held my breath and submerged into the water to help the others from their seats but it became immediately clear that they hadn't survived. The windshield must have shattered on impact because they were left with large cuts on their faces and the front of their bodies with pieces of glass and metal protruding from them.

I looped my arm through the strap of the kit and grabbed onto Sookie and pushed us through the opening in the windshield along with the raft. I wrapped one arm and both of my legs around her and looped the tether of the raft around my other arm. I pulled the stopper to inflate the raft and as it filled with air it pulled us towards the surface of the water.

Once we broke through the surface I pulled myself into the raft dropping the kit onto the floor and then pulled Sookie's unconscious body along side of me. It was then that I noticed she had stopped breathing. I started doing CPR and yelling for her to wake up in between breathing into her mouth.

It was on my third set of blowing air into her lungs that her eyes opened and she started coughing up water. I'd never felt so relieved in my life. I helped her turn over as she coughed the water from her lungs.

When she was done she looked over at me and asked, "What happened?"

She looked so lost and fragile that I couldn't resist pulling her into my arms. I was surprised and relieved when she didn't push me away. "I don't know. I heard the pilot yelling for us to brace ourselves and then we hit the water. The plane ended up upside down and the windshield broke open on impact. I got us out of there."

She turned her head to look up at me and whispered, "What happened to the others?" I pulled her head back into my chest saying, "They didn't make it." I stroked her wet hair as she cried into my chest and found that the feeling of her in my arms felt very right. Like she belonged there. Before I could contemplate that any further I noticed land in the distance. It was difficult to tell how far away it was over the water, but I pointed it out to Sookie as I released her from my embrace. The feeling of emptiness that engulfed me when I let her go shocked me.

I quickly shook it off and grabbed one of the paddles tethered to the raft and started rowing towards the shore. I didn't try to go too fast so I could pace myself in case it was farther out than I thought. Sookie tried to grab the other paddle to help, but I told her she needed to take it easy because of the big bump on the front of her head. At first she looked like she wanted to argue, but when she moved to get the paddle her whole body swayed. My eyebrow lifted into an 'I told you so' expression and she glared back as she stuck her tongue out at me causing me to laugh for the first time in days.

The land in front of us slowly got bigger as we got closer to it but I continued to pace myself. I kept looking over at her and was awestruck by her beauty. Even with a huge knot on her head and her hair and clothes in a mess from our ordeal, she was still the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

I caught her looking back at me a few times too, but neither one of us said anything for a while. The silence wasn't an uncomfortable one but I finally broke it asking, "Do you have any idea how much time had passed after we left LAX before the crash?" I was trying to figure out in my head where we possibly were based on how long we had been flying.

"No," she answered. "I fell asleep not long after we took off. The turbulence woke me up but when I looked around no one was in the cabin." Her body visibly tensed when she asked, "Where were you?"

"In the bathroom. I had just made it back to my seat when we hit the water. Everyone else was in the cockpit." When her body relaxed I wondered why she would tense up wondering where I was, but just attributed it to the trauma of the crash. She must've felt all alone.

The sun had just set by the time we reached the shore. Sookie was still a little shaky which concerned me so I held onto her waist as we walked through the water onto the beach. After setting her down in the sand I went back and pulled the raft up behind the tide lines so it would get pulled back out into the ocean.

The saltwater had helped the gash above her eye stop bleeding, but I opened the kit and took out the first-aid pack anyway. I gently went over her cut with an alcohol swab and dabbed some Neosporin on it so it wouldn't get infected before but she balked at me putting any band-aids over it saying she was fine.

Wherever we were was definitely some place tropical. Since the moon was full I grabbed a flashlight from the kit but kept it off to save the batteries as we set off to try to find another living soul where we were. After we walked for at least an hour without any sign of civilization we turned back. Neither one of us had said much. We were both probably still in a little shock from the crash.

When we got back to the raft I pulled it up into the tree line and got us each a protein bar from the kit that we devoured within seconds. We made plans to walk in the opposite direction the next morning and climbed into the raft to get some sleep. It was then that the awkwardness crept in with us.

I lay down on one end propping my head up on the side with my feet dangling over the opposite edge and she curled into a ball on the other end. I wanted nothing more than to wrap my body around hers but I didn't think she would feel that was appropriate.

When the sun had set there was a noticeable drop in temperature, but now that we were no longer up and moving around it was much cooler than earlier. I could see her shivering as she pulled her legs up into her body and wrapped her arms around them trying to contain her body heat. When her teeth started chattering I couldn't watch her suffering anymore.

I moved closer to the center of the raft and held my arm up while saying, "Come here." She gave me a wary look so I followed it up with, "We're both cold. If we sleep next to each other it'll help keep us warm." That was partially a lie because I wasn't cold at all, but I didn't think telling her that would get her into my arms. I watched her facial expressions as she debated back and forth in her mind before she finally scooted into my arms. I wrapped one arm around her from underneath as she snuggled into me placing her head on my chest and wrapping both of her arms around me. I turned my body towards her and she moved one of her legs in between both of mine and nothing had ever felt more right than at that very moment.

She quietly whispered into my chest, "Thank you for saving me Eric." I didn't know what to say so I just did what felt right and kissed the top of her head. I heard her sigh and she held me a little tighter and we both drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 5: Assumptions

Assumptions

SPOV

I woke up with big strong arms encircling me like a boa constrictor. It took me a few moments until everything from the day before came flooding back to me. We were stranded God knows where, alone. At least alone for now. Who knew who or what we could come across when we went out looking later.

As I lay there with Eric's arms around me I came to the quick realization that I really liked it. Bill never liked to snuggle and we always kept to our own sides of the bed when we slept. It was nice to wake up this way. I thought of the events the day before and remembered coming to in the life raft. Eric's worried face was the first thing I saw and when he pulled me into his arms and told me what had happened I had never felt safer.

There was definitely something about him that drew me to him. I figured he must be charismatic given his playboy status, but he was so tender and gentle with me last night that I could only believe I had finally met the real Eric Northman.

I recalled the relief I felt when he said he had been in the bathroom alone because it had crossed my mind that him and Bimbo may have been renewing their status in the mile high club. I had no right to be upset if that had been the case, but I couldn't deny that I would've been nonetheless. Then I felt like a bad Christian for having animosity towards a woman that had just died. I decided then and there that I wasn't going to make any more assumptions about him. I think I had done enough of that already.

I felt him start to stir and I lay perfectly still. The sounds of his breathing steadily increased and I knew he had woken up. I was shocked when I felt him nuzzle his face into my hair and kiss the top of my head while squeezing me a little tighter. I waited to see if he was going to do anything else and I was a little surprised that I felt disappointed when he didn't.

I finally decided to make it known that I was awake by slowly stretching out my arms and legs. Eric's grip actually tightened for a second before he released me from his arms and my heart fluttered inside. I sat up and looked down at him. His face was breathtakingly beautiful with his day's worth of whiskers and his eyes still half open from waking. He had the most adorable lopsided grin on his face as he said, "Good morning."

"Good morning." I couldn't help but notice that other parts of him were more awake than others. Parts currently being constricted in his pants. For a second I thought maybe that boa constrictor had crawled in there while we slept based on the size of what I was seeing. Jesus Christ Sheppard of Judea! I quickly averted my eyes but I couldn't stop the moan that escaped my lips and immediately felt the blush creep up my chest and onto my face at my involuntary sound.

He sat up right away asking with concern, "Sookie, what's wrong? Do you feel okay?" His eyes were travelling up and down my body looking for the source of my discomfort. Little did he know the discomfort I felt was an ache between my thighs and had absolutely nothing to do with the crash.

I quickly recovered saying, "There's no coffee." He chuckled at my statement and I breathed a small sigh of relief that he bought my little white lie.

Still looking amused he said, "Yeah, there's no a-lot-of-stuff. What do you say we start looking around to see what is here?" He stood up and held out his hand to help me to my feet. I again felt a wave of disappointment when he released it once I was standing.

I felt my bladder making itself known and when I hesitated to start on our journey Eric looked at me questioningly. I don't know why I felt embarrassed but I did. Maybe it was the lack of bathrooms...with doors...and toilets. Ugh. He was still looking at me patiently waiting until I finally admitted, "Umm...I have to pee."

He chuckled admitting, "Yeah, so do I." We both laughed and took off in opposite directions into the trees to do our business. When I was done I noticed I had inadvertently peed on a stick. The sight of it made me think of home pregnancy tests and brought back the news the doctor had given me before we left. I felt sad again at the thought I might never have a child, but now wasn't the time to dwell on it so I headed back to the beach to meet Eric.

I found him standing by the raft with several coconuts at his feet. He looked up at me and grinned saying, "Would you care for some breakfast?" My stomach took the opportunity to growl at that very moment and I laughed saying, "Yes, but how are you going to get them open?"

His gaze darkened and using the sexiest damn voice I'd ever heard he said, "Oh, I think you'll find that I have *many* talents." I gulped and felt my knees go a little weak.

"Oh," I squeaked out. I felt my skin flush with heat and fought off the urge to start fanning myself. I watched as he placed a coconut in front of him on the sand and took out a large hunting knife from the survival kit. Placing the tip of the knife into one of the natural indentations he took a large rock and using it like a hammer the muscles in his arms flexed as he brought it down hard onto the top of the handle. I couldn't help fanning myself then.

It took me a minute before the lust cleared from my brain and I realized he had actually made a good sized hole in the coconut. When he held it up in triumph with his chest puffed out like a proud warrior I laughed and clapped at his success. He stood up and held it out to me saying, "Drink the juice. It's got a lot of proteins, vitamins and minerals."

Seeing an opportunity to pay him back for his *many* talents comment I took it in my hands and tipped it to my lips. Our eyes stayed locked on each other as I poured the sweet liquid into my mouth. Eric made a low noise in the back of his throat and licked his lips when I let some of it spill out and run down my chin. I held out the emptied coconut towards him and wiped my chin with the back of my hand saying, "I'm all... *sticky* now." I watched his expression turn into hunger and I didn't think it was for the coconut. I gave myself an internal fist pump and thought *He's not the only one that can do innuendo.*

We stood there in silence for a few moments until he finally turned back to break open the coconut completely. He carefully carved out the meat from the inside with the knife and as I ate he opened a second one drinking the juice himself. I knew better then to look at him while he drank because I didn't want to give him the opportunity to one-up me in the innuendo department thinking I was already playing with fire as it was.

He shocked me again when he disappeared into the trees and came back holding some roots in his hand. I watched as he stripped them with the knife and then frayed the ends. He held one out to me saying, "They're coconut roots. They can be used for mouthwash or for dysentery, but if you fray it out like this it makes an instant toothbrush."

Taking it from him I shook my head in disbelief and said, "How do you know all of this stuff?" He just laughed saying, "My head is full of mostly useless knowledge. I kick ass at bar trivia games."

After we finished he grabbed the survival bag throwing it over his shoulders and we started heading down the beach in the opposite direction we had travelled the night before. We walked along in silence before Eric cleared his throat and asked, "Can I ask you something?"

Shrugging my shoulders I replied, "Sure." I hoped it had nothing to do with what happened at breakfast but he did save my life so I figured it was the least I could do. What he asked brought my steps to a halt.

"Why did you hate me the first day we met?"

I stared at him remembering everything I had felt and thought as my dreams were snuffed out and then recalled my decision to stop making assumptions about him and his character. I replied honestly saying, "I was really thrown for a loop when I heard you pitching the same proposal I had given your father just days earlier. I didn't believe you had come up with the same idea. I had also believed I would be getting the VP slot because your father implied as much to me. I wasn't too keen on being your glorified flunky."

He looked me straight in the eye saying, "I swear to you Sookie, I had no idea you had pitched the same proposal. I'd been tracking that firm for several months and thought it would be a good way to get my father to have some faith in me."

I hung my head in shame at his complete sincerity answering, "I believe you Eric. It's my fault for making assumptions about you, but I've learned over the last 24 hours that they were wrong. You saved my life. The self-centered egotistical jerk I thought you were wouldn't have done that and only saved himself."

He lightened the mood by making a mocked up hurtful face and said, "Self-centered egotistical jerk? Ouch!" The playfulness left his eyes and his voice took on a harder edge when he said, "As for my father...he's a narcissistic horse's ass. I'm sorry for accusing you of being his lover."

Talk about *Ouch!* I guessed that was a sore spot for him so I mumbled out "I forgive you," and started walking again in the hopes that he would follow and pull out of his 'father funk'. It worked.

We walked for a couple of hours and we were rapidly coming to the conclusion that there was no one else around. Everything was untouched by mankind. We made our way back to the raft and started walking into the trees, avoiding the larger areas of tangled vines and brush, making our

way towards the center. We had no idea how large this island was and planned on taking the raft out at some point to row around the whole thing to see what lay on all sides.

I was surprised how easy it was for us to carry on a conversation. We found out we had a mutual love of books and discussed a variety of different classics, authors, and genres in general. He snickered when he called me out on the trashy romance novel I was reading on the plane. When I asked him how he knew what I was reading he mumbled that he saw it when he first walked in. I remembered all too well how big of a bitch I was when he first walked in but he quickly changed the subject so I guessed that he felt my earlier apology applied here as well.

We avoided talking about anything too personal and discussed the investment firm we had been headed to before we crashed. I was pleasantly surprised again at his total recall on their financial history and the reasons he gave on why he thought they'd be a good fit for the company. I had seriously misjudged him.

The terrain started getting higher the farther we walked and I was grateful I had dressed for comfort on the flight wearing a green cotton t-shirt with jeans and sneakers. We mostly made small talk but I sputtered a few times when I got caught up staring at his backside as he climbed the ground in front of me. Talk about perfect! Was there ANYTHING wrong with this man? Maybe he had six toes on each foot or a third nipple. I giggled thinking my blood sugar must be getting low again if I was contemplating third nipples.

Eric stopped climbing and turned to face me asking, "What's so funny?" *Uh oh...* As I racked my brain for something other than his possible third nipple I heard a sound in the distance. Not answering his question I listened harder asking, "Do you hear that?"

His eyebrow shot up into his hairline giving me a look like he wasn't falling for my attempt to distract him with imaginary noises. "No really! Listen" I insisted. I pointed in the direction I thought the noise was coming from and he cocked his head to the side in concentration. Both of his eyebrows shot up when he said, "Yes!"

We gave each other knowing looks and smiled taking off towards the sound.

Chapter 6: Home

Home

EPOV

I felt her lips moving across my neck as she kissed her way from one side of my head to the other. The feel of her breath blowing across the trail of moisture she left behind ran straight to my dick. A moan of "Sookie" left my lips as I pulled her face back to mine, tracing her lips with my tongue. My hands ran across her back underneath her shirt and up her front where they came to rest on her breasts. Cupping my hands over each one I grazed my thumbs across her hardened

nipples before pinching them through the fabric. She gasped at the sensation and I took the opportunity to plunge my tongue into her mouth devouring everything I could.

She broke free when she needed to breathe and I ripped the shirt she was wearing from her body as I greedily licked and sucked my way down. I had her bra unhooked and off her body within seconds as I swirled my tongue over the top of her breast before sucking her nipple into my mouth. Her hands grabbed onto the back of my head holding me in place as she rubbed her center up and down my straining erection. I could feel the heat coming off of her body in waves as she clawed at my back trying to get our bodies impossibly closer than they were. I rolled us over so that she was underneath me and pulled her jeans and underwear free from her legs leaving lying bare before me. I'd never seen a more beautiful sight.

Evidence of her arousal glistened between her thighs drawing me towards it like a man dying of thirst at a desert oasis. I positioned myself between her legs and dove head first into the Promised Land licking from her entrance up to her small bundle of nerves. She screamed out in ecstasy bucking her hips up both wanting and needing more. I had no desire to leave her wanting for anything and proceeded to suckle her nub in between my lips as I thrust first one, then two fingers inside of her. With each thrust of my fingers I flicked her nub with my tongue steadily increasing my pace. I knew she was close when I could feel her walls clamping down on my fingers and as I reached up her body with my free hand I pinched down on her nipple as I hooked my fingers brushing over her g-spot and growled out against her clit with my tongue hardened against it. She screamed with her release as the trifecta was achieved and I ripped off my pants and plunged into her before she could come back down causing a strangled, "YES!" from mouth. Her hands raked down my back as she grabbed onto my ass with both hands pulling me into her as she raised her hips to meet mine. Her pussy was so wet and so tight I felt almost light-headed from the sensation. I pounded into her grunting her name from my lips when she raised up and latched onto my neck biting down as her release hit her ripping my orgasm from my body in an explosion I was sure would leave me in pieces.

I slowly came back to consciousness with Sookie in my arms and the mother of all hard-ons. The dreams had been plaguing me since the day that we met, but now I actually had her in my arms. Waking up with Sookie in my arms was like nothing I had ever experienced before. I was never one to snuggle, but with her it just felt natural...right. Now, if only I could get her to re-enact some of my dreams I'd be set.

I was surprised at how easily we fell into a comfortable rhythm with each other. Especially since we seemed to be at each other's throats the previous two times we had been together, but I wasn't about to question it now. Just being in her presence affected me in a way I'd never felt before. The closest I could come to describing the sensation was that she felt like home. It was ridiculous to think that since I barely knew her at all, but it was the way I felt nonetheless.

I couldn't help flirting a little when I told her I had *many* talents and nearly came undone when the juice from the coconut dribbled down her chin. I had to turn away to hide my obvious arousal from her after her proclamation of being sticky and had to conjure up thoughts of little old men in tiny red Speedos before I could safely face her once more.

I was relieved that we were able to get the apologies out of the way and felt the weight I didn't know I had been carrying lift away with them. As we made our way through the forest of trees I took note of everything we passed. There were a lot of natural resources we could use if we were going to be stuck here for a while. I knew my father would spare no expense in trying to find us, but I secretly hoped he wouldn't be successful any time soon. I wanted to get to know Sookie better without real life getting in the way. Here we were just Eric and Sookie. Back home I was Eric Northman, son of Andre Northman and heir to the Northman Empire and she was Sookie Stackhouse, wife and unhappy employee.

I was just working up the nerve to ask her about her husband when I heard her snickering behind me. When she completely ignored my question of what was so funny and said she heard something I didn't buy it for a second. I was only humoring her when I tried to listen as well when I heard it too. We took off through the trees and a few minutes later we found the source of the noise.

The trees gave way to a good sized lake of sorts being fed from a waterfall above. The water was crystal clear and neither one of us hesitated running straight into the water fully clothed laughing like little kids. I dove under the water eager to rinse the salt from my skin that had been clinging to me from the day before and when I came up for air I didn't see Sookie anywhere. Before I had a chance to panic she sprung up through the surface of the water a few feet in front of me. Her hair was slicked back and hanging in wet tendrils passed her shoulders and the chill of the water caused her nipples to pebble underneath her shirt.

The sight of it reminded me of my earlier dream and I was thankful I could hide my lower half in the water. I stood frozen just looking at her and watching the droplets of water running down her face to her neck and lower into her cleavage. When I looked back up to her eyes I watched her gaze travel over my chest and arms before she realized I was watching her. The blush slowly crept up her chest and neck and she quickly lowered herself back into the water until just her head was visible.

Pulling me from my thoughts she asked, "Do you think it's safe to drink?"

I looked around thinking it *looks* okay, but there was only one way to find out. Shrugging my shoulders at her I said, "Bottoms up!" and brought my hand cupped with water to my lips, swishing it around my mouth before swallowing. I knew she was waiting for my reaction so I clutched at my throat letting out a garbled, "AHH..." and fell backwards into the water.

I heard her yelling "ERIC!" and couldn't hold back the laughter as she splashed her way to me. The look on her face was priceless when she saw me laughing. I wasn't prepared for her wrath when she jumped up and landed on me pushing my head underneath the water. I righted myself coughing up water only to see her standing there laughing at me.

I eyed her like I was a hungry lion and she was gazelle in my path. I started stalking towards her when she guessed my intentions and screeched, "You started it!" as she took off to get away from me. My height was an advantage because she didn't get too far before I leapt forward and

grabbed her from behind causing her to squeal. I held her close as I tickled her mercilessly. Peals of laughter spilled from her throat as she struggled to get away.

"ERIC! Stop!" she gasped out in between laughs. Feeling her body wiggling against mine was having a definite effect on me that I was sure she would have noticed. This was SO much better than when I had her in my arms the day before getting us out of the plane.

"Say you're sorry Sookie and I might stop." *Might.*

"NO! You started it you big FAKER! YOU say you're sorry!" She was gasping for breath in between giggling while still trying to push away from my tickling fingers.

When it appeared we were at a stalemate and she looked like she really did need to breathe I stopped tickling her but still held her close to me growling, "You're very stubborn." I felt her ass rub up and down my erection once before she said, "You have *no* idea." She turned around with our faces just inches away and I could see a hailstorm of thoughts flickering behind her eyes. I held perfectly still waiting to see what the outcome would be and was more than disappointed when she closed her eyes, sighed, and moved away from me.

I knew she was married and felt like a dirt bag for wanting her so much. I decided to do my best to back off from her. I didn't want to make her uncomfortable around me and I hoped to find out more about her personal life soon. I didn't even know if she had any kids. I certainly didn't want to break up a happy family if that was what she had. But I also knew if she were the one to make the first move I wouldn't have any willpower at all to deny her. The constant dreams I had about her would make my body respond to her no matter what my head might be saying.

She changed the subject by saying, "So, the water tastes alright. Is there anything in the bag we can use to carry it in?" I thought for a moment and said, "Yes. There's a canteen in there. If we're stuck here for a while I'm sure we can come up with some other stuff to use too."

After we both had our fill of water, I filled the canteen and we continued to explore around the forest before heading back to the beach. I picked up a couple of long sturdy branches on our way back and sharpened the ends to a point with the knife. Sookie looked at me questioningly and smirked asking, "Do you have a battle to attend later that I'm not aware of?"

I laughed answering, "Yes. I'm a mighty warrior." Without thinking I leered at her asking, "Want to hear my battle cry?" I berated myself thinking, *No! No flirting!* It seemed I couldn't help myself around her. I didn't give her a chance to respond quickly adding, "Actually, I'm going fishing. Who knows how long we're going to be here and I'm going to get pretty sick of nothing but coconut soon."

I didn't miss it when she swallowed hard at my battle cry comment, but she shook it off without commenting. I handed her a spear as I started walking towards the edge of the water when she asked, "Is this one for me?" I watched as her gaze dropped and her shoulders fell slightly inward as she said, "I've never been fishing before much less spear fishing. My husband goes fishing sometimes but he never lets me come along. He said it's unladylike."

Was she kidding? I stared at her and realized she was perfectly serious. Her husband must be a complete douche. I'd want to spend every minute with her and he refuses to *let* her come with him? Without thinking I reached out and held her chin in my hand gently tipping her face back up. When her eyes finally met mine I said, "There's NOTHING unladylike about you Sookie. You could be in coveralls riding around on the back of a garbage truck all day and anyone in the right mind would be able to tell you're a lady in every way."

Her eyes softened and her shoulders straightened out as she nodded. I continued with, "But if we don't catch some fish you're going to be a HUNGRY lady, and I can't have that, so come on." She laughed as I grabbed her hand and pulled her along with me to the water.

She laughed at me as I stood near some rocks at the water's edge and made my battle cry as I brought the spear down into the water only to come up empty. I looked at her with one eyebrow raised asking, "Do you think you can do better?" I held my hand out over the water saying, "Please, by all means, show me how it's done."

My challenge worked as she squared her shoulders and walked towards the rocks with the spear in her hand. She held perfectly still watching the fish slowly getting used to her presence before thrusting the spear down into the water. She squealed with delight when she raised it with a fish attached at the end.

I couldn't help laughing at her delight and clapping for her like she had done for me earlier when I presented her with her breakfast coconut. She speared another one within a few minutes and declared herself the spear fishing queen. After I bowed before her and offered her my fealty I gutted the fish on the rocks since Sookie wanted no part of that chore. I left her there cleaning the fish and went back up to the beach.

The sun was beginning to set so we each gathered some driftwood and dried leaves to make a campfire. I piled some larger rocks together and balanced a large flat rock on top. We spread the driftwood and leaves around the base of the rocks and I lit them with a waterproof match from the kit. It didn't take long before the fish fillets were sizzling on top of the flat rock and we were soon eating a pretty good dinner. We made plans to start gathering stuff in the morning so we could start building our *temporary?* home the next day.

Not long after we finished I watched Sookie's eyes start to droop and she let out a big yawn. I gathered some more driftwood and stacked it near the fire so I could throw some more on during the night. I pulled the raft closer to the fire and said, "Come on sleepyhead. Time for bed."

She looked at me and I could tell she was having some sort of internal debate again. I guessed it had to do with our sleeping arrangements and if we'd be snuggling again. I couldn't help but smile when I saw her rubbing the goose bumps on her arms and I held my arm up like the night before saying, "Come on, you're cold." She hesitated for just a moment before smiling and coming to me, curling her body up against mine. I went to sleep thinking, *yep...she feels just like home.*

Chapter 7: Angels & Demons

Angels & Demons

SPOV

I can't believe I almost kissed Eric Northman. I could feel his "excitement" brushing up against my back while he was tickling me in the water and I couldn't help rubbing up against it before turning around to face him. I was caught up in his gaze with his eyes as blue as the water we were in. All I could think about was closing those few inches between us before my inner voice yelled, "STOP!" He was my boss; I'm married; he probably has a line of prettier girls waiting outside his door every night. *No assumptions Sookie!* I quickly chastised myself. I tried to find the will to pull myself away from him and found the only way to do that was to close my eyes to break the spell he had me under.

Everything felt so easy with him. Here on this island I finally felt free to be me. Not Sookie Stackhouse, business executive trying to climb the corporate ladder of success. Not Sookie Compton, wife of Councilman William T. Compton. Here I could just be Sookie Stackhouse, the real me, even if I was no longer sure who I was. Maybe I'd have the chance to find out while we were here.

Aside from developing a major crush on Eric I was really glad he was here. He didn't seem daunted in the least at what we were facing. I was in awe watching him sharpening the ends of the sticks into points and a little flabbergasted when he handed one over to me. Bill would've never reacted like Eric had so far, but then again, remembering the last words he'd spat out at me when we left the doctor's office, I might even question if he would've pulled me from the airplane.

Spear fishing turned out to be a lot of fun. The best part had been watching Eric stab at the water letting out a real battle cry. I felt my body flush when I heard him wondering if he made similar sounds when he had his "happy moment". I was relieved that he was paying attention to what he was doing and didn't see the blush on my face. I found I was doing that a lot lately around him and told myself I had to get a better hold of myself while we were here.

I could hardly believe it when I was the one to catch our dinner. Up until then Eric was my own personal MacGyver and I was happy to be finally contributing to our survival on the island. After he gutted them and walked away to gather some driftwood I cleaned the fish thinking again about how different Eric was from Bill.

Bill would've never thought to make a spear for me, nor would he have encouraged me to try using one. And he would've been really pissed off if I had managed to catch a fish before him. Not only did Eric think to include me, he praised my success. I'd forgotten what praise felt like outside of work. And when it was time to go to sleep I didn't have to think too long before curling up against Eric once more. Not only was he warm like an electric blanket, I felt safe and protected in his arms. I fell asleep selfishly hoping we wouldn't be rescued any time soon.

I awoke the next morning with a sense of déjà vu. Eric had me wrapped up tightly in his arms and the substantial outline in his pants indicated he was having a very good dream. My head was lying on his chest and provided the perfect vantage point for me to study his lower half without getting caught.

His stomach was flat and I could see the outline of his abdominal muscles. I concentrated on the sound of his breathing and when I was sure he was still asleep I slowly pulled the fabric of his t-shirt up higher until I could see the wisps of blond hair below his naval trailing down into his jeans. All of that was very nice but the star of the show was what he had trapped inside of his jeans. I had to wonder if what I was seeing was some sort of optical illusion based on the angle of my head lying on his chest, but I remembered how it felt against my back and ass and knew this was no illusion. He was simply HUGE. I never thought of Bill as inadequate in that department, even if he rarely tried to please me with it anymore, but compared to what Eric had to offer Bill might as well be a woman.

The feel of Eric starting to stir pulled me from my manhood musings. I once again lie perfectly still to see what he would do. His breathing started to pick up in pace and as his arms held me tighter against his body he let out a soft groan followed by, "*Sookie...*" My whole body tensed, unsure if he was awake or if he was still dreaming. My question was answered as his hips moved upwards and he mumbled, "*Ahh...you feel so good.*"

My inner demon let out a "WHOOOP!" with her fist pumping and encouraged me to trail my hand down his chest towards his God-given spear. My hand got as far as his abs (where I found out, yes, they are in fact as hard as they look) before my inner angel screamed, "NO!", effectively halting my hand's descent. It was a good thing Angel Sookie spoke up when she did because Eric's body jerked awake a moment later. He let out what sounded like an exasperated sigh while his fingers lightly traced up and down my spine. I waited a few more minutes for him to get his wits about him before saying, "Good morning." I felt his head turn and his cheek nuzzled the top of my head as he said, "Morning."

We slowly disentangled our limbs from one another and stretched out before Eric finally stood up and pulled me to my feet. After we had our breakfast coconut we set off into the jungle to start gathering supplies. We took the same path we had taken the day before that led to the waterfall because Eric said he'd seen a lot of bamboo on our way there and back.

We spent the majority of the day just gathering the materials we needed. Eric cut down rods of bamboo and I carried them back to the beach. After we had a decent pile of those we started gathering vines to lash them together. There were plenty to be had, especially around the waterfall which is where we discovered a cave in the face of the cliff.

Eric went in first to make sure it was safe before I trailed in after him once he declared it to be empty. It was just tall enough that Eric could stand up without hitting his head and was about six feet wide at the opening and around 8 feet deep, narrowing slightly from front to back. It would make for pretty cramped living quarters for the two of us and after discussing the pros and cons we decided to continue with trying to build something closer to the beach so we could keep an eye out for a rescue party.

We took the vines back to the beach and while Eric got started trying to build us our home away from home I went down to the little cove with my spear to try to catch our lunch. It wasn't as easy as the first time and as I stood still in the water my mind wandered to the conversation Eric and I had about staying in the cave. He acted so differently than what I had become accustomed to back home. He actually asked for my opinion and listened when I told him my thoughts. I liked the feeling of being valued by someone and it only strengthened my resolve once more on leaving Bill if and when we ever got home. I didn't need that promotion to leave him. All I needed was the confidence to do it. My mother was going to give me hell for it, but I couldn't keep living my life the way she wanted. I'd cut her out of my life if I had to, and I honestly thought I wouldn't miss her all that much if I did. Without knowingly doing so Eric gave me the confidence I needed and I would be forever grateful to him.

Once my decision was made I felt the weight of the world lift off of my shoulders. I felt lighter in both body and spirit and could've danced a little jig if I didn't have to hold still to try to catch the fish. I eventually snared two of them and even gutted them myself. I figured I had to get over my squeamishness and thought it was 'them' or 'us' and I chose 'us'.

After cleaning the fish I had poured some coconut juice on the fillets and cooked them on my prehistoric skillet. I giggled out loud when I moved the cooked fillets into two coconut shell halves that we were using as bowls thinking I could've sworn I'd seen something similar on an episode of The Flintstones. I had noticed the sky darkening with clouds while I was cooking but as I walked towards Eric with our lunch a huge clap of thunder echoed in the sky and it opened up allowing sheets of rain to fall. I covered our food as best as I could and took off running for Eric.

We crouched in the tree line with Eric holding the raft upside down over our heads to deflect the rain, but when it showed no signs of slowing and the wind picked up we grabbed what we could and decided to run for the cave. As soon as we were inside I took one look at Eric standing there, dripping wet, holding his coconut bowl in front of him and I burst into a fit of giggles. There was nothing particularly funny but I couldn't stop laughing. When Eric looked dumbfounded and quirked his eyebrow at me like I was a crazy person it only made me laugh harder and I was soon doubled over clutching my stomach waiting for it to end.

As soon as I could breathe again Eric asked, "At the risk of setting you off again, do you mind filling me in on what was so funny?"

I snickered again and shrugged my shoulders answering, "Nothing really. The way you were standing there just struck me as funny."

Eric looked at me while a smile came on his face that reached his eyes and said, "You have a beautiful smile, like an angel."

He was so sincere when he said it that my heart fluttered in my chest. I was hoping he couldn't see me blush, again, in the darkness of the cave as I smiled back saying, "Thank you. You're not so bad yourself." He was so far from 'bad' he was practically in a different realm.

We stood looking at each other for another moment before sitting down to eat our now cold lunch. The storm was really picking up then so Eric ran back out and gathered some palm leaves for us to cushion the cave floor and we huddled together further inside the cave. I wanted to know more about him and his life so I started off only half joking and asked, "So, how do you like working at Northman Inc. so far?"

He looked at me like I was nuts again and I gave him my cheesiest grin. He shook his head and smiled answering, "Well the first couple of days were pretty rough, but it's improved dramatically since then."

I couldn't help but agree with him and I'm sure the expression on his face was mirrored by my own. We'd lived through a plane crash and were now stranded on a deserted island for God only knows how long. Hell, we may never be rescued and yet I'd never felt more relaxed than I did at that very moment.

He looked at me for a while before asking, "And what about you? How do you like working there?"

I couldn't help but smile as I answered, "It's okay. I got this new boss on Friday that I kind of bumped heads with, but it turns out he's not so bad. He comes in handy whenever I want to eat a coconut."

His laughter echoed in the cave and I liked the sound so much that I promised myself I'd try to get him to laugh as much as possible. I wasn't sure if my next question would keep him in a lighthearted mood but I asked anyway. "Do you really like your new job though? I'm ashamed to admit this, but I'd read a few articles about you over the years and it seemed like the lifestyle you were living was nothing like the corporate environment you're in now."

I could've kicked myself when I saw his face fall. He stared at his hands for a long time and I watched as my own hand reached over and held onto the top of his. I rubbed soothing circles onto his skin and said, "I'm sorry if I upset you. That wasn't my intent. You don't have to answer. It's none of my business."

I was just pulling my hand away from his when he grabbed it and held it between both of his. He looked up into my eyes and said, "It's okay. I'll answer your question." He paused for a moment gathering his thoughts and said, "I've always known from a young age the role I was expected to fill. When I was a child it was to be seen and not heard. I was more or less like the fine china. I was brought out on special occasions and holidays and then packed back up until the next one. I've never spent more than a week or two at a time with my parents since I was old enough for them to ship me off to boarding school and even before that I was raised by nannies."

He looked so indifferent about it all but I felt sad for him anyway. I didn't have the greatest parents either but at least they were around. The more I thought about it though, I was sure my mother probably would've done the same thing to me if they could've afforded it.

He continued on saying, "I graduated at the top of my class in both private school and at Oxford but my father attributes my success to his generous donations when the reality of it was that I worked my ass off. When he didn't bother to even acknowledge everything I had accomplished I decided to just stop trying for a while. He didn't require me to come back to start working for him right away so I just did my own thing. I'm actually a little embarrassed of the way I used to live. I could've done so much more, helped others that were less fortunate than me, but instead I just had a seven year pity party. My father is like my own personal demon. The sad thing is, even though I don't really want to work for him, after all of this time I guess I'm still hoping for an 'atta boy' from him." He looked at me sheepishly and admitted, "I kind of got one when I told him about that firm in Australia."

Wow. He seemed so confident when he walked into the staff meeting I never would've guessed he felt that way. I didn't know what to say, but I definitely didn't want to keep going down this road if it upset him so much. I thought I'd try a different tactic and asked, "So, if you could be or do anything else in the world, what would it be?"

"A writer." He didn't even think about it, the words just fell from his lips. He followed up with, "I've written a few short stories but I've never sent them out to see if they could be published. I didn't see the point when I knew I'd end up in Shreveport." He looked around the cave and smiled saying, "I think our story here would make a great novel though."

We were both yawning after working so hard most of the day and now that our stomachs were full sleep sounded pretty good to both of us. We automatically curled up into each other without any hesitation or discussion and I secretly hoped that this arrangement would continue from now on. Our breathing slowed as we were both winding down towards sleep but I still asked, "What kind of story would ours be?" When he didn't answer right away I assumed he had already fallen asleep, but he whispered, "I'm not sure yet. Action, adventure..." I yawned again while he was whispering, but as I did I could've sworn he said *romance*. I didn't have the nerve to ask him to repeat himself so I just snuggled up to him tighter and drifted off.

Chapter 8: Clothing OptionalOptional Clothing

Clothing Optional/Optional Clothing

EPOV

I woke with a start lying in the cave alone. I had the nightmare again where Sookie had run away from me crying and when she wasn't in my arms when I woke up I felt the panic rise in my chest. I sprung up off of the cave floor calling out "SOOKIE!" as I ran outside. The cave was close to the base of the waterfall and as soon as I made it outside I saw her in the lagoon.

Her head had whipped around as I called out her name and upon seeing the concern on my face and hearing the urgency of my voice her eyebrows furrowed with worry as she said, "I'm right

here Eric. What's wrong? Are you okay?" She had been in a shallow portion of the lagoon and stood up as she spoke.

I couldn't breathe, so I couldn't answer her. She was naked. Completely. Standing. Just a few feet away. From me. With water dripping down her body. And her body was exquisite. Even better than I had imagined in my dreams. She had curves in all of the right places and I could tell from where I stood that her breasts were real. Perfect and real. I couldn't help but follow a drop of water with my eyes that trailed down her neck to the top of her breast and coming to rest at her hardened dusty pink nipple that was just begging for me lick it off. I felt lightheaded, more than likely because all of the blood left my head to pool down in my pants.

"Eric?" Her voice pulled me from my trance and I immediately looked away and tried to gesture something with my hands, but I wasn't sure how to convey *Hey, you're naked. Do you know you're naked? If you do, by all means, remain naked. I don't mind. At all.* Instead I was pretty sure I looked like a drunk attempting to *Vogue* like Madonna. A drunk that still couldn't breathe.

Since I was no longer looking at Sookie, I didn't see her expression but I heard her gasp, followed by water splashing and something about Jesus Christ, shepherds and *Madea? Wasn't that a Tyler Perry movie?* Odd, but no time to contemplate now...

Being the gentleman that I am, without turning to face her, I asked, "Umm, Sookie?"

"Yes?" she squeaked out.

"Can I turn around now?" *Please still be standing! Please still be standing!*

She sighed deeply before responding, "Yes."

I turned to see just her head sticking above the water, *damnit*, and her whole face was bright red. Looking down I noticed her clothes lying on a rock at the edge of the water. I also noticed that I could still see her naked body pretty well even under the water because it was so crystal clear. I decided I wouldn't mention that to her since she was obviously mortified. Yes, I wouldn't tell her I could still see her perfect heart-shaped ass to spare HER the embarrassment. *Not.*

No matter how hard I tried I couldn't wipe the grin from my face. Her eyes had yet to meet mine so I wasn't really trying all that hard, but still, I wanted to know I COULD wipe it off if I had to. The silence was just a tad awkward so I said, "How long have you been up?" I forced my grin down a notch in case she looked up.

"Not long enough" she mumbled. Her eyes finally met mine and my grin didn't go down any more notches. It got bigger. She looked appropriately abashed and explained, "I felt a little dirty from the rain water yesterday and wanted to rinse off. You sounded so panicked when you called my name I wasn't thinking and just stood up."

What a coincidence. I was feeling a little dirty too but it had nothing to do with rain water. "Do you need some help with that?" I couldn't resist prolonging this little exchange after all of the other non-nightmare dreams I'd been having about her.

When she pulled her bottom lip in between her teeth to chew on it I felt my hope rise up thinking she might actually be considering taking me up on my offer. I felt something else rise up too. My hope was dashed a moment later when she replied, "Ha ha. Could you turn around please so I can get dressed?"

Reluctantly, I turned around forcing myself to stand still. I could feel my muscles thrumming to just jump on her like a lion pouncing on its prey. I heard her move through the water and while she was getting dressed she asked, "Why did you run out of the cave screaming my name?" Before I could answer her question she said, "Okay, you can turn around now. I'm decent."

"You're much more than decent," I said as I spun around to see her standing there with her hair still dripping wet and her clothes sticking to her wet body. Her blush was still in full bloom and all I could think about was how badly I wanted to make her body flushed with color from what I wanted to do to her and not my words. I know I had told myself that I wouldn't flirt until I knew more about her, but I obviously had no willpower where she was concerned. She was my own personal kryptonite and the realization scared me a little. I needed to find out more about her before I let myself fall under her spell any more than I already had.

"I wasn't screaming" I lied. "Normally you're still lying there when I wake up so I was just calling out to see where you were." I didn't want to continue this particular conversation afraid of what I might let slip if she kept questioning me so I said, "Let's go get a look down by the beach and see if anything's left." I motioned for her to join me and we started heading back. Everything was still wet and there were a lot more branches on the ground so it took a little longer to get there. What we saw when we got there made us gasp in unison.

The beach was littered with small debris from the plane and clothing. The storm from the night before must have churned up some of the lighter items in the water and deposited them on the sand when the tide went out. Sookie gathered all of the clothing while I started gathering everything else into one area so we could sort through it all to see what we could use.

I was unloading another armful of stuff when Sookie walked up to me holding up a few shirts and asked, "Are these yours?" I looked up at her and was once again struck by her beauty. Her hair had dried into soft waves that framed her face with the slight wind coming off the ocean water blowing it softly behind her. Without any make-up or designer clothes she still looked like someone you'd see pictured in a fashion magazine. I hadn't realized I'd been staring at her until she cleared her throat and asked, "What's wrong? Is there something on my face?" She started brushing her hands across her face wiping away the nonexistent marks.

"No, there's nothing on your face." I reluctantly looked down at the clothing draped over her arms and quickly changed the subject by answering her original question. "Yeah, I think some of those are mine. I'm guessing the others must have belonged to the pilots."

I took a chance and glanced back to her face and saw her expression sadden as she held up a few articles of women's clothing. It was my turn to ask, "What's wrong?" She kept looking at the clothing in her hands and answered, "These aren't mine so they must have belonged to Bi, uh, the flight attendant." Her eyes welled up with unshed tears and the sight alone broke my heart a little. I stood up and pulled her into my arms while rubbing soothing trails up and down her back with my hand. We stayed that way for a few minutes before she pulled back saying, "I'm okay. I just feel bad they didn't make it."

I wiped away the wet trails her tears had left on her cheeks with the pads of my thumbs and nodded my head in agreement. When she squared her shoulders and took a deep breath I knew the tears were behind her for now at least. I gestured towards the bamboo rods we had gathered the day before that were now scattered everywhere by the storm saying, "Before I start working on that mess do you want me break open your breakfast?" I pointed towards some of the coconuts on the ground and tried to lighten the mood by adding, "It's one of the benefits you get being my only employee."

She snickered before answering, "I guess I could eat something. But I have to admit, I'm already getting sick of coconut." She looked out into the trees adding, "I could really go for something citrus-y." For some reason my mind flashed to tequila and what it would be like to do body shots with Sookie, sucking the lemon wedge from her mouth. All I could do was mumble, "Yeah, me too."

I had to shake the image from my head before walking over to pick up a coconut. After serving our breakfast we agreed to explore more of the island once we got everything else situated. Sookie continued to walk up and down the beach bringing back stray items when she found them while I continued building our bamboo hut.

By the time I had finished the frame for what would become the roof of our new home Sookie had gathered a large pile of clothing and carried what she could to the waterfall where she rinsed the saltwater from them and laid them in the sun to dry. Hours had passed since breakfast so while she was 'doing the laundry' as she put it, I went down to the fishing hole to try to catch our lunch/dinner. I was standing knee deep in the water, spear in hand, when I heard her call out, "Do you want some help?"

I looked towards the sound of her voice and froze. She was wearing a fitted pink tank top that scooped low enough in the front that the tops of her breasts peaked through along with the dip in between them over a pair of khaki short shorts. I knew I was standing there with my mouth hanging open, but I couldn't stop.

I must have made her feel self conscious because she started smoothing her hands over the fabric of the top and shorts asking, "Does it look alright? The flight attendant was a little smaller than me, but I thought they fit okay?" *Boy did they!* When I failed to answer her (I also failed to blink or close my mouth) she nervously laughed out loud saying, "I know there's not a lot to them, but it gets pretty hot during the day. I figured what the hell since you've already seen me naked."

I choked on the drool that had pooled in my mouth at her last statement and coughed a few times before it cleared from my throat. The look on her face was almost, challenging? Like she knew the effect she was having on me. I was never one to refuse a challenge, whether or not it was all in my mind, so I agreed with her saying, "Yeah, it does get pretty hot here." Picking up the metaphorical gauntlet, I stuck the spear into the sand next me and pulled my shirt off, tossing it to the beach away from the water. I worked out at the gym at least four times a week from the time I was 16 years old and it showed. I didn't lift weights to bulk up, but I was definitely muscular with defined cuts all the way down my abdomen. I made sure to stretch out my arms and back before picking up the spear again. I glanced in her direction and had to hold in the laugh building inside of me when I saw her expression. I had no doubt it was a mirror image of what I looked like both this morning when I saw her naked and again when she walked up a few minutes ago wearing hardly anything.

Because paybacks are a bitch and I can be an evil bastard sometimes I knelt down and cupped some water in my hands splashing it down my chest and back. I looked back at her and saw her eyes had glazed over as they travelled up and down my body. When her eyes finally made it back to mine I grinned asking, "Well are you going to help me catch dinner or not?"

It took a minute for my question to sink in and she blinked a few times before going to get the other spear and joining me in the water. As we stood mere feet from each other I wanted nothing more than to reach over and pull her into my arms. I wanted to know if her lips felt as soft as they looked and if her skin tasted as good as she smelled. But, I had to find out more about her before I could even consider finding out the answers to those questions.

Since the fish weren't cooperating with either one of us I figured now was as good of a time as any. Trying my best at sounding casual I asked, "Can I ask you something personal?" She was concentrating on the water below her with her spear poised for attack when she answered, "Sure." *Here goes nothing*, I thought. "How long have you been married?" I figured that was a fairly innocent question considering what I REALLY wanted to ask was, *"Are you happily married and if not, do I stand a snowball's chance in hell of being with you?"*

I risked looking at her and saw that she had lost her focus on fishing. When she didn't answer right away I started to worry that maybe by my asking about her marriage I had inadvertently reminded her she was, in fact, married and our little flirt fest would be history. I was just about to apologize and change the subject when she finally answered.

"We've been married for five years, but we've been together since high school." I trained my eyes back on the water below me when I felt my heart sink in my chest, but I thought I should at least acknowledge her words before I sunk into my impending depression. The most I could muster up was, "Oh, that's nice."

She actually snorted when she replied, "Not really." My head shot up at her statement and when my eyes found hers she smiled softly saying, "We have a lot of problems. So many in fact that if and when we ever get off this island I'm filing for divorce. The last few days have shown me that life is too short. I'd rather be alone and happy than married and unhappy. I want the fairytale, the Happily Ever After, and that's not going to happen staying married to him."

I could feel the smile spread across my face and my heart swell up in my chest upon hearing her words thinking maybe I could be her Prince Charming.

Chapter 9: Aphrodisiac

Aphrodisiac

SPOV

I was surprised by the sense of relief I felt when I admitted to Eric that I planned on divorcing Bill. I guess it took me saying the words out loud to someone else for it to seem real, and not just an abstract concept. And, I'm pretty sure the sight of him wearing nothing but his jeans was distracting me from feeling much besides lust anyway. I knew I'd be drooling if I looked at him outright, so instead I looked at his reflection in the water. I had no idea if there were any fish around because I could only see him. If I thought I could get away with it, I'd hide his shirt along with every other piece of clothing we'd found today just so he wouldn't cover up the masterpiece that is his body. I felt like I was going to need to dive under the water soon just to cool off, and the heat I was feeling had nothing to do with the sun.

I chanced a glance in Eric's direction and saw he was looking down in the water with a slight smile on his face. I was very curious wondering what thoughts would make him smile like that when it hit me. He MUST have a girlfriend. He's too good looking to NOT be attached to someone. And I felt jealous even though I had no right to feel that way. Why would he want me? I had more baggage than Samsonite.

Since it seemed we were sharing personal information now I figured it was as good a time as any to find out. Never taking my eyes off of the water I asked, "So, how about you? Do you have someone special in your life?" I figured that was a broad enough term that would include someone he was sleeping with even if they weren't exclusive. I caught myself holding my breath waiting for his answer.

"That depends on who you ask!" he barked out. He sounded like a scorned lover taking on the contemptuous tone we used with each other before the crash and my lusty feelings for him were crushed instantly. All I could do was mumble, "Sorry" and I immediately focused on the fish swimming around us and not Eric Northman. A larger fish caught my eye and thankfully swam behind me so I had to turn away from him to follow the fish which had darted into some undergrowth surrounding a group of coral rock at the water's edge. As soon as Eric was no longer in my line of sight my whole body tensed as I replayed the last few minutes in my mind. Before I got too far in my thoughts I felt his hand on my shoulder and heard, "I'm sorry" from behind.

I felt my body automatically relax and lean into his touch. All I could do was nod while I kept looking down into the water not wanting to see whatever expression might be on his face. I heard

him moving through the water and he came to stand right in front of me with his hand never leaving my shoulder.

The silence got to be too much for me and when I finally looked up at him he looked remorseful as he said, "Really, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap at you." I didn't like seeing the sadness on his face and fought the urge to reach out and smooth away the lines in between his furrowed eyebrows. "Do you want to talk about it?" I asked.

His grip on my shoulder tightened and he sighed as he released me saying, "My father summoned me to his office the morning of our flight to tell me, no, to *order* me to marry Sophie-Ann LeClerq." "Do you love her?" I blurted out before my brain/mouth filter could kick in. "Not hardly" he replied. "We're acquaintances at best. She's a lesbian for christsake."

I know my eyes got impossibly large before I burst into laughter. The hurt expression on his face sobered me up quickly and I explained, "I'm sorry. I only laughed because I think your father and my mother would be well-suited for one another. She's the reason why I married Bill." His face softened considerably at my admission.

He went on to explain the reasons why his father wanted him to marry Sophie-Ann along with how they could make him a grandfather without ever having had sex together which only served to remind me of my own fertility issues. I genuinely felt sorry for him and myself. We had more in common than I ever would've guessed. I tried hard to tamp down my curiosity on what he was going to do about it so instead I offered my own two cents. "I hope for your own sake you think long and hard before agreeing to this arrangement. I know firsthand how miserable someone can be just giving in to everyone else's wants and needs. I wish I'd been stronger to stand up to them then, but all I can do now is choose my own path."

He looked at me with a smirk on his lips and defiance in his eyes. "I have no intention of going along with my father's little scheme. We argued about it right before I got to the airport. That's why I was late by the way, not because it was *my daddy's plane*."

My head ducked in shame and I squeaked out, "I'm sorry." I looked up again to see him looking amused before he said, "So THAT's why I was in such a foul mood that morning. What's your excuse?" I was surprised my reaction was instant, from the gasp that left my lips to the tears that formed in my eyes. He looked horrified to see me reacting that way and immediately put both of his hands on my shoulders saying, "I'm sorry. I was just kidding."

My breath hitched in my throat as I fought back the urge to cry. I didn't realize how much my diagnosis had affected me, but I really hadn't had much time to dwell on it since I'd gotten the news. I forced a smile onto my lips saying, "It's okay. I'm okay. I'd just gotten some bad news that morning and I hadn't really thought about it too much with everything that's happened since then and it kind of caught me off guard." He started rubbing his hands up and down my arms while looking into my eyes and I swear I could get lost in them. Yes, his eyes were a nice distraction until he opened his mouth and asked, "Do you want to talk about it?"

Did I? "Honestly? I think I need some more time to process it all. I really don't feel like thinking about it right now, but when I do you'll be the first to know?" I ended with a small smile. He looked like he wanted to push the issue, but thankfully he didn't. He didn't remove his hands from my shoulders either, nor did I want him to. Well maybe I DID want him to remove them from my shoulders but only so he could put them on other, more erogenous, parts of my body. Our eyes stayed locked, neither one of us moving, and I would've given anything at that moment to have been able to read his mind. I longed to run my hands over his bare chest and that perfectly shaped ass of his. I thoroughly enjoyed the view each and every time he's had to bend over to pick up something since we've been here. Then something latched onto my little toe and I jumped in the air screaming like a lunatic.

"What's wrong?" Eric looked frantic as I jumped around cursing like a sailor so I tried to lift my right leg up to show him the crab from hell that was attached to my little toe yelling, "Get it off!" He looked relieved and started laughing while he tried to catch my foot which was bouncing up and down while I tried to keep my balance. He grabbed on my calf and held it up against the side of his body, his bare body, as he turned around to face my foot and even with the pain radiating from my toe I STILL enjoyed the view of his ass right next to me. In fact, I *had* to put my hand right at the top of it to keep my balance. *Yep ... HAD to.*

I was drooling a little looking at his broad golden back when he finally dislodged the killer crab from my toe and gently lowered my foot back down into the water. I almost told him to reattach it just so I could keep touching him, but I bit my tongue instead. I had been too busy watching the way his muscles moved under his skin to notice the crab in his hand until he shook it in front of me.

"Holy shit what is THAT?" It looked like a giant monster crab. Its shell was over a foot long with mutant sized claws. I was thankful that it didn't cut my toe off because I was pretty sure it could have given its size.

Eric had a huge grin on his face when he answered, "It's dinner!" We walked back up the beach, well he walked and I hobbled, where he sifted through some of the things we'd found on the beach that morning. He found some rounded metal that he pounded into a bowl shape about the size of a large mixing bowl while I held onto Crabzilla. After starting another fire Eric ran to the waterfall and came back with the bowl full of fresh water and set it on our 'stove'. As soon as it was boiling we said goodbye to Crabzilla and put him in the water. While he cooked Eric took another look at my toe.

"It's a good thing he didn't clamp all the way down on your toe or else it'd be gone right now," he said as his fingers ghosted over the bruise left behind. I smiled answering, "But now I'm not only the Fishing Queen, I'm also the Crabzilla Queen." He laughed replying, "Yes, you are. But technically you're the Coconut Crab Queen."

I felt my eyebrow quirk up in disbelief saying, "Don't tell me...bar trivia?" He just shrugged his shoulders saying, "I don't remember, but I DO remember that they're considered a delicacy. It didn't even occur to me that there might be some on the island and they usually only come out at night so it would explain why we haven't seen any until now. You know, in some places they're

considered an *aphrodisiac*." His voice dropped an octave when he said that last word and I felt the effect in my girly bits. Christ his voice alone was an aphrodisiac. I had to sit on my hands to resist fanning myself in front of him.

The only lame thing I could think of saying was, "Too bad we don't have any butter." It was the wrong thing to say because then all I could picture was what Eric would look like all oiled up and my knee started bouncing in order for my body to work off some of the tension I was feeling. Sexual tension.

I would swear he was leering at me when he said, "Oh, I think we'll enjoy it anyway." *Gulp*.

My inner sex kitten, that I had NO idea existed, was thinking up all sorts of sexy retorts to purr out to him but my Christian upbringing wouldn't let me say them. At least not yet. It also hadn't escaped my attention that he still had my leg draped across his lap from when he was inspecting my toe and he'd been stroking it absentmindedly while we'd been talking. I caught myself staring at his chest and all I wanted to do was to lean forward and pull one of his nipples in between my teeth.

I don't know how long we sat like that but I must've been unconsciously leaning towards him because his chest had gotten closer and when I finally looked up Eric's face was only inches from mine. He looked hungry, but I didn't think it was for Crabzilla. I felt his hand travel farther up my leg but the look on his face told me that I would have to be the one to close the distance between us.

I didn't hesitate at all. I leaned forward lacing my fingers into his hair pulling him towards me and as soon as our lips touched I could feel an electrical charge run through my body. I traced his lips with my tongue until he parted them allowing me to explore the inside of his mouth as well. He tasted sweet and his lips were soft with his whiskers tickling my face. It was tender and sweet and I never wanted it to end but we eventually pulled away from each other to breathe.

Eric leaned his forehead against mine confessing, "I've been wanting to do that since the first time I laid eyes on you." I had to laugh because our encounters up until we ended up here were anything but romantic. When I said as much to him he laughed along with me.

We managed to separate ourselves and Eric pulled Crabzilla from the boiling water. Once it was cooled off enough he broke open the shell and we both stuffed ourselves on the meat inside. It was delicious! I noticed Eric paying extra attention whenever I would lick my fingers clean and I may have done so with a little extra gusto because of it. It was nice feeling wanted by someone, much less someone as smart and sexy as Eric Northman.

Eric told me more about his childhood and as did I. He shared funny stories of the people he'd met over the years, celebrities in particular so I'd know who he was talking about, but he not in a way like he was name dropping. More like "they're so stupid" stories. I couldn't remember the last time I had laughed as much as I did that night.

When it was time to go to sleep the awkwardness was back in spades until he put me at ease saying, "I'm not going to do anything Sookie. I really do like you and I'm not going to jeopardize that by trying to move too fast too soon." My heart melted a little bit more towards him and I crawled up curling my body into his and the only thing we did differently was the chaste kiss on the lips we gave each other before settling in. I fell asleep to him telling me a fairytale he made up just for me.

Chapter 10: Translation

Translation

EPOV

I watched Sookie's breathing even out while telling her a fairytale I made up off the top of my head. She had giggled when I named the main character 'Princess Sookie'. When I knew she was asleep I stared at her replaying the day's events in my mind. It had to be one of the best days of my life. I got to see her naked AND she kissed me. I felt like a giddy school girl on the inside. I fell asleep with a smile on my face remembering the sight and sound of her licking her fingers clean.

"Ahhh..." My eyes were closed as I enjoyed the sensations coursing through my body. I felt the vibration of her moan all the way to my toes and my eyes shot open. Looking down I saw Sookie's blue eyes lock onto mine never breaking her stride as she took as much of me as she could into her mouth while working the rest with her hand. Her tongue swirled around my shaft while her free hand travelled up the back of my leg where she grabbed onto my ass holding me in place. The sight of her on her knees in front of me was the most erotic thing I'd ever witnessed and I could feel myself getting harder. She must have sensed it as well because her rhythm increased in speed as did the force of her suction. When her hand trailed from my ass to caress my balls she moaned again and I felt the coil about to spring free. I wound my fingers through her hair just as..."

My eyes shot open and I groaned from the pain I was feeling in my balls. It was just a dream. If this continued for much longer I was going to have to take care of Eric Jr. myself. It had been quite a while since I had to resort to masterbating, but I doubted Sookie was going to help me out with my little problem anytime in the near future. She just wasn't that type of girl and that fact alone drew me towards her even more. I could feel her body still curled against mine and I couldn't help nuzzling the top of her head as I squeezed her a little tighter with the arm that was still wrapped around her.

I threw my free hand over my eyes as I attempted to will my still painful erection away. Frustrated I sighed, "Knulla mig..." (*Fuck me...*)

Sookie turned her head so she could see my face asking, "Excuse me?" She looked so beautiful with her eyes still half closed from sleep and her hair tousled all over her head. Like 'sex hair'.

That thought wasn't helping... Her eyes started to focus more and I realized she was waiting for me to answer her question.

"Oh, nothing." By the way her eyes crinkled I knew she wasn't going to let me get away with THAT answer, but I waited for her response anyway.

"Eric...what did you say?" I could see her jaw set and knew she wasn't going to give up so I answered, "I cursed. In Swedish." She furrowed her eyebrows when she asked, "Why did you curse? You speak Swedish?"

Answering her second question I said, "Yes, I speak five languages actually. I can get by okay speaking French, German, and Spanish, but, with the exception of English, I'm most fluent in Swedish."

"Why is that?" I smiled thinking I might actually get away with not answering the first half of her question. "My mother is from Sweden. She met my father when she was modeling in New York City and after I was born they hired Swedish nannies so I'd learn both languages at a young age."

Her eyes lit up when she asked, "Would you teach me a few words or phrases?" *She's stunning*, I thought.

I smiled answering, "Sure. What would you like to say?"

Her eyes darted around while she was in thought before returning my gaze. "How about, 'Good morning'?"

She really was adorable. Adorably sexy. I never knew that was a combination that existed in the world, but here was the living proof right in front of me. I resisted the impulse to grin when I came up with a way to teach Sookie Swedish and have a little fun of my own at the same time. Looking at her with a small smile I repeated, "Good morning? Sure. Say, Vi klär av sig (*Let's get naked*,)

I couldn't resist grinning as she repeated the phrase back to me. Replying to both her spoken statement first and then the one she *thought* she was saying I said, "Yes. It IS a good morning." I felt like Batman's 'The Joker' as she chanted the phrase over and over trying to memorize it. It was impossible for me to NOT smile, but at the same time I felt a little evil on the inside. I made myself feel better by vowing to tell her the truth. At some point. In the future. She repeated it again and I knew 'the future' was NOT today.

When she felt she had that one down pat she looked around and asked, "How about, 'It's a beautiful day today.'"

"Jag vill göra mycket smutsiga saker till dig." (*I want to do very dirty things to you.*)

I felt my dick twitch and my grin got impossibly wider when she repeated it back to me. This was definitely going to be fun. I sat up and choked out a cough to hide my obvious arousal when she said both phrases together. I knew I was only making it worse when I said, "Now say, 'Jag vill att du gör mig skrika ditt namn'" (*I want you to make me scream your name.*)

After she repeated it back to me I felt myself smirking when I responded, "Oh, I will."

She smiled asking, "What did I just say?"

I found I couldn't look her in the eye so I looked out at the ocean when I answered, "I hope you have a pleasant day."

I started feeling guilty tricking her like I was but the guilt quickly vanished and was replaced by lust when she said all three phrases together. I had to hold back from tackling her and doing just what she was saying but my sanity held on long enough for me to stand up and put a little bit of distance between us. We went about our morning routine and opted to eat another one of the protein bars from the survival kit instead of having coconut *again*. There were a few MRE's (Meal ready to eat) in there as well but we decided to save them in case there was a day we couldn't catch our dinner.

We spent the rest of the morning working on our 'house'. While I worked on setting up the frame that would be the walls, Sookie tied vines throughout the completed frame for the roof and then gathered palm fronds that she wove through the vines. I was setting up the frame farther back from the beach under the canopy of trees and she was weaving them pretty tightly so hopefully the rain wouldn't leak through. If it did we could always stay in the cave.

After lunch we set off into the forest to see what else there was on the island hoping to find some other fruits or berries we could add to our diet. Every once in a while Sookie would point at something and ask me to translate it into Swedish. I told her the real translation having decided I'd taken enough advantage of her already. I kept replaying in my mind what she had told me the day before. She'd said her mother was the reason she'd married her husband, but she didn't say why. As we walked I kept going back and forth on whether or not I should ask her about it because I didn't want to upset her, but my curiosity finally won out.

When we stopped to rest for a few minutes I finally asked, "Can I ask you something?" When she nodded I continued, "Why did your mother want you to marry your husband? Did she just want you to get married, or did she want you to marry HIM?"

She rolled her eyes responding, "She wanted me to marry someone that she considered a 'good catch'. Bill's family is well off and he's always been the ambitious type. He has his whole life *planned* out, which always included running for some political office. She liked the idea of going along for the ride. He was the only boyfriend I ever had and when he proposed in front of my parents I didn't see a way to say no."

She seemed so sad as she talked that I pulled her into my arms for an impromptu hug. "I'm sorry if I upset you." She felt so small in my arms I wanted to scoop her up bridal style but didn't have the nerve.

She wrapped her arms around my waist and spoke into my chest saying, "You did upset me. I just wish I'd done things differently. You know, hindsight is 20/20."

"What would you have done differently?"

"I would've gone with my first instinct and said 'No'. I mean, I DID care for him, but I would've tried living on my own first. I would've waited longer before committing to get married. I think if I had I would've seen how manipulative Bill really was. Hell, how manipulative he still is. He played on my insecurities a lot when we were younger and passively pushed me to where eventually I had no friends. Him and my mother are closer than I am with either one of them. My father tuned out a long time ago deciding it was easier to just go along with whatever my mother said because giving in translated into a peace. I guess, in that way, I took after him."

I was stunned. I'd seen the fire burn inside of her when we clashed back in the real world. It was impossible to reconcile that with what she was telling me now, even though I had no doubt she was being absolutely truthful. I hugged her tighter saying, "I'm glad you decided to get out of that environment. Not just because I like you but because I wouldn't want you to stay with someone that doesn't deserve you. You're much too special to accept anything less than being with someone that values you and knows how lucky they are to be with you."

She was quiet for a minute when I felt the wetness on my shirt and realized she was crying. I pulled back slightly and lifted her chin until her eyes met mine. "Why are you crying?"

"That's the nicest thing anyone ever said to me." I felt angry that she'd been treated so poorly that a few kind words had her in tears. I decided that I would make a point of showing her in every way possible how special I thought she was for as long as she'd let me. I started by leaning down to capture her lips in mine. Her lips were so soft and I found myself getting lost in her. I'd kissed more women than I could count, but I'd never felt anything remotely close to what I felt kissing Sookie.

I knew I was on the verge of getting carried away so I reluctantly forced myself to pull back before things went too far. I wanted her more than anything, but I didn't want to take advantage of her in her fragile state. If and hopefully when we progressed to a physical relationship I wanted it to be because she WANTED to be with me and not because she was feeling sad and vulnerable. I was pretty confident she did want ME, but I knew she wasn't ready for anything more to happen between us yet.

I gave her one more chaste kiss on her lips and smiled saying, "We should get going before it starts getting dark." She tucked her tiny hand into mine and said, "Yes, after all, Jag vill göra mycket smutsiga saker till dig." (*I want to do very dirty things to you.*) I couldn't help letting out a hearty laugh at her unexpected statement. Thankfully she didn't question it and we set off hand in hand.

Chapter 11: Sweet

Sweet

SPOV

As Eric and I continued hiking through the forest my emotions were swinging back and forth from being elated that Eric thought so highly of me to being utterly mortified that I cried like a little girl in front of him. Normally I'm able to school my features regardless of what I might be feeling at the time and only break down whenever I'm alone. Thanks to my mother and Bill I learned a long time ago to never show any weakness because they'd surely use it against me later on. His words were sweet and heartfelt when he said I deserved someone better than Bill and when he kissed me it took everything I had to not rip off his clothes right then and there, but something inside told me it was too soon. I knew I cared about him and liked him a lot but we didn't know each other very well yet and I refused to give in to my carnal desires until it felt right.

It didn't help that I found myself very turned on whenever he would speak Swedish. The way his mouth moved as he spoke was quite sexy and I had a feeling he felt the same way considering the expression on his face whenever I would repeat the everyday phrases he'd taught me earlier that morning. I would definitely be repeating them again in the morning.

We kept walking for a little while before heading east towards the ocean. We had come across several bushes that held different colored berries, one of which had half inch long bright red berries with tiny jasmine scented flowers. We picked the bushes clean of the berries, taking the opportunity to feed each other a few of them, and I took several of the branches so I could attempt to do something with them to try and capture their sweet scent. Eric and I had talked some more while we walked, but the majority of the time passed in comfortable silence.

We came to an incredibly thick wall of branches and vines that Eric had to cut down in order for us to pass. We could hear the faint sounds of the ocean and knew we weren't very far from the beach. The brush seemed to go on forever as Eric continued to cut our way through until it finally opened up into a clearing. We each stood there with our mouths gaping open at what was in front of us.

There were several wooden shacks that were all worn down with age having stood on that spot for at least a hundred years. They appeared to have been made from planks of wood, perhaps from a ship? We started exploring the site and found an old jug and a ship's bell halfway buried into the ground. But what had us giddily high fiving each other was the numerous trees and berries that were growing all throughout the area. We found all sorts of fruit and nut trees that appeared to be purposefully grouped into several areas around the clearing that had us guessing that whoever had settled here at some point had planted them.

A lot of the fruits were foreign to both of us, but we cut down a few of each anyway and sampled them together. One in particular tasted very similar to a sweet potato and we couldn't wait to add them to our dinner staple. We recognized the jackfruit and something very similar in size and taste to guavas. There were some trees that had huge 2 foot long cylindrical pods and when we split one open it was full of a very sweet pulp. I was jumping up and down for joy when we came across a large pitanga shrub. The berries taste similar to tangerines.

I had popped a few in my mouth and closed my eyes moaning in delight as their sweet juice burst in my mouth. I might even call it an orgasmic experience, especially after a few days of nothing but coconut, protein bars, fish and Crabzilla. I opened my eyes after swallowing what was left in my mouth to see Eric staring me down from where he stood a few feet away. I assumed my audible appreciation of the fruit sounded orgasmic as well considering Eric's hooded gaze and the tightening in the front of his pants. What happened next was almost like an out of body experience.

Without any thought whatsoever I seemed to be watching from above as my body sauntered forward towards Eric coming to a stop directly in front of him. My eyes travelled from the swell in his jeans, up his chest, and into his eyes. "Would you like one?" I whispered. He simply nodded so I stuck it in between my teeth and grabbed the back of his head pulling his lips to mine. As soon as they connected I bit down on the berry forcing the juice and flesh into his mouth before sweeping my tongue in after it. His hands gripped my waist as our tongues battled for dominance and I moaned as I rubbed the front of my body against his. While one hand gripped the back of his head the other travelled down his chest around to his lower back and landed on his perfect ass. I held his body to mine as I pressed against him as hard as I could. Eric grabbed the back of my head by my hair and pulled back as he growled, "Sookie..." He nipped and licked his way down my jaw and neck coming to rest just under my earlobe. "If you're not ready for anything more to happen between us we need to stop now," he whispered.

It was like having a bucket of cold water thrown onto me. My hands let go of him and I involuntarily whimpered when he let go of me. We stood there panting with our hearts racing waiting to calm down. "You're right. I'm sorry. I don't know what got into me," I confessed to his chest, unable to meet his eyes.

His hands came up to cup each side of my face and I watched as his mouth descended on mine. This kiss was tender and sweet, so unlike the frantic one before it. His hands left my face to wrap around my body hugging me to him like a big security blanket before he finally pulled away. "I don't need an apology Sookie. I wanted that as much as you did if not more. A lot has happened over the last few days and I don't want to take advantage of you if you're feeling vulnerable. Make no mistake about it that I do want you. A lot. But I don't want you to have any regrets later on if you're not ready for an intimate relationship yet." He gave me one more peck on my lips and let me go.

I felt the tears welling in my eyes once more and caught Eric off guard. He looked panicked as he held my face asking, "Sookie? What's wrong? Did I say the wrong thing?" I had to laugh as I shook my head answering, "No, you didn't say the wrong thing. You said the right thing and I'm just really touched that you're being so sweet with me."

When it was apparent I wasn't going to breakdown into hysterics Eric breathed a sigh of relief before he smirked and rolled his eyes saying, "Sweet? You think I'm sweet? What about rugged? Or sexy? Or ruggedly sexy?" he ended with his panty dropping lopsided grin. I fought off the urge to attack him again by taking a deep breath before I smiled answering, "You're definitely all of those things too along with a few others, but I don't want to inflate your ego any so I'll just stick to calling you 'sweet'."

He waggled his eyebrows at me asking, "Really? What others?" I laughed while pushing his chest away to get his ass out of my reach saying, "Oh no, that's just going to lead to other things, so let's save it for another time. Okay?" His hand darted out and pulled me back to him lightening quick while he planted a toe curling kiss on me before pulling away once more answering in a low husky voice, "Okay. As long as we both agree there *will be* another time."

I felt my whole body flush with heat and started fanning myself and not feeling the least bit self-conscious about it either. He chuckled when all I could do was nod my response.

We gathered everything together and made our way to the beach. I held the bag we'd filled with everything while Eric continued to cut down any vegetation in our way and once we hit the sand we realized the clearing was less than a hundred feet back into the trees. Eric went back to the clearing and grabbed several pieces of wood that he used to mark the entrance of the patch we'd just taken. We saved a few pieces to use back at the campsite and once that was done we headed south down the shoreline to where we had been staying. It only took about 30 minutes to make it back since there wasn't anything blocking our way and we decided to stay where we were since it was closer to the waterfall and we'd just make daily trips to what I had dubbed 'the market' to get more fruit.

The sun was getting lower in the sky so I went fishing while Eric ran back to the waterfall to bathe and refill the canteen since he'd gotten so sweaty cutting down the vegetation most of the day. I half thought about following him just so I could get a peek of the full Monty but decided against it. I highly doubted I'd be able to refrain from attacking him and I knew it was too soon so I reluctantly grabbed my spear and headed for the inlet. Eric had assured me yesterday that as long as I stayed in the water and not at the edge where the water met the undergrowth and rock formations, I should be safe from any Crabzillas because they stayed on the land and would drown if they were fully submersed in the water. I still didn't take any chances and paid more attention to my feet than the fish swimming around them but I eventually relaxed enough to focus on catching our dinner.

I ended up spearing one large fish that we could share and after cleaning it up I brought it back to the campsite. I went into the tree line and broke off two large green leaves and once I cleaned them I placed a fish fillet in each leaf and covered the fillets with several of the pitanga berries sliced up before loosely wrapping the leaves around the fish so they could steam cook inside. Once those were cooking I added slices of the larger melon that tasted like sweet potatoes grilling them uncovered alongside the fish.

The sun had set while the food was cooking and I was so focused on what I was doing that I was startled when I heard Eric behind me saying, "Mmm...smells good." I turned around intending to

give him a what-for for sneaking up on me but my protest died in my throat once I saw him. He was holding a t-shirt in one hand with the canteen in the other with his wet hair slicked back with drops of water falling down his bare chest and back. He'd replaced his jeans with shorts that fell just passed his knees and were a little loose on him so they hung low on his hips. SO. NOT. FAIR. If this was his idea of getting us to take things slow it wasn't helping AT ALL.

When I could finally tear my eyes away from his abs and looked up to his face his lips were raised in a knowing smirk. "What? Don't I look 'sweet'?"

I couldn't help laughing as I turned back to the food still cooking and asked, "How do you say 'egotistical jerk' in Swedish? Oh wait, never mind. I already know. Eric." He clutched his chest in feigned hurt but his lips twitched into a smile so I knew he didn't take me seriously. He sat down across from me and I was very disappointed as I watched him pull the t-shirt over his head. This one wasn't nearly as clingy as the one he'd had on before. I guess my disappointment was obvious because he chuckled and I was tempted to throw something at him. Instead I pulled the wrapped fish off of the rock they had been cooking on placing each one onto a plate-sized piece of the wood we'd carried back earlier. I unwrapped each one and placed several pieces of the grilled melon alongside the fish and we dug in.

We talked some more during dinner mostly about music and hobbies. After we were done eating we curled up together to go to sleep. "Continue the story you were telling me last night," I yawned out.

He kissed the top of my head before asking, "What was the last thing you remember before falling asleep?"

"Princess Sookie was wandering around the forest near her castle to stay away from the Evil Queen," I answered. I had an inkling the Evil Queen was my mother, but I didn't mind. She was.

His hand rubbed up and down my back as he spoke. "Princess Sookie was wandering around the forest when she came upon an ogre. But she didn't know he was an ogre because he used magic to change his appearance. He said he would be her friend and would help her get away from the Evil Queen when in reality he was working with the Evil Queen."

My eyes were getting heavier and heavier, but I still found myself asking, "What was the ogre's name?"

I felt his body tense underneath me and I automatically rubbed circles across his chest trying to soothe him. "What do you want his name to be?" he asked.

"Bill. His name's Bill." I yawned one last time before drifting off to sleep.

Chapter 12: Pronounced

Pronounced

EPOV

The more time I spent with Sookie the more I became enthralled by her. I'd never met anyone in my entire life that affected me the way she did. Visually she was stunning, but she was so much more than just that. We'd been on the island for a full week and there was nothing about her that I didn't like. Normally I'd have a list a mile long filled with things I didn't like about a woman after spending just a few hours with her. But Sookie was smart and could talk about a wide variety of topics from history and politics, to heavy metal music and her favorite episode of *The Simpsons*. She was quick-witted and funny and her laugh warmed me from the inside out. But the one thing that stood out to me was she never once complained about anything. I'd learned a lot about her childhood with her dysfunctional parents and a little more on her disaster of a marriage over the last week but she didn't seem disheartened by any of it. Everything she told me was in a matter of fact manner that only seemed to make her stronger when it would've been so easy to be a bitter victim to it all. She'd taken the lemons life had given her and made lemonade.

Just the fact that I even noticed she never complained about anything to do with the plane crash and what we now had to do to survive wasn't lost on me either. I'd spent so much time with spoiled celebutantes and rich kids my whole life that I sometimes found myself expecting her to bitch about her hair and nails getting messed up or that she didn't want to do this or that because she'd get dirty. It never happened. She woke up with a smile on her face every morning and went about doing whatever it was we needed to get done with enthusiasm and vigor. And every night she'd fall asleep with that same smile. We'd been so busy over the last few days that we pretty much passed out once it was time to go to sleep, but we'd held hands on our way to 'The Market' and shared a few tender kisses since our first kiss, but nothing heated like it had been when she'd fed me that berry. I knew it wasn't time yet, but it didn't stop me from leering at her whenever either one of us ate another pitanga berry. She blushed each and every time and would fan herself when she thought I wasn't watching. My hopes for 'us' were high as was the tent in my shorts at times, especially when she said *Let's get naked* to me every morning in Swedish. I knew it was wrong, but I liked hearing it too damn much to tell her yet. Her southern accent mixed with the way she pronounced the Swedish words went straight to my dick.

Our little island home was nearly finished and when we woke up on our one week anniversary of being on the island we both got to work. The roof and walls were all done. All we had left to do was put in the rods that would be the supports for the hut and attach the walls and roof. At times I wondered why we were even bothering to build it since it wasn't going to ever get cold here and we always had the cave to go to when it stormed. When I said as much to Sookie she just shrugged her shoulders and without missing a beat said, "It keeps us civilized, like on Gilligan's Island. Now can you make a radio or a car out of a coconut?" When I finally stopped laughing we had an hours' long discussion about Gilligan's Island and if they could build all of that stuff, why didn't they just fix the boat they were on? She was perfect.

After I finally had the rods secured in the ground we lifted the roof to attach it first. It was a lot heavier than it looked but Sookie still managed to hold up one end while I attached the other to the supporting rods on the other end before I was finally able to take it from her. My shirt was

drenched in sweat so I took it off and tossed it aside thinking nothing of it. But when I asked Sookie to help me lift one of the walls and she didn't move I looked over to see her eyes had glazed over while she was staring at my naked chest. I may have flexed a little while twisting and turning so she got to see all sides of me but she caught on to my little show muttering *incorrigible* before moving to the other end of the wall. They went up a lot quicker and before we knew it we had a house. A primitive house, but a house nonetheless.

I saw Sookie turn to walk inside and I reacted without thinking. I surprised her by scooping her up bridal style and carrying her inside. She giggled and then surprised me herself by grabbing onto each side of my face and pressing her lips to mine. It started off innocently enough but when her tongue slipped into my mouth things heated up quickly. She turned her body into mine as my hand slid further up her back and before I knew it my hands were cupping her ass and her legs were wrapped around my waist. She pulled back to breathe and my lips travelled across her jaw then moved along her neck. I nipped at a spot just behind her ear causing her to moan and then grind her heated center against the bulge in my shorts causing me to moan as well. I wasn't sure how far she wanted this to go and it took all of my willpower to just hold still. I could feel her hardened nipples through her shirt pressed against my chest and the only thing I could force from my throat was more of a warning consisting of nothing other than, "Sookie..."

She had one arm wrapped around my neck with her other hand gripping the hair at the back of my head as she panted into the side of my neck. I was disappointed when she stilled her actions but I understood why she did. Once our breathing had returned to normal she finally lifted her eyes to mine with an apologetic look and said, "Sorry. I got carried away." I couldn't resist letting out a huge sigh before leaning forward and giving her a chaste kiss. Smiling I said, "It's a good thing to get carried away every now and then, but I'll wait until you're ready."

"It's not that I don't want to," she protested, "but Bill's the only person I've ever been intimate with." She'd told me that they had been together since high school but it never dawned on me that she'd only ever had one lover. I was just about to tell her that I was willing to wait however long she deemed necessary when she unlocked her legs from around my waist and slid her body down the front of mine pushing against the pronounced strain in the front of my pants eliciting a hiss from my lips. I gave her the universal 'No Fair!' glare and she surprised me again by rubbing over my erection through the fabric of my shorts with her hand. Looking up at me through her eyelashes she said, "But maybe we could take baby steps in the meantime?"

I hadn't had the opportunity to take care of my 'Sookie=blue balls problem' since we'd gotten here and my hips involuntarily bucked into her hand. I restrained myself from attacking her and hoarsely asked, "What kind of baby steps did you have in mind?"

I watched her cheeks flush with color as she averted her eyes down to her hand while she continued her movements and asked, "Can I touch you?"

I pushed my hips harder into her hand saying, "You're already touching me, so I'd say the answer is yes."

I worried that was the wrong answer when her hand stopped moving but then she brought both of her hands to the button on the waistband of my shorts. She unbuttoned it before looking back up at me asking again, "Can I *touch* you?" *OH GOD YES!* my brain screamed. Thankfully only a husky, "Yes," left my lips.

As soon as she pulled down the zipper the shorts dropped from my legs to pool at my feet and my cock sprang out at her. I heard her gasp and I couldn't help standing a little taller when I heard her mutter, "*You're huge,*" under her breath. I had never met her soon to be ex-husband, but I knew I was larger than most so I wasn't too worried. Sookie wrapped her hand around the base and my whole body shuddered at the direct contact. Together we watched her hand as she began to slowly stroke up and down my shaft with each of us equally mesmerized by the sight. When she added her thumb brushing over the tip on her upstroke I groaned and pulled her face up so I could pull her lips to mine. My hands started running all over her body trying to feel everything at once before they settled on her breasts. She wasn't wearing a bra and I could tell from the way they felt that they were definitely real and she cried out when I lightly pinched her nipples through the fabric of her shirt.

"Can I *touch* you?" I asked against her lips. No sooner had she nodded her consent that my hands dove under her shirt while my tongue dove back into her mouth. Her skin was so soft and I relished in the feeling of it under my fingertips. I lifted her shirt above her breasts and leaned down to suck one of her nipples into my mouth. The rhythm of her hand faltered as she pushed her breasts farther out in front of her with her chest rising and falling in ragged pants. I switched my mouth to her other breast while mimicking my actions on the first one with my fingers while my other hand slipped down into the front of her shorts.

I couldn't help growling against her skin when I discovered how wet she already was. I pulled her shorts down before returning my fingers to her slick folds and coating them in her juices. I slipped one finger inside of her and she pushed into my hand crying out "*Eric!*" My dick got harder hearing her screaming my name and I slipped a second finger inside of her while rubbing her clit with my thumb. I attacked her mouth with mine and soon the rhythms of our mutual masturbation matched the other. I held off having my release wanting her to go first and it wasn't long before I felt her walls starting to spasm around my fingers. She pulled her lips away from my mine gasping air into her lungs and I leaned forward flicking my tongue back and forth over her nipple pushing her over the edge. She screamed "*ERIC!*" even louder as she came and I felt my orgasm explode through my body while screaming "*SOOKIE!*"

Our bodies were still twitching and I pulled her up against me when she seemed too wobbly to keep standing on her own and waited for the orgasmic fog to clear and our heart rates to slow down. She nuzzled her face into my chest while running her hands over my ass and giving it a firm squeeze before she clasped them against my lower back. It was a few minutes later when I heard her whisper, "Wow," into my chest. "Yeah...wow," I agreed. I hadn't climaxed from nothing more than a hand-job since I was in boarding school yet I'd never been more sexually satisfied than I was at that very moment.

I released her from my grasp when I felt her pull away from me. Her hair was wild from my hands going through it and her skin was flushed with color along with a sheen of sweat that had

spread across her body. I'd never seen a more beautiful sight. "Was that okay for you?" she asked apprehensively.

I pulled her back to me wrapping my arms around her while giving her a kiss that curled my own toes before responding, "Lover, it was beyond okay. It was perfect." I looked into her eyes and placed my lips on hers saying, "You're perfect." The smile she rewarded me with was so bright and beautiful it could've replaced the sun in the sky.

We pulled our clothes back on and walked back outside noticing for the first time that the sun had already set but the moon was bright enough to let us see without needing the flashlight. While Sookie ran to the lagoon to get cleaned up I pulled the deflated raft into the hut so we could use it to sleep on. I had already cleared the area of everything and the raft was large enough that it covered nearly the entire floor inside. Since it was too late to try to catch any fish I heated up a couple of the MRE's from the survival kit and we ate together once Sookie got back. Once I finished eating I went to get cleaned up myself and felt much better when I returned in a clean pair of shorts. I didn't bother putting on a shirt hoping Sookie would be tempted enough to take another 'baby step', but I'd let her make the first move. After all, it worked out well for me earlier.

We went inside and lay down with her curled up against my side and my arm wrapped around her. We both yawned, tired from the physical labor earlier in the day followed by the orgasmic release we'd each needed. Now that our bellies were full it wouldn't be long before we would both be asleep. I felt Sookie kiss my chest before asking, "Can you tell me more of the fairytale tonight?"

I hadn't continued the story since the night she named the ogre "Bill". We'd been so tired every night that we were asleep within minutes of laying down that the opportunity to continue it hadn't come up. From the little she'd told me about him so far I knew I didn't like him, but I still didn't want to say anything against him to her. I would offer my opinion on what I thought of how he had treated her when it was appropriate, but I tried to behave myself by not saying what I really thought, *he's a douchebag that never deserved you and I'm so fucking happy that you're divorcing him.*

"Princess Sookie met with Ogre Bill every day in the forest near her home and he would say things to her that she longed to hear. He would say, '*Princess Sookie, you're very beautiful...*'"

Sookie interrupted snickering, "That's not how he pronounces my name." I looked down at her expectantly before she continued by lowering her voice and rasping out, "He says *Suh-keh.*"

I could feel my eyebrows lift into my hairline and she broke into a fit of giggles. "Am I saying it wrong?" I asked.

"No. Well, maybe? I was called 'Sookie', you know, like 'cookie', my whole life until I met Bill. When he called me 'Suh-keh' the first few times I let it slide. I later tried to correct him but he told me that *I* was pronouncing it wrong."

I was about to throw the bullshit flag when I asked, "You're kidding, right?"

She shrugged her shoulders and put her head back onto my chest saying, "No. He even has my mother calling me 'Suh-keh' now. My father stopped calling me 'Sookie' and just calls me doodle-bug instead so he doesn't get yelled at."

I laid there in complete disbelief that my darling *SOOKIE* has had to put up with the amount of bullshit that she has so far and I knew that I would do anything and everything I could to see that she didn't have to tolerate any of it for another second if and when we ever went back home. She even had the grace to laugh about it instead of being pissed off like I would be. I don't know how long I'd pondered the 'Sookie/Suh-keh' issue, but when I turned to look down at Sookie again she was already asleep. I kissed the top of her head and closed my eyes picturing different scenarios of what I was going to do to Ogre Bill once we picked up the fairytale again.

Chapter 13: Broken

Broken

SPOV

I woke up curled against Eric's side with my head resting on his naked chest. Remembering the day before I couldn't help blushing at the memory of what we'd done together. I'd NEVER had an orgasm like that before in my entire life and he'd only used his hands. I could only imagine how great it would be if he added his other body parts into the equation. He really was the epitome of 'sexy'. That thought led me to wonder what he could possibly see in me. I didn't think I was ugly by any means, but I didn't consider myself beautiful either. I was average. I'd seen some of the women Eric had at his side over the years thanks to the internet gossip sites and I wasn't even close to being in their league. Was our relationship nothing more than a way to pass the time for him? Would I be the one he chose to spend time with if he had other options available? I had already promised myself that I wouldn't make any more assumptions about him, but I couldn't help feeling a little insecure not knowing where we stood.

I slowly removed myself from Eric's grasp trying to not wake him and walked outside to see the sun was just barely cresting over the horizon. I took my time as I walked to the lagoon to freshen up and my thoughts were filled questions that could only be answered by Eric. I knew I liked him A LOT, but did he feel the same way? If we were rescued today would he still want to see me or would this island be the Las Vegas equivalent and 'what happens here stays here'? What if he told me that he didn't want an exclusive relationship with me? Could I still continue on with the way we'd been acting around each other knowing it would come to an end as soon as we were back home?

I didn't think I could. Bill had been my only relationship and I knew deep down if Eric said he just wanted to be fuck-buddies I'd end up with a broken heart. It would be better for me to halt

going any further than we'd already gone because I knew I was already attached to him. Having sex with him only so he could discard me later would kill me inside.

I finally reached the lagoon and took a quick dip in the water before filling the canteen with fresh water. I grabbed a pile of clothes I'd washed earlier and had left drying in the sun. I quickly folded them before carrying them with me as I headed back. I took my time walking while pondering the other side of the Eric relationship coin. What if Eric really did have feelings for me? What if he wanted to be with me regardless of where we were? Would he be willing to put up with my mother and her reaction to it all? Or the nightmare that would be Bill's reaction when I told him I wanted a divorce? What about our jobs? I couldn't work for him if we were seeing each other. What about his father's reaction? He said he'd wanted to please his father, but would he be willing to defy his wishes just to be with me?

I was more confused than ever by the time I made it back to the beach and I had no idea of how I could ask Eric all of the questions I had without seeming like a clingy, desperate girl. We'd only known each other for less than two weeks, and had spent only one week together. It didn't feel right to ask him yet. I hoped we'd be here long enough that I would find out the answers in time and decided to just go with the flow for now. He wasn't purposefully pushing me into a sexual relationship, but I'd have to keep my lust in check for now whenever he was being unintentionally sexy which seemed to be every second of the day.

I was in a melancholy mood when I walked into the hut. Eric was just opening his eyes and stretching out his body before he held up one of his hands reaching for me. I couldn't help smiling at him and placing my hand in his, allowing him to pull me down next to him. He immediately wrapped his body around mine burying his face in my hair and I heard a soft grumble in his chest. *Was he actually purring?* I chuckled at how much he liked to snuggle and held him tighter attempting to let go of all of my fears and doubts and just tried to enjoy the moment instead.

Eric reached down and pulled my face up to his and softly brushed his lips against mine before smiling and asked, "Did you get enough sleep?" He was really very sweet but it only made my heart clench tighter at the thought that he might not want me in the same way that I wanted him. I was afraid of what might come tumbling out of my mouth so I merely nodded my reply, but I guessed my face gave me away because his eyebrows furrowed as he studied me and asked, "Is everything okay?" I could feel the tears starting to form behind my eyes so I quickly leaned over and kissed his lips before standing up and saying, "I'm fine. I'm going to get breakfast together," and darted outside.

I made myself appear busy picking through the fruits we had stored away mentally kicking myself for letting my emotions get away from me. I pushed all of the tear producing thoughts down and when I was sure I would be able to maintain my composure I walked back to where Eric had perched himself in the sand. He watched me for a while without saying anything and I knew he was trying to figure out what I was thinking. Thankfully he didn't ask and we were able to eat in relative silence. Once we were done I knew I needed a distraction from my thoughts so I asked, "What did you want to do today?" Now that the hut was finished I wasn't sure what else we might need to do.

Eric continued to silently study my face before he said, "Why don't we just take it easy today? We've been going non-stop since we got here and I think we deserve a day off." I hesitated knowing we'd have to do *something* other than just sitting around talking or else I'd end up spilling every question going through my mind. I broke our mutual gaze and looked out at the ocean, watching it gently lapping at the shore and an idea popped into my head.

I looked back at Eric and smiled agreeing, "That sounds like a great idea." I stood up without another word and walked towards the water. I dropped my shorts into the sand and waded in wearing nothing more than a tank top and my underwear. The warm water felt amazing and I treaded water while bobbing up and down with the tide. I turned back to look at Eric and had to laugh at his expression. He hadn't moved from where he'd been sitting but his eyes were locked onto me with his jaw hanging open. I hadn't intentionally tried to get a rise out of him, either figuratively or literally, but I was enjoying his reaction just the same.

When he realized I was laughing at him he smirked as he stood up and sprinted into the water after me. I felt like his prey again and took off in the water parallel to the beach in a foolish attempt to get away from him but he was on me within seconds. I screamed out laughing as soon as he lunged forward and held me in his grasp. It didn't escape me that I always seemed to feel better when he was with me so I let all of my worries fade for the moment and just enjoyed playing in the ocean with Eric. At one point we noticed a seagull drifting on the water a few hundred feet away which made Eric start humming the melody to "Surfin' Bird". Before long we were belting out at the top of our lungs, "*A-well-a everybody's heard about the bird; Bird, bird, bird, b-bird's the word; A-well-a bird, bird, bird, b-bird is the word...*" I knew I'd be hearing that song in my head for days and what's worse is it would be the version from 'Family Guy'.

After a few more rounds of singing and me trying to get away from Eric as he caught me every time, we finally waded back up to the beach and plopped down into the sand. I started pushing the wet sand into a pile as we sat there and before long we were building a sandcastle. We spent hours packing and shaping the sand into a three foot tall six foot wide castle. It was a good distraction from my worries and we kept at it until we finally deemed it 'finished.'

By that time the sun was lower in the sky so we caught our fish dinner and cooked it together. We faced the sandcastle as we ate watching the tide rising with each lap of the water slowly washing our masterpiece away. When there was nothing left but a broken shell Eric said, "I haven't made a sandcastle in years. I guess it's good to practice now before having any kids."

With everything else I'd been worried about with Eric that issue never occurred to me. I looked at the broken sandcastle and felt the silent tears start falling down my face knowing I was just as broken. Eric had been looking out at the ocean and only when my breath hitched in my throat as I tried to stifle a sob did he turn to see the hot mess I was quickly turning into.

He dropped his food in front of him as he turned to face me and wrapped his arms around me which only caused the flood of tears and sobs to break free. I knew he was clueless as to why I was sobbing into his chest but he just held me tightly and rubbed soothing circles on my back while quietly whispering soothing words and sounds in my ear. When the sobs died down and I

was able to breathe normally again he pulled back and just looked into my eyes. I could practically see the question poised on the tip of his tongue but he remained silent.

I knew I owed him an explanation so I took a deep breath preparing to give him one, but in the end all I could say was, "I'm sorry." He slowly rubbed his hands up and down my arms before asking, "Did I say something wrong?" I slowly shook my head 'no', but the silent tears returned with a vengeance. "What is it Sookie? Please tell me what's wrong," he pleaded.

My eyes dropped to my lap as I whispered, "I'm broken." Eric reached out and tilted my head up. When my eyes finally met his again he looked bewildered and asked, "What do you mean you're broken?" I took another deep breath, steeling my resolve, and answered him the best way that I could.

"Do you remember I told you I'd gotten some bad news the morning we left Shreveport?" He nodded silently so I continued, "That morning I had an appointment with a fertility specialist. Bill had wanted a baby and it just wasn't happening." The look on his face indicated he wasn't too happy with the thought of me having a baby with Bill so I truthfully explained, "Bill only wanted a baby to help his image because he wants to run for mayor and thought having a family would help him win. I went along in the beginning but when we were sitting there waiting for the doctor to come in I had already decided I wouldn't be going along with his *precious plans* any longer."

I watched Eric absorb what I'd told him so far and he slowly went from being slightly upset to almost outraged. "You're telling me that he only wanted a child with you so it would help him in the polls?" I just nodded and waited to see if he had anything else to say before I continued. He huffed and shook his head and then huffed some more before saying, "I'm sorry Sookie. I've tried to keep my opinions to myself and I know I've never met him and technically he's still your husband, but I've just got to tell you I think he's a complete douche bag. The way he treats you is despicable and all I want to do right now is rip his head off." I sat there silently as he huffed and puffed for a few more minutes before continuing my confession. While he silently fumed I realized I didn't care enough about Bill to be upset by him anymore. It was liberating.

"Anyway...the doctor had my blood work results and explained that the results coupled with my symptoms indicated I more than likely have a benign tumor on my pituitary gland and that I wouldn't be able to get pregnant without medical intervention, and even then it wasn't guaranteed it would work." My tears and sobs slowly made a reappearance towards the end of my tale but I plowed ahead anyway saying, "And when the doctor told us everything Bill all but accused me of being broken inside, and I'm not so sure that I don't agree with him."

Eric quickly gathered me in his arms again holding me tightly against him and letting me cry all over his bare chest. When I calmed down he pulled back and asked, "Did the doctor say you'd be in any danger from it without treatment?" He started looking around and I could see the wheels turning in his head before he continued, "We could probably build a decent raft. It wouldn't take that long and we could pack up a bunch of fruit along with the MRE's we still have left. There're water purification tablets in the kit so we could make the saltwater drinkable. As long as we rationed everything we could probably last a couple of weeks at sea."

He was starting to ramble a mile a minute becoming more and more panicked so I grabbed his face and held it between my hands saying, "Eric! I'm fine. I'm not in any danger. The only thing wrong is I can't get pregnant and I won't get my period, although I don't necessarily think that belongs in the 'wrong' column considering we're stuck here without any Tampax." I smiled trying to bring him back from the edge he'd travelled to and slowly his face and shoulders relaxed. "You're sure? Sookie I wouldn't be able to sit here knowing you were sick and needed to see a doctor or had to have some sort of treatment. I would move heaven and earth to make sure you were okay."

I could see the truth of his statement in his eyes. When I caressed the side of his face he leaned into my hand and closed his eyes before turning his head and kissing my open palm. When he opened them again the look of intensity on his face took away any doubts I had. I knew I meant something more to him than a friend with benefits and I'd never felt more valued by someone in my entire life. The man in front of me literally saved my life and I had no doubt that he would put his own life at risk to save me again.

The emotional roller coaster I'd been on for most of the day crested and I felt a raw need to be connected to him in any and every way possible. I climbed onto Eric's lap straddling his legs and pulled his face to mine. Eric must've felt just as raw as I did because our need for one another was palpable in our kiss as our mouths crashed against one another's with our hands touching and pulling our bodies as close together as we could. I could feel his swelling arousal beneath me and I pushed down while rubbing my core back and forth along his growing length.

I could feel the moisture between my legs run down along my thighs and I pulled back long enough to pull my tank top over my head before pressing my body back against his needing to feel his bare flesh against my own. Eric kissed and licked his way across my neck before making his way down to my breasts. Taking one nipple into his mouth he held it between his teeth flicking his tongue over the hardened peak while his hand traveled down into my shorts. I cried out when one of his fingers slid through my wet folds and inside of me while I rocked my hips against his hand. The intensity of the moment had me screaming out his name as I quickly climaxed just a few minutes later.

He removed his hand from my shorts and I watched Eric's eyes, hooded with lust, close as he slipped the finger into his mouth and sucked it clean. He moaned in pleasure and opened his eyes saying, "I knew you'd taste as sweet as you smell." He was smelling pretty good to me too so I pushed his chest until he was lying down and kissed and licked my way across his neck and down his chest. I swirled my tongue around his nipple and his hips bucked upwards when I lightly bit down. I liked being able to get Eric to respond to me that way so I made sure to repeat the process on his other nipple. His reactions were the same with him adding a hoarse moan to the mix.

I continued travelling down until I came to the waistband of his shorts. As soon as I opened them his erection sprang out to greet me and I quickly settled myself between his legs and licked the drop of moisture from his tip. "*Sookie...*" he hissed as his hips bucked again from the contact. I looked up the length of his body to see him looking down at me. I smiled leaning forward and ran my tongue from the base of his shaft to the tip like he was a giant ice cream cone. Another

moan escaped his throat as I swirled my tongue around the head before sliding my lips down as much of his length that I possibly could. Given his size I knew there was no way I'd be able to fit all of him into my mouth so I wrapped my hand around the rest and slid my mouth up and down along with my hand. His hand threaded through my hair at the back of my head but he allowed me to maintain the rhythm I'd established thankfully holding still because I was sure I'd choke if he tried to push my mouth further down.

I was incredibly turned on watching Eric watching me and I moaned in pleasure. Apparently Eric liked the vibration my moan caused because his eyes rolled back into his head. I could feel him swelling larger and knew he was close even as he tried to warn me panting out, "*Sookie... I'm about...to...come.*" I quickened my pace and increased the amount of suction moaning the entire time. As soon as I brought my other hand up to caress his balls I felt his body tense beneath me and he cried out with his climax hitting the back of my throat. I swallowed everything he gave and continued slowly moving my hand and mouth up and down making sure I had it all while his body continued to twitch. I finally released him with one last swirl of my tongue and a kiss on his tip before he pulled me back up the length of his body for another kiss.

We laid there for a while letting our heartbeats slow down feeling utterly content in the moment. My mind was mush after the orgasm he'd given me and I felt a little punch drunk when all of the emotions from earlier were added to it. I'd be happy just staying there forever and had no desire whatsoever for us to leave the island.

Our breathing eventually evened out and unless Eric said he was uncomfortable, I had no intentions of moving from where I was which was still lying on top of him. While we were on the cusp of sleep my mind lazily ran through everything that had happened that day and I groaned in frustration at what it settled on.

"What's wrong," he murmured, almost asleep himself.

I smiled evilly knowing he couldn't see me and asked, "Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?" he yawned out.

"*B-b-b-bird, bird, bird, b-bird's the word...*" I sang.

"*ARGH...*" he growled and covered my mouth with his hand as the tune made its way back into his head. So I just hummed instead.

Chapter 14: Need

Need

EPOV

I woke up slowly to the sound of the ocean softly hitting the shoreline with Sookie asleep on top of me. I stared at the top of her blond head remembering everything she had told me the night before. Bill was an ASSHOLE and the thought of her being with him made my gut clench. I actually felt a little nauseous when she'd told me they had been trying to start a family. She was MINE! Even if she hadn't, technically, agreed to that yet I felt it to be true regardless and I would do whatever she wanted or needed for her to feel the same way.

I'd never thought of having children of my own, nor did I think I'd ever want to. My childhood, while privileged, wasn't exactly ideal and I hadn't realized I'd changed my mind on the subject until the words came tumbling out of my mouth when I was talking to Sookie. I had no idea that she'd get upset, or the reason why she was upset, until she told me what had happened. My inner turmoil along with the rage I felt towards her husband turned into panic as soon as I heard the word 'tumor' come out of her mouth. I couldn't lose her. I just couldn't. I'd only just found her and as far as I was concerned we still had another 60+ years together. We didn't HAVE to have children, it could just be the two of us and I'd be fine with that. Or we could adopt our children and I would love them just like they were my own. I just needed her to be there with me because I'd quickly come to the realization that I couldn't picture my future without her in it.

I could tell something was wrong as soon as I woke up that morning. She just seemed 'off'. But given the shitstorm that's been her life so far, I still wasn't sure what exactly was bothering her. All I knew was that I wanted to try to let her know how special she was, but I was at a loss as to how to go about doing that. If we were anywhere else, I would spoil her with dinners and trips and gifts, although I had a feeling she wouldn't like that as much as other women might. That fact alone made her even more attractive.

As we lay there I tried to think of what I had learned so far in the time we'd spent together. Without a doubt I knew that our personalities meshed well together and we had the same sense of humor. She was a hard worker and aside from the first time she'd caught a fish that needed to be gutted, she hadn't asked me to help her with anything. That told me she either was the type to want to do everything themselves, or that she was used to having to fend for herself which is what I suspected to be the case.

But the single thing I was most sure about was that the chemistry between us was like something I'd never felt before. I would be perfectly content to stare at her for hours. Her beauty was undeniable, but her inner beauty shined even brighter. The feel of her soft skin underneath my fingertips and the sweet taste of her kiss would make a fire burn white hot inside of me. The sounds of her moans and whimpers while in the throes of passion drowned out any and every other sound, my focus solely on giving her pleasure.

And the pleasure she gave me was indescribable. We hadn't gone any farther than most teenagers and yet I'd never been more sexually satisfied than right now. I could only imagine what it would feel like if we actually had sex and idly wondered if a person could die from an orgasm because I was pretty sure if and when it happened I would literally explode.

Thinking of being inside of her while she was lying on top of me was making me hard and Sookie's sporadic shifting of her body in her sleep wasn't helping matters. She was only half

dressed wearing just her shorts since she collapsed on top of me after the previous night's activities and when a cool breeze blew off of the ocean water I could feel her nipples pebble against my own naked skin. Her head was resting on my chest while her legs were hanging over each side of mine so I hugged her gently and just enjoyed the feeling of her with me thinking maybe I could just *show* her how special I thought she was.

I could tell she was starting to wake by the sound of her breathing and I felt a little giddy inside thinking *She likes me!* when she pressed a kiss into my chest before stretching out and slowly sitting up. Looking up at her I knew without a doubt she owned me, even if *she* didn't know it, but that knowledge didn't bother me one bit. *Yep, stick a fork in me because I'm done.*

Her eyes were still half open from waking and her hair was tousled and hanging down her front on each side of her head with the ends long enough that they just covered the top half of her naked breasts. I'd never seen a more beautiful sight. I could feel the smile on my lips while looking at her causing her to smile at me in return.

"What are you thinking?" she asked, her eyebrows slightly furrowed.

I reached up and tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear answering, "That you're beautiful."

Sookie smiled and blushed slightly, but when she shifted her hips her eyes opened wider when she felt me hard underneath her. She held still for a brief moment while her eyes remained locked onto mine and I watched as her expression changed from surprised to heated. Leaning forward she placed her hands on my chest while pushing her hips down grinding back and forth over my erection. Her hair fell forward leaving her breasts uncovered as she whispered, "Is that *all* you're thinking?"

She didn't give me the chance to respond by pressing her lips against mine in a tentative kiss as if she was unsure of what I felt about her so I held onto the back of her head sweeping my tongue into her mouth and decided to show her what I felt. As soon as our tongues came into contact her hips pushed down harder against me as she moaned into my mouth. My hands gripped her hips while I pushed against her wanting desperately to be inside of her but I wasn't sure if she was ready for us to take that next step.

I wrapped my arms around her body and rolled us over so that she was underneath me, breaking our kiss so I could explore her bare skin with my mouth. I'd already discovered a spot just behind her ear that caused her to whimper whenever I nipped at the skin there, but when I nipped it now she moaned while raking her nails down my back and slipped her hands underneath the waistband of my shorts. She grabbed onto my ass while thrusting her hips upwards and when a hoarse growl left her throat I responded with one of my own.

I slipped my hand into the front of her shorts while licking my way from her neck to her breasts and found that her folds were already slick with arousal. I parted her folds with my fingers and coated them in her juices before bringing them up to her nub where I rubbed slow circles over it while mimicking the actions with my tongue over her breast. Her breathing picked up speed as

her hips pushed up into my hand and she held my head in place over her breast with one hand while her other dug into the small of my back.

I could feel her heartbeat racing in her chest and just as she cried out, "*Oh God, Eric!*" I slipped two fingers inside of her while pressing down on her clit with my thumb. Her whole body tensed as she screamed out with her release and her muscles contracted around my fingers while I continued to thrust them inside of her drawing it out for as long possible.

Sookie pulled my face back to hers with one hand while her other one snaked in between our bodies to unbutton my shorts. Our kiss was hungry and frenzied but the feel of her hand wrapping around my shaft caused me to break our kiss when I hissed at the contact. She continued to stroke up and down my length while she pushed my shorts down with her feet.

I kept my hands wrapped up in her hair unsure of how far we were taking this but my unspoken question was answered when she said, "I want to feel you inside of me. *I need to.*"

I stilled my actions and looked into her eyes needing to make sure I heard her correctly. I didn't want her to have any regrets later on so I asked, "Are you sure Sookie?"

She bit her bottom lip and my heart sank when she looked unsure. I was ready to talk myself down when she said, "*I'm sure*, but if you don't want to..."

I didn't let her finish her statement not needing to hear anything after "I'm sure" and swept my tongue back into her mouth. My hands roamed all over body with hers doing the same. I couldn't get enough of her and I was shocked by the need I felt for her. I pulled away long enough to pull her shorts down her legs and paused to take in the sight of her naked body again. I'd thought there was nothing more beautiful than seeing her standing in the lagoon with water trailing down her body, but to see her now, lying in front of me, took beautiful to a whole other level.

I guessed I was taking too long admiring her body because Sookie sat up and wrapped her arms around my neck. She pulled me with her as she laid back down so I was on top of her once more and slid her hand in between us to stroke me again. Her lips found mine and when I slid my fingers through her folds again she moaned before pushing my fingers aside and placing my tip at her entrance. "*Please Eric...*" she whispered against my lips.

Our eyes locked onto each other's as I slowly pushed my way inside of her. Her eyes widened at first and I knew I needed to take my time to allow her to adjust to my size when I felt how tight she was. It was only a moment later when her eyes narrowed and she rocked her hips against mine in an effort to get me to start moving.

I slowly slid myself out until I was barely inside of her before sliding back in again. I took my time feeling each and every part of her as it came into contact with me. I could feel the throb of my pulse pushing against her slick walls as her muscles sporadically clenched around me. Nothing I had ever experienced came close to what I was feeling the moment our bodies were connected. Everything about her was perfect as if she was made just for me and watching her face full of lust and desire as I continued to slowly thrust into her turned me on even more.

Sookie's hips thrust upwards in sync with mine and as I felt the coil tightening low in my body I starting putting more force behind my thrusts. Her cries and pants came faster and louder and I could feel her muscles starting to spasm harder around my cock. Her nails dug into my back as I shifted slightly drawing her knee up higher on my hip and held it in place letting me reach even deeper inside of her causing her to scream out, "*YES! Oh my God Eric! YES!*"

Hearing Sookie scream my name nearly pushed me over the edge but I needed her to come first so I lifted her knee up even higher using my bicep to hold it in place and rubbed her clit with my thumb as I continued to pound into her. Her hips responded with just as much force and I felt her walls clamp down like a vice as she screamed out with her climax. I couldn't hold back any longer and I thrust into her once more before my whole body tensed as my orgasm ripped through my body and I exploded inside of her with a hoarse scream of my own.

I couldn't help it when my body fell forward on top of hers but I tried to keep most of my weight off of her even though my arms felt like jello. We continued to lay there feeling the lingering twitches and spasms of each other's bodies with me still inside of her as our breathing slowed down. I leaned down needing to kiss her again putting everything I felt for her into that one kiss.

I eventually pulled back and looked down to see the adoration in her eyes and a sparkle I hadn't seen before as she stared back into mine. I was still a little worried she might regret what we'd just done and I found myself asking, "Are you okay?"

I felt better when she laughed answering, "Am I okay? I've never been *MORE okay* than I am right now. I knew it would be great, but you exceeded my expectations by leaps and bounds. That was...*WOW*...you were...just...*WOW*."

I couldn't help grinning when I said, "I'm glad. You were pretty *WOW* yourself." And she was. I'd never felt something like that before and I couldn't wait to feel it again. I was about to start round two when I heard her stomach growl.

She giggled and blushed saying, "Well *that's* sexy..."

I took her by surprise when I thrust my tongue back into her mouth devouring it with my own letting her know just how sexy she was before pulling away again. "*YOU* are the definition of sexy. But I need to feed you so you can keep up your strength." I leered at her before adding, "Because you're going to need it later on."

She leered right back at me before asking, "Is that a promise?"

I felt my dick twitch while still inside of her and was about to drop the idea of having breakfast just yet when her stomach growled again. "That's a fact lover," I assured her before pushing myself up. She groaned when I pulled out of her and tried to hold me in place on top of her, but I resisted knowing my Sookie needed to be fed even if she didn't agree. I kissed the tip of her nose before pulling her shorts back up her legs and coaxing her to lift her hips so I could pull them all the way up. I pulled my shorts back on as she slipped her tank top over her head and we headed to the 'Market' to pick some fresh fruit.

We held hands the entire way without saying anything, each of us still lost in our post-orgasm haze, and we were there before we knew it. Sookie let go of my hand as she bent over in front of me to pick some berries from a bush. I couldn't resist running my hands over her perfect ass even if her display was unintentional.

Apparently Wicked Sookie was making an appearance because she looked over her shoulder and pushed her ass back against me rubbing it up and down my crotch. I gripped her hips with my hands holding her in place while grinding against her and said, "You need to eat young lady, so quit tempting me with your irresistable ass."

She stood up and turned around smiling and asked, "You think my ass is irresistable?" My eyebrow quirked up as I gave her my best 'Duh!' face and she took a step forward so we were toe to toe. Reaching around she ran her hands over my ass and squeezed when she said, "I guess we have that in common then because this," she squeezed again, "is a work of art."

I'd felt myself grow hard again as soon as she had bent over but now I was starting to lose my focus on getting her fed and just wanted to bury myself inside of her once more. She gasped in surprise when I held onto her head and back as I dipped her body backwards with a kiss. I grabbed some more berries as I pulled her upright again and poured them into her hand saying, "Eat!"

"You need to eat too," she said and I watched as she put a berry in between her teeth and tilted her head up expectantly. I smiled leaning down and sucked the berry from her mouth before kissing her again. I pulled away and swallowed before repeating the process for her by placing another berry in between my teeth and letting her pluck it from my mouth.

We fed each other berries back and forth for a while until our faces and bodies were covered in berry juice from us kissing more than actually eating. When Sookie insisted she'd had enough we walked to the lagoon to wash up and by the lustful look in her eyes I knew the time for round two was upon us.

Chapter 15: Worship

Worship

SPOV

I'd spent the last few hours in a daze. Waking up on top of Eric had been wonderful, but when I felt him hard underneath me I just went with what I was feeling at the moment, which was wanting to pick up where we'd left off the night before. I didn't care that we'd barely known each other just a week earlier. I didn't care that he'd probably been with more women than I cared to know about while I'd only ever been with Bill. The only thing I cared about was him and how he made me feel. I felt closer to Eric after one week than I had after being with Bill for years. He made me feel safe and valued, beautiful and smart, cherished and worthy. And now? Now I felt

insatiable, like I could never get enough of him, but I was more than willing to try and see if it was possible.

I used to hope and pray for a single orgasm, but they were few and far between. I had just thought that maybe I was the type of person that didn't have a high libido and wrote it off to that. But Eric was able to coax an orgasm out of me with just his fingers each time he had touched me there and then to be able to make me climax *again* when he was finally inside of me made me feel like he could perform miracles. A part of me wondered if he could turn water into wine because Lord knows I had every intention of worshipping at the altar of Eric again. And again. And again.

I was happy to see (and feel) that Eric seemed to be just as caught up in 'us' as I was. Not only because he couldn't seem to keep his hands off of me, but by the look of adoration in his eyes whenever he looked at me. Lust was sometimes added to the mix, but the adoration always seemed to be there as well. A part of me wondered what the future held in store for us, but for now I was content to just live in the moment.

Just the thought of how that man could kiss would make me dizzy, but I had NO idea sex could be THAT satisfying. At the time, it made the grains of sand that were currently lodged in several different parts of my body well worth it, but I started to second guess that decision once we were actually up and walking around. Eric insisted on me eating thanks to my ill-timed stomach noises and the walk there was somewhat uncomfortable when the magical feeling of our morning encounter started to fade making the presence of the sand more prominent, but feeding berries back and forth to each other made the walk there worth it as I once again forgot about the sand.

Once the berry juice was starting to form an uncomfortable glaze on top of the sand already stuck to my body I'd had enough and convinced Eric to head to the lagoon. I'd left some clothes in the cave there so we'd always have something we could change into but I had half a mind to just wander around naked hoping that Eric would do the same. Something told me I wouldn't have a hard time convincing him and it made me want to chuck my modesty out of the metaphorical window.

As soon as we could hear the waterfall in the distance getting louder as we walked closer I started feeling even more aroused knowing we were about to get naked. Together. Again. I wasn't worried whether or not he'd be up, so to speak, to performing again so soon after I'd felt him pressing his erection into my ass when I'd bent over to pick berries in front of him. Just the thought of him inside me again put an extra wiggle in my step and a throb in my girly bits so I picked up the pace a little with him easily matching my quicker strides.

Once we reached the edge of the lagoon I turned to face him and could easily see the desire written across his face knowing it matched my own. Our gaze was only broken when I lifted my tank top over my head and when I looked back at him I found I still had his undivided attention. Eric's eyes strayed down taking in my naked breasts, watching as I slid my hands down my torso until they stopped at the waistband of my shorts. I slowly eased them over my hips and let them fall to the ground at my feet before stepping out of them and turning to walk into the water.

I turned to look over my shoulder at Eric, as I continued walking into the water, and saw him standing there staring after me with his mouth slightly gaping open. I'll admit I was pleased to have had an effect on him and I may have put a little more sway in my hips until I was completely submerged in the water. It was cooler than the ocean water, but it felt good on my heated skin so I completely submerged myself, only coming up when I needed to breathe.

Eric was still standing where I'd left him and if it wasn't for the heated stare he was leveling me with I would've thought something was wrong. Instead I merely asked, "Aren't you going to join me?" The sound of my voice seemed to break the hypnotic spell he'd been under because he made a show of slowly unbuttoning his shorts and letting them fall to the ground giving me a full view of just how much I'd effected him. *Woo boy!* I was a lucky girl.

He took his time stalking his way into the water and I was completely mesmerized by the sight of him. I watched the way his muscles moved under his bronzed skin as he parted the water while he made his way towards me and I was surprised there wasn't smoke coming out of his eyes with the amount of heat that was pouring out of them.

As soon as I was within his reach he pulled me to him, wrapping his arms around my naked form, and pressed his lips against mine. "You're beautiful," he mumbled against my lips before parting them with his tongue. It wasn't sweet, but it wasn't frenzied either. It was meaningful, almost as if he was worshipping me, like there was nowhere else on earth that he'd rather be and no one else he'd rather be with.

We slowly ran our hands over each other's bodies rinsing away the sand and sticky residue left from the berries on our skin. Once we were squeaky clean Eric lifted me up with me wrapping my legs around his waist as we kissed again. I loved the way we took our time, just enjoying the act of kissing and now that we each knew where this would end up we weren't in any hurry to rush things along. His lips were soft as they moved against my own and I could feel the pounding of our hearts where our chests were pressed against one another.

Eric broke the kiss to lick and nip his way across my neck before lifting me higher as his mouth made its way to my breasts. He captured a drop of water from the tip of my breast with his tongue and then slowly traced the outer edge of my hardened nipple before completely encasing it within his mouth. He gently suckled at my breast while lapping his tongue in a steady rhythm over the tip causing my back to arch towards him while the throb in my center became greater. My legs automatically held him tighter in my grasp and a moan escaped my lips when he kissed his way across my chest to pay equal attention to my other breast.

I wove my fingers through the wet hair at the back of his head holding him in place as my hips pressed against his body wanting more friction. Sensing my need, Eric continued to worship my breast with his mouth while his hand slipped down my back and under my bottom, sliding his fingers along my slick folds while his other arm held me tighter against his body. I let out a gasping cry as soon as his fingers made contact with my nub and he growled against my breast. The vibration of it added to my already heightened state of arousal and I pushed down on his hand even harder.

I hadn't noticed Eric was moving us through the water until I felt him lifting me up onto a large flattened rock near the base of the waterfall, gently setting me down and pulling my legs from around his waist. The water only came up to his hips in this part of the lagoon so he was able to stand while leaning in to kiss me again while his hands slowly caressed each part of me that he could reach.

He once again made his way down my body with his mouth before hovering directly over my center. I couldn't help feeling somewhat exposed and when he started slowly kissing my inner thigh making his way up I realized what he was about to do. I'd never had *that* experience before because Bill had thought it was *dirty*, even though he held no such qualms about me doing that for him. I had no idea of what I should expect, but knowing what a great kisser he was I highly doubted that I would be disappointed.

Eric placed each of my legs over his shoulders and when he leaned forward, running his tongue up through my folds, my hips bucked up and a sound came out of my throat that I'd never made before. Undeterred, he continued licking his way up and down from my core to my clit while steadily increasing his pace as well as the amount of pressure he applied with his tongue. I never knew something could feel so good and in the very back of my mind I thought *I can't believe I wasted all of those years missing out on something like this.*

I was leaning on my elbows with my head thrown back and my eyes closed, watching the colors swirling behind my eyelids, completely caught up in the sensations Eric was causing in me when I heard him say, "Look at me lover." My head snapped up and my eyes opened to see him staring intently into mine while he went back to turning my body into jello. His eyes were hooded, looking into my own, and it was all I could do to not close them again from the sheer intensity of it all. When he sucked my clit in between his lips and steadily flicked his tongue over it I felt my whole body tense up and I screamed out with the explosive climax he had produced.

When my vision began to clear I saw Eric still watching me from between my legs and he smiled saying, "I love watching you as you come for me lover." I'm sure I would've blushed at his words if he hadn't gone back to licking up the moisture he'd caused to run down my trembling thighs and I cried out again while wantonly pushing myself against his face. He licked me clean before thrusting his tongue inside of me, moving his hand from my hip, and pressing his thumb against my clit moving it in slow circles. My whole body was one giant nerve ending and I could feel another orgasm quickly building low in my body when my eyes closed again causing Eric to growl out his disapproval.

My eyes shot open just in time to see him slip two fingers inside of me as he moved his tongue back to my small bundle of nerves. I was already so far gone that as soon as he hooked them, rubbing against that magical spot inside of me that I didn't know existed until he had discovered it, my walls locked down on his fingers and I cried out again with my fourth orgasm that day.

My chest was heaving with my panting breaths as Eric kissed his way up my body before slanting his lips over mine. I could taste myself on him while feeling his want and desire, not only in our kiss, but against my leg as well. I wrapped my arms around him with him doing the

same as he lifted me up off of the rock. My legs automatically circled his waist while he walked us towards the base of the waterfall, never once breaking our kiss along the way.

The waterfall was only about a hundred feet high and the force of the water falling from above wasn't any harder than what a heavy rainfall would produce, so when Eric settled us against a rock ledge under the spray of the water we weren't drowning in it. The ledge was wide enough that I could sit comfortably on the edge and was the perfect height for what Eric had in mind. I couldn't help smiling when I said, "Well this is convenient." Eric's smile matched my own when he responded, "I scouted the place out the last time I was here and found it," he ended with wagging his eyebrows.

I couldn't help giggling at him and didn't think it was possible, but I felt even happier knowing that Eric wanted me enough to think of something like that so I pulled him back into another kiss wanting him to know that I desired him just as much. My hands ran along his shoulders and down his back to his award winning ass, pulling his body closer to mine. I slid one hand around his waist and grasped him at his base, slowly stroking up and down his length while he started running his finger along my center as well, causing each of us to moan in unison.

When neither one of us could take it anymore I placed his tip at my entrance before wrapping one arm around his shoulders and bracing myself against the rock ledge with my other hand. Eric held onto my hips as he slowly pushed into me and I could feel the throb of his pulse as he made his way further into my body. Our kiss was reverent with more emotions being conveyed than either one of us was willing to say just yet and it was then that I knew I could love this man. A part of me already thought that I did.

Eric continued to slowly move in and out of my body with the spasms inside of me sporadically pulsing around his girth with each of us making the unspoken decision to prolong our union for as long as possible. We continued to move our hips against each other and the force of our thrusts were becoming greater as our rhythm increased. I let go of Eric's body to brace myself with both of my hands on the ledge while his grip tightened on my hips. He locked his gaze onto mine and held onto me while changing the angle of his thrusts reaching even further inside of me. The flashes of color and light before my eyes obscured the sight of Eric in front of me and all coherent thought left my mind as I screamed out "Oh my God, Eric!" with my release. He continued to thrust in and out of me drawing out my orgasm for what felt like forever until his whole body locked up and he forcefully thrust into me one last time before yelling out my name with his own release and exploding deep inside of me.

We held onto each other, slowly coming back to our senses, while the water continued to rain down over our joined bodies. I whimpered at the loss I felt when he pulled out of me, but was instantly soothed when he wrapped his arms tightly around me and held my body against his own. He nuzzled his face into the spot where my shoulder met my neck and mumbled against my skin, "You're amazing." I mimicked his nuzzle with my own replying, "You're pretty amazing yourself."

We stayed like that for quite a while, waiting for our bodies to adjust back from the orgasmic goo they'd been reduced to, before making our way out of the water and up onto the cool grass

where we laid down in the sun to dry off. I snuggled into Eric's side while he held me there in his arms and we were both asleep within minutes.

Chapter 16: Time

Time

EPOV

The sun had almost set as I looked across the dancing flames of the fire at Sookie, watching as she hesitantly ate her dinner. She had mentioned earlier that she was feeling a little queasy but it seemed to have passed. I'd also noticed that she seemed to be tired a lot lately, but she just brushed it off attributing it to the tranquility of the island. I was still a little worried about her health because of the tumor no matter how much she insisted that she was fine. The thought of losing her brought with it a pain like I'd never felt before so I tried to not dwell on the what-if's for now.

It had been six months since the plane crash and I'd never been happier than the moment we got to the island. I was filled with the familiar warmth that spread through my veins at the sight of her. Her skin was a golden brown and her hair was a lighter shade of blonde from the sun, having grown a few inches in the time we'd been there so it now fell to the small of her back. She was breathtaking and I wanted her to be mine, as I wanted to be hers, in every sense of the word.

We made love every day following the first time, often more than once a day. Sometimes it was fast and hard, but most of the time we leisurely explored each bodies for hours truly making love and I still wanted her just as much now as I did when we first began. I'd never been with the same woman for longer than a weekend before I got bored with them, ready to move on to the next one, but not with Sookie. I simply couldn't get enough of her and at this point I didn't think I ever would.

Our time on the island seemed to fly by while simultaneously stand still. We'd weathered a couple of more storms in the cave and had even found ways to celebrate special occasions. The week before my birthday Sookie had started disappearing for a few hours each day only telling me that she was working on my birthday present. I had no idea what she could possibly be doing, so I was stunned when the day finally arrived and she appeared before me wearing nothing more than a grass skirt, a lei made of flowers and a smile. She barely got through the hula dance she'd been practicing before I tackled her to the ground and showed her just how much I liked my present.

I was impressed with Sookie's cooking prowess as well. She experimented all of the time using whatever edible items we came across when she prepared our meals and I could honestly say I was never disappointed with the end result.

We had just returned from a camping trip earlier that day, having explored the island over the course of a couple of weeks before we made our way back to our original spot on the beach. We didn't find any more settlements or any other signs of human inhabitants, but the landscape itself was like something out of a fairytale. The lush green color of the vegetation and the clear blue skies left seemingly untouched by the pollution of man was like something I'd never seen anywhere else on earth and had me longing for a camera wanting to capture the perfection Mother Nature had produced.

Over the last six months Sookie and I talked about virtually everything and I'd learned more about her relationships with both her parents and Bill. He'd been a true son of a bitch for the majority of their relationship and it seemed to shock her now that she'd been blind to it then. Even knowing all of that a part of me worried that if we were ever rescued that she would go back to him. He was, after all, her husband and I was just...not. But God knows I wanted to be.

Looking back, I knew that'd fallen in love with her during our first week here, but it didn't compare to the love I felt for her now. I loved her with every fiber of my being and I couldn't imagine not having her in my life. I was pretty sure she felt the same but neither one of us had said the actual words with both of us dancing around the phrase on the tips of our tongue.

I could see the love she felt for me whenever she looked into my eyes. I could feel it in every touch of her body. I could taste it in every kiss of her lips. I could smell it on her skin as she wrapped herself around me. I could hear it in her whispered words after we made love even though they weren't the actual words she'd said.

And yet, even though I believed it all to be true, I was still afraid to voice my feelings. I'd never said those words to anyone. Ever. And I never really thought I would until Sookie came into my life. I knew logically I wouldn't die if she rejected my feelings for her, but I was pretty sure I'd want to die if she did. I'd never felt this way about anyone before and the insecurity I felt was unfamiliar to me. I'd always been confident in every aspect of my life, cocky even, but this little southern belle would be able to utterly destroy me with a simple rejection.

I hadn't realized she had noticed me staring at her until she asked, "What are you thinking?" drawing me out of my inner ramblings.

"Nothing really," I replied instantly chickening out.

Sookie gave me a look to let me know she wasn't buying it, but I suddenly had the overwhelming need to be as close to her as physically possible so I leaned forward and pulled her body closer to mine. She gasped in surprise but as soon as my lips touched hers she instantly relaxed into my embrace and kissed me back. I could happily kiss her for hours with the feeling of her lips on mine being both familiar and brand new every time we kissed. I held onto the back of her head keeping her there, never wanting to let her go, as I explored her mouth with my own like it was the very first time.

I eventually moved on from her mouth to kiss my way along her jaw and neck relishing in the taste of her skin. She tasted of sunlight and the ocean air along with a flavor that was distinctly

Sookie. The sounds she made as I moved at a snail's pace across her body were making it difficult for me to take my time, but I wanted to savor her for as long as I could because I couldn't seem to shake the feeling that this could be our last time together having been plagued with the now familiar nightmare of her running away from me in tears the night before.

I pulled her shirt over her head and tossed it aside before laying her down in the sand in front of me. I paused for a moment wanting to memorize the sight of her before me, again longing for a camera to try to capture this one perfect moment in time. The sun was nearly gone but there was enough light left that her skin was bathed in a perfect combination of shadows and light making her seem almost surreal.

I pulled off my own shirt and slid it under her hips having learned our lesson of what happens when we make love in the sand and she smiled at my gesture while I pulled her shorts off of her body. I again leaned forward licking across her lower lip needing to taste her once more while my hands ran over the body I had memorized over that last six months. I knew where every freckle dotted her skin, the shape of every hill and valley of her body, so much so that I could probably sculpt an exact replica of her from clay if given the chance.

My mouth worked its way down her neck and across her collarbone before moving farther down to her breasts. Cupping each one in my hands, I ran my tongue across the tip of one while massaging the other, pulling her nipple into my mouth as she writhed underneath me with her nails digging into my back. After paying sufficient attention to one breast I moved across her chest to the other while her hips bucked up against my body and I could feel the moisture that had been produced in between her legs from my explorations.

Taking that as my cue, I kissed my way down her torso and settled between her thighs. I looked up into her eyes as I leaned forward and lapped at the juices coating her folds. Sookie let out a hoarse moan that went straight to my cock and I again had to fight the urge to bury myself inside of her. This was another part of her body that I knew by heart and over time I'd learned how to play her body like an instrument bringing her right to the edge and then back down again. She continued to watch me while I glided my tongue up and down, swirling it around her clit before sucking it in between my lips.

As I suckled her small bundle of nerves I lapped at it with my tongue at a leisurely pace while slipping two fingers inside of her, eliciting a strangled cry from Sookie's lips. Her hips bared down on my hand while I held her in place with my other hand, never breaking the rhythm of my tongue. I could feel her muscles spasm around my fingers and when I brushed them over the hidden spot inside of her it was enough to push her over the edge. She screamed out my name as she climaxed and I continued to pump my fingers inside of her while licking up the the moisture that spilled out. The taste of her was better than any dessert and I made sure to get it all before moving back up to her clit once more.

I loved that I could make Sookie have multiple orgasms and kept track of the number of times I could make her come during our love making sessions. My personal best was eight, but I knew I wouldn't be able to hold out that long tonight. I continued to work on her clit until I knew she

was on the edge again and then I thrust my cock inside of her all the way to the hilt at just the right moment causing her to come again.

I could feel her walls clamping down on me and it was all I could do to hold off my own climax. I gripped her hips as I pounded into her at a furious pace drawing her orgasm out while her whole body trembled. I would never tire of watching her come undone and when I knew she was ready I slowed my thrusts to push her back to the edge once more.

Sookie reached up and wrapped both arms around my neck pulling herself up for a kiss and I took the opportunity to pull her into my lap as I sat back with my legs out in front of me. She wrapped her legs around my waist and continued to rock her hips against mine while we panted into each other's mouths as we kissed. Our rhythm continued to build as we moved faster and faster with me eventually gripping her hips while I pulled her up and down as I thrust into her. I could feel the coil low in my body about to burst so I held her up higher as I continued to pound into her and the moment my mouth latched onto her breast her walls clamped down again with her third orgasm, effectively pulling my own from me. I spilled out deep inside of her with a yell and felt our heartbeats furiously pounding against our chests while we hung onto each other.

When our breathing returned to normal we cleaned ourselves up in the ocean before getting dressed again and going inside the hut to go to sleep. Sookie curled her body around mine like she did every night and I doubted if I'd ever be able to fall sleep again without her by my side. We'd been laying there for a few minutes when she asked, "Can I ask you a personal question?"

I had to chuckle before replying, "Sookie, I think we're passed the formality of asking that question. You can ask me anything."

She stared at me for a moment and I got nervous when she squared her shoulders and took a deep breath before she asked, "How many relationships have you been in?"

Uh oh. I had been waiting for this question for a while now and was surprised it had taken her this long to ask. There was no good way to say it so I ended up just blurting out the truth. "I've never been in a *relationship*." Her eyebrow raised up and she opened her mouth to say something but I cut her off before she got the chance. "It's true, I've never been in a relationship. It was never something I ever wanted. I really don't remember all of the women I've been with and they've never been more than a fuck to me."

I felt sick when she physically recoiled at my words like I'd slapped her and it was only then that I realized how my admission would sound to her. All I could think was the time had come and it was now or never and I felt more insecure than ever thinking my greatest fear of all would come to true. She might realize that she's too good for me.

I sat up and reached over to take her hand, but she pulled hers back before I could touch her. The pain I felt in my heart was palpable and I guessed it showed on my face because her eyes softened and she reached out taking my hand in hers saying, "I'm sorry. Your answer just threw me off for a moment." Her gaze dropped back down in front of us and she slowly shook her head as she finished with, "I shouldn't have asked."

My heart broke as I watched the pain that was evident spread across her face while tears formed in her eyes and it physically brought me to my knees. I moved in front of her and tilted her head up, waiting for her eyes to meet my own. Grasping her face with my hands I looked into her eyes and confessed, "I've never wanted to be in a relationship. I've never wanted to be with the same woman more than a couple of days because no one woman ever meant anything to me."

The tears spilled from her eyes leaving wet trails down her cheeks and instead of kissing them away, like I wanted to, I wiped them from her face with my thumbs because I needed to look into her eyes as I handed her my heart. I opened my mouth to finally say the words that would make or break our relationship when a loud noise sounded overhead causing both of us to look out the door.

"What was that?" she asked as we both got to our feet and went outside.

Chapter 17: Mistake

Mistake

SPOV

I felt like I'd been punched in the gut when Eric told me, in so many words, that he never wanted a relationship. That no one woman ever meant anything to him. What was I? I thought we had something special between us. I fell in love with him and only now he decides to tell me I meant *nothing* to him? Just a *fuck*?

I could barely stand it when he wiped my tears away, waiting until I looked him in the eye to tell me I meant nothing to him. I sent a silent thank you to God when the noise outside gave me a reprieve from having my heart ripped out and took off out the door not wanting or needing to hear anything more from Eric Northman.

The noise got louder when a bright light appeared, shining down from the sky that eventually settled on us standing on the beach. It was a helicopter. We were rescued. I could feel Eric's eyes on me but I refused to look at him and just stared up in the sky as the helicopter got closer until it finally settled on a larger piece of land a little ways down from where we were. I watched as the doors opened and two people got out and started jogging our way.

Eric reached out and grabbed my arm, turning my body until I faced him, but when I saw that he seemed determined to finish breaking my heart I decided to put myself out of misery. I got it. 'We' were through, but I certainly did need him to reiterating that fact. I jerked my arm away and started running towards the strangers with tears running down my cheeks. I just had to get away. Away from this island, my one time Heaven had turned into Hell and away from Eric, my one true love that turned into my biggest mistake of all.

I reached the two strangers first and they asked, "Mrs. Compton?" I couldn't stop the sobs that overtook my body and began shaking uncontrollably as I wept. I felt Eric start to wrap his arms around me, but that only made the sobs worse so I jerked away from him. I didn't want to find comfort in his arms because it was the loss of him, of us, that had me breaking down. I would stay here forever with him if only he loved me, but he didn't and feeling that truth come crashing down on me I couldn't bear to stay on this island for one more minute.

The other man looked behind me and said, "Mr. Northman, we're so glad we found you. We've been looking for you for months." He paused as he looked back and forth between Eric and I, feeling the obvious tension between us, before continuing, "We spotted the fire on the beach and got here as quickly as we could. Is there anyone else here with you?"

"No," Eric replied, "we were the only survivors." Hearing his voice behind me made me cry even harder until I didn't think I'd be able to stay on my feet for very much longer. My stomach was in knots and it took all of the willpower I had not to throw up at their feet. I looked at the man in front of me and choked out, "Can we leave now? I have to get out of here. I want to go home."

He reached out and placed a hand on my shoulder saying, "Of course Mrs. Compton." He paused for a moment before asking, "Is there anything you'd like to bring back with you before we leave?" I shook my head while I said, "No. There's nothing here on this island that I want. It's all been one huge nightmare and I'd like nothing more than to forget it ever happened."

I thought I heard Eric gasp behind me, but I didn't bother to turn around and instead started walking towards the helicopter. One of the rescuers helped me inside and sat me down in the back while taking the other seat next to me. As soon as Eric climbed into one of the seats in the front I curled myself up into a ball and stared out the window watching as we took flight.

I could feel my heart tearing in two as we climbed higher and higher into the night sky and I silently said goodbye to the island. I just wished I could leave the memories there too.

We were in the air for what felt like forever when we finally landed on a huge cargo ship. The people on the boat surrounded us as soon as we stepped out of the helicopter with everyone talking non-stop and I felt lightheaded along with exhaustion quickly taking over my body. A woman stepped closer to me and said, "Mrs. Compton, my name is Claudine and I'm an RN. You're not looking so well. Do you feel alright?" I just nodded my head that I was fine. There was nothing she could do to heal my broken heart so it didn't really matter. She stared at me for a moment trying to gauge my reaction, but her eyes softened and said, "If you'll follow me, I'll set you up in a cabin down below. Would you like something to eat? Or, if you're feeling up to it you can phone home and speak to your family."

I felt numb and doubted I'd be able to carry on a conversation right now so I just said, "I'd like to get some sleep right now. I'll call them later." I didn't look to see where Eric was. I knew I'd break down again if I saw him so I kept my eyes on my feet as I shuffled off behind Claudine. She led me to a room one flight down that had a private bathroom and left some clothing for me to change into. She left after telling me that she would be in the room next door to mine if I needed anything else.

I stripped off my clothes and climbed into the shower, breaking down again as I stood under the hot water raining down on me. How could I have been so stupid to think Eric loved me too? Before tonight I would've bet anything and everything that he did, but I would've lost. I did lose. He'd been kind and sweet the entire time we were there, but that didn't change the fact that everything else was just because he had no other options. I was the only one there for him to spend time with, to have sex with. *No*, I told myself, I was the only one there for him to *fuck*.

When my skin was pruned I finally climbed out of the shower and dried off before putting on a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt and climbed into the bed. I wasn't used to how soft the mattress was and couldn't get comfortable. I must have tossed and turned for hours, replaying in my mind the final moments before the helicopter arrived, before I thankfully drifted off to sleep.

When I woke up the next morning I was disoriented. I reached out for Eric's body, but the feel of the sheets and the mattress brought back everything from the night before. My pillowcase was wet from the tears I must have shed while I was asleep and I had to force myself to swallow down another round of sobs that were threatening to leave my throat. I walked into the bathroom and saw my reflection for the first time in months.

My face was a golden brown and my hair was much lighter than it had been. I would've looked like I'd just returned from a fabulous tropical vacation if it weren't for the fact that my eyes were puffy and red from all of the crying I'd been doing.

I washed my face and brushed my teeth, thankful for the bag of toiletries Claudine had left for me the night before. I was in the middle of putting my hair up into a ponytail when the wave of nausea hit me without warning. I barely made it to the toilet before I lost what was left of my dinner from the night before.

When it finally stopped I stood and brushed my teeth again when I heard someone softly knocking on my door. My heart fluttered for a moment thinking it might be Eric, but then it quickly turned into dread with me hoping it wasn't. I went to the door and hesitantly opened it with relief and disappointment simultaneously flooding my body seeing it was Claudine.

"Are you okay?" she asked with concern. "We share a bathroom wall and I heard you getting sick." I watched her eyes taking in my own swollen ones and just said, "I'm fine."

It was probably just nerves leftover from the night before. Bill and I had taken a cruise on our honeymoon and I didn't have any seasickness then so I didn't think it was that.

Claudine looked at me for another brief moment before asking, "Do you feel up to eating anything?" When I shook my head no, she followed up with, "Well then, would you like to phone home now? We notified both your family and Mr. Northman's last night once we had you on the ship. The helicopter is going to take you to Guam in a couple of hours where a private jet will be waiting for you to bring you back to Louisiana."

I still felt numb at the thought of going back home. I didn't want to talk to Bill right now, so I decided I would call my parents instead. Claudine led me to the Captain's office and I sat down

in one of the chairs facing his desk while she dialed the number I gave her. I put the phone to my ear and started crying again when his voice came on the line, *"Hello?"*

"Daddy? It's me, Sookie." I couldn't say anything else through the sobs that were racking through my body. I hadn't realized how much I'd missed him while we'd been gone. Claudine rubbed her hand on my back for a minute before leaving the room to let me have some privacy.

"Baby girl!" he cried. *"I'm so happy to hear your voice. How are you doodlebug?"*

"Oh Daddy," I continued to cry, "I've missed you so much. I'm okay. I just want to come home."

"Well they're saying that you'll be back in Shreveport by tonight. Would you like for your mother and me to meet you at the airport with Bill?"

"Of course I want you there Daddy. Is everything okay back home? Did I miss anything good?"

I hoped he would distract me with six months worth of stories and gossip, but he seemed tense when he replied, *"There've been some changes, but I think it would be best if we told you in person. It's nothing for you to worry about though. I'm just counting my blessings that my baby girl was found safe and sound."*

I wanted to ask what it was he was keeping from me, but I didn't think I could handle any more bad news right now. I wondered why I couldn't hear my mother in the background demanding the phone from him so I asked, "Where's momma?"

I heard him let out a loud sigh before answering, "She's not home right now. Her and Bill are at his campaign headquarters being interviewed by all of the network morning news shows."

Campaign headquarters? "What campaign headquarters? I haven't been gone *that* long and the mayoral election is still a year and a half away."

"That's one of those changes I thought would be best if we discussed it in person. The short answer is that Bill is no longer interested in running for mayor and is running for a seat in the House of Representatives for Louisiana." He cutoff my next question with, *"Now I know you probably have a million questions, and rightfully so, but I really do think it would be best for you to wait until you're home. You've had enough stress to last a lifetime and I don't want to add to less than a day after you've been rescued."*

I heard someone come to stand in the doorway behind me and figured Claudine had come back so I ended the call with, "Okay, if you think its best. I can't wait to see you tonight."

"Me too baby girl. Me too. Now you have a safe trip back and I'll see you when you land, okay? I love you."

"I love you too. I'll see you tonight." I hung up the phone and stood to face Claudine, only it wasn't Claudine. It was Eric. He had shaved off the beard that had grown in our time on the

island and looked better than ever. His hair was still long though, and the thoughts of when I used to run my fingers through it almost brought me to my knees. We continued to stand there, just staring at each other while I swallowed the urge to breakdown again. I didn't want to cry over Eric Northman. He didn't deserve my tears.

I couldn't help noticing the bags underneath his eyes. He looked like he'd had a rough night, and the hateful part inside of me was glad. Then I had to wonder if he hooked up with someone new now that he wasn't stuck with just plain old 'nothing' me, but deep down I didn't think that would be true. I thought he looked sad, but then again, I thought he loved me. I obviously didn't know him as well as I thought I did.

He finally opened his mouth and said, "I was going to use the phone."

That's it? That's ALL he has to say to me? I started walking towards the doorway, but he didn't move to let me get by. I stood staring at his chest and said, "Well, it's free now. " It took another minute or two, but he finally moved out of my way and as soon as I turned the corner and knew he could no longer see me, the tears returned with a vengeance.

As soon as I made it back to my room I locked the door and threw myself down on the bed crying nonstop, until I made myself sick again. I hadn't eaten anything so it was nothing more than dry heaves and thankfully they passed fairly quickly.

I cleaned myself up and Claudine showed up a little while later carrying a sandwich, some fruit and a bottle of water. Even though I'd been getting sick I suddenly felt ravenous and wolfed everything down while she sat and watched me eat. I was dreading being stuck with Eric in the airplane all the way back home, but there wasn't any other way around it if I wanted to get home as quickly as possible.

I guessed the dread was showing on my face because Claudine asked, "Are you okay?"

I offered a half truth and replied, "I'm just dreading getting on the airplane." Let her believe I was afraid of crashing again, even though a part of me was praying for it. I really didn't feel like I had much left to live for at this point, not that I would ever do something to purposely try and end my life. But if God saw fit to take me out of my misery, who was I to argue with Him?

Claudine looked at me sympathetically and asked, "Would you like for me to go with you?" I was so grateful I could kiss her, but I just smiled softly and whispered, "That would be great," before I was lost in another wave of grief. The tears slid down my cheeks while I tried to keep my breathing under control, but I lost it completely when she wrapped her arms around me. I cried on her shoulder while she rubbed my back and all I could think of was how much I wished she was Eric instead.

I eventually calmed down and I was thankful that Claudine didn't ask me any questions about why I was so upset. I guessed she just assumed that it had to do with being stranded for so long on the island so I just remained silent. She went to her room and came back with a summer dress for me to wear. She was taller than me, so it would've ended just above her knees but on me it

came down to mid-calf. Our feet were the same size so she gave me a pair of sandals to wear before we headed back onto the deck to get in the helicopter.

Claudine and I climbed into the back while Eric sat in the front again with the pilot. I avoided looking at him at all costs and didn't even bother to put on the earphones everyone else wore so they could communicate over the noise of the rotating blades.

We were in the air for about an hour before landing at an airport somewhere in Guam where we were immediately loaded into Northman Inc.'s new private jet. It was even bigger than the last one and even came with a new blond bimbo. I wasn't prepared for the wave of jealousy that rolled through me when I saw her smiling at Eric, clearly trying to get his attention, so I turned away from the two of them and stared out the window until we finally took off.

I didn't realize I'd fallen asleep until I woke up with my neck hurting from the odd angle I'd assumed with my head leaning on the window. I stretched out and glanced to my side to see Claudine had fallen asleep too, when I realized my bladder was suddenly screaming at me. I quickly stood up, mentally preparing myself at the possibility of having to see Eric and moved into the aisle.

What I should've prepared myself for was what I would *feel* when I saw Eric. He was asleep and every memory I had of what we shared on the island came rushing back. I loved him so much and I thought he did too. It couldn't *ALL* have been a lie, could it? He must have felt *something* for me to act the way he did. I had no idea of how long I stood in the aisle watching him sleep, but my heart dropped when he shifted in his sleep and murmured, "*Sophie...*"

It was a mistake to try and believe I ever meant anything to Eric and I barely made it to the bathroom in time to throw up my entire lunch.

Chapter 18: Nightmare

Nightmare

EPOV

How could she pull away from me? The rescuers jogging down the beach toward us were about to reach us and I had to tell her how I felt before our real lives could come rushing back in. But the glare in her eyes as she looked at me stunned me into silence. I simply couldn't process how her mood had changed so drastically in a matter of minutes. We had just finished making love not twenty minutes earlier and now she looked as though she hated me.

I was stuck wondering what in the hell happened when I noticed Sookie had run away from me towards the rescuers and my body automatically followed hers. Hearing them calling her Mrs. Compton was like having a knife twisted in my gut, but when she broke down into sobs all I

could think of was I needed to take her pain away. I tried to wrap my arms around her, but she jerked her body away from mine and the knife twisted some more.

One of the men in front of Sookie looked towards me and said, "Mr. Northman, we're so glad we found you. We've been looking for you for months." I barely registered his words while feeling my whole world crumbling around me.

Hearing him say, "We spotted the fire on the beach and got here as quickly as we could. Is there anyone else here with you?" brought me out of my reverie for the moment and I replied, "No, we were the only survivors."

I felt helpless watching Sookie cry uncontrollably in front of me, but I was afraid to try to comfort her again. Afraid that she would reject me again. She barely choked out the words, "Can we leave now? I have to get out of here. I want to go home." How could she do this to me, to us? Why didn't she want me to comfort her? I *knew* she loved me. Didn't I?

I hadn't been paying attention to whatever it was one of the rescuers said to Sookie, but I had to swallow the bile that quickly rose in my throat when she said, "No. There's nothing here on this island that I want. It's all been one huge nightmare and I'd like nothing more than to forget it ever happened."

The gasp of air that I pulled into my lungs was sudden and involuntary while I felt my body sway where I stood. I was disoriented and confused, but mostly I was devastated hearing Sookie call our time on the island a nightmare. Didn't I mean *anything* to her? Didn't she love me too?

I felt the gaping hole ripping open in the middle of my heart while I watched her walk away from me towards the helicopter waiting for her to turn around. Wanting her to tell me this was all just a bad dream. Needing her to love me as much as I loved her. Feeling my whole world fall apart when she climbed inside without so much as a glance in my direction.

The one rescuer still standing before me broke through the mental fog in my head asking, "And what about you Mr. Northman? Is there anything you'd like to bring back with you before we leave?"

Yes, the feeling I had when I believed that Sookie loved me too. I just shook my head no, unable to form any words, and followed him to the helicopter. I was upset seeing the seat next to her was filled with the other rescuer knowing I wouldn't be able to look at Sookie without making it obvious to her. I climbed into the front seat and had to fight back the tears as we lifted up into the air knowing that whatever it was we had together on the island was now over.

It seemed like only minutes later when we were landing on the deck of a huge cargo ship. My thoughts were filled with everything Sookie and I had done together on the island. Everything we shared together; physically, verbally, and emotionally. How could it be that my whole world had turned upside down?

We were quickly surrounded by the ship's crew as soon as we stepped out of the helicopter. Everyone was talking at once and my head was pounding from the onslaught of noise their chattering had produced. I stared at the back of Sookie's head willing her to turn around and look at me while tuning out everyone else around us, but she never did.

I stood and watched helplessly as a woman leaned down and said something to Sookie that I couldn't hear before Sookie followed behind her walking away from me.

It wasn't until I felt someone shaking my shoulder that I came back into the present and saw a man standing in front of me with a look of concern on his face. "Mr. Northman? Are you okay?" He appeared to be concerned, but I didn't care because I had just watched everything I cared about walk away.

It took me a few more minutes before I was able to respond. "Yes, I'm fine," I lied. I could barely stand the thought that Sookie and I were over much less being able to form those words out loud. I just looked at him with what I was sure was a completely blank look on my face. He finally started speaking again saying, "My name is Bobby Burnham. Your father hired me to head the search for you."

I nodded that I understood his words, but I had nothing to say to that so I remained silent. He took that as his cue to keep talking and said, "I'm sure you're tired after going through the whole ordeal. If you'll follow me, I'll show you to your cabin."

I followed along behind him down one flight of stairs and through a narrow hallway. I wondered if Sookie was behind any of the doors we passed by, but I didn't ask, fearful of my inability to stay away from her if I knew where she was when she had made it perfectly clear that she didn't want me any longer.

He showed me into a small cabin that held nothing more than a bed and a small dresser. There was an attached private bathroom and within a minute of us entering the cabin a steward appeared with some clothing for me to wear as well as a bag of toiletries. I mumbled out a quiet "Thank you" and after assuring Bobby Burnham that I didn't want anything to eat, they both left me alone with Burnham saying he would notify our families that we were found safe and sound.

I stripped off my clothes and climbed into the shower where I finally broke down. I'd never felt so much grief and despair in my life. Sookie meant everything to me. I thought I knew how much she meant to me before we were rescued, but I truly hadn't realized just how much until now. I'd never felt so lost and alone, even after my parents shipped me away at a young age to boarding school for the first time and I cried myself to sleep for a week straight.

I don't know how long I'd been in the shower, or when my legs had given out because I was no longer standing, when I finally stood up and actually got myself clean. My whole being was exhausted, both mentally and physically, so I climbed onto the bed and waited for sleep to take me away.

I tossed and turned unable to fall asleep and I knew it was because I wasn't wrapped up in and around Sookie's body. I'd grown accustomed to having her curled around me every night with my face buried into the top of her head. I'd never missed someone or something as much as I missed her in that moment.

The tears leaked from my eyes as I lay there remembering all of the happy times we'd spent together on the island. I remembered how scared and sad she was when she came to in the life raft and how right it felt when I held her in my arms for the first time. I smiled through the tears remembering her triumphant expression at catching the fish on her very first try. The tears fell faster when I remembered the touch of her lips on mine for the very first time and I couldn't hold back the sob that escaped from my throat any longer. I felt like someone close to me had died and in a way I guess it was true. The Sookie I thought I knew was gone, replaced by one that looked identical to her only without the love we had felt for one another.

I never did fall asleep and when the sun started shining through the porthole window I finally climbed out of bed and went into the bathroom. I was shocked seeing my reflection for the first time in months, not having noticed anything but my grief the night before. I knew my hair had grown out in the time we were on the island, but actually seeing it brush against my shoulders was odd. I had a full beard now which also looked odd considering I'd never let it grow for more than a few days at a time before then.

I dug around in the bag of toiletries and found a pair of scissors which I used to cut off the majority of the beard and then slathered on the shaving cream. I focused all of my attention on shaving my face needing a reprieve from the emotions I'd been feeling since the rescue.

Once that was done I rinsed off my face and brushed my teeth. I ran a comb through my hair, but I didn't feel confident enough to try to cut it on my own so I just left it down for now. I was just putting everything back into the bag when I heard a knock on my door. My heart jumped in my chest and I ran over throwing it open hoping to see Sookie standing there, but it was only Bobby.

"How are you feeling today Mr. Northman?"

I gave him the answer he probably expected and said, "I'm fine." I was far from fine, but he wasn't the one that could make it better. She was somewhere else on this ship.

"Well, I just wanted to see if you'd like to call your family now. We made the notifications last night after you were on board, but your father asked that you call him when you were up to it. The helicopter will be flying you to Guam in a little bit and a private jet will be flying you home from there."

Home. That word held no meaning for me without Sookie by my side. I just nodded my acceptance at everything he'd just told me and followed him towards the Captain's office. He pointed out which door led to the office and stepped into the galley telling me he would wait for me in there.

I continued down the hallway and my breath caught in my throat when I heard her voice coming from the office. I slowly made my way to the doorway and had to steady myself with my hands on the doorframe seeing her again. She was facing away from me, but just the sight of her made me feel the tiniest bit better. Until I heard her words.

"Okay, if you think its best. I can't wait to see you tonight." There was a longing in her voice that I'd never heard before and my heart stopped beating with her parting phrase.

"I love you too. I'll see you tonight." She hung up the phone and stood, turning around to face me. I could see the surprise in her expression at seeing me and I could only guess it was because she knew I'd overheard her conversation. She had lied to me. She'd never stopped loving Bill and now she knew that the cat was out of the bag. I couldn't find it in me to be mad at her. Not yet anyways. I just felt broken inside.

I couldn't stop staring at her while my thoughts were screaming inside of my head wanting to ask her *why?* Why had she lied to me about Bill? Why had she pretended to feel something for me? Was I just a temporary distraction? A way for her to pass the time? Did she ever feel *anything* for me?

I wanted the answers to all of those questions, but when I opened my mouth the only thing I could say was, "I was going to use the phone." She started walking towards me but I couldn't move. My body had come to lean against the doorframe and I was sure it was the only thing keeping me upright at the moment.

Her eyes wouldn't meet mine as she stood within arm's reach of me and my body screamed out for me to gather her into my arms and hold her tightly, never letting her go. I was about to do just that when she spat out, "Well, it's free now." The anger in her tone was enough to break through my desire so I stepped aside as she rushed passed me out the door.

It took me a minute to get my feet to work and I stepped into the office before allowing myself to fall into the chair Sookie had just vacated. I still couldn't wrap my mind around that fact that Sookie didn't love me. I had been so sure of it before last night, but now it was if it had all been a dream. None of it was real, but this nightmare certainly was.

I finally picked up the phone and called my father's private line. He picked up after the second ring saying nothing more than, "*Northman.*"

"Hello father." I didn't know what else to say.

"*Eric! How are you son? Your mother and I have been so worried, but we never gave up hope that you were alive. You're a Northman after all. We're survivors.*"

"I'm fine." I tried to find more to say, but all of my thoughts were on Sookie so I kept quiet.

"I'm glad to hear it son. They'll be flying you to Guam where my private jet will be waiting for you. I sent them there the minute we were told you'd been found. How is Ms. Stackhouse? I was told you two were the only survivors."

I didn't think I would be able to say much about Sookie without breaking down so all I said was, "She's fine."

"Good. Her husband has been making quite a ruckus since you two disappeared, so hopefully now he'll stop."

Of course he was upset, they're married and in love I thought to myself.

"Well son, I'm glad you're okay. I felt horrible after you went missing knowing the last time we'd seen each other we'd had that heated discussion about you marrying Sophie Ann. At the time I thought a merger with the LeClerq Corporation was the most important thing, but after living for six months afraid that I'd lost you, my only child, I've seen the error of my ways."

He paused for a moment and I was stunned with his next statement. *"I love you Eric. I know I haven't always shown you that, but it's true. I want nothing more than for you to be happy. If that means you'll be staying on at Northman Inc. or if you want to join the circus, I'll be proud of you no matter what."*

I couldn't believe my ears. Who was this man and what had he done with my rigid-my-way-or-the-highway father? Knowing I had him in my corner to support me, the corner that had recently been filled by Sookie, brought out all of the emotions of the last 24 hours and my voice broke when I said, "Thank you."

I knew he would be able to hear the breath hitch in my throat as I tried to push it all back down again and I was stunned again when I heard it echo through the phone from his end. *"No, thank YOU son for giving your old man a second chance."*

We each said our goodbyes with both of us too emotional for much more than a 'See you tonight' and I hung up the phone. I sat there in disbelief at the complete turnaround my father had shown me. The entire time we'd been on the island the thought of him trying to force Sophie Ann on me if we were ever rescued never left the back of my mind. I'd just dreamt about it two nights ago, our last night on the island.

That thought made me remember everything else that happened that day and how much I'd needed to hold Sookie close that evening. That nagging feeling I'd had that it could be our last time together had become a reality only it had nothing to do with Sophie Ann like my nightmares. It had to do with the fact that Sookie hadn't loved me. I was just a stand-in for Bill.

I couldn't think about it anymore and went to find Bobby. I ate a small lunch before we were herded into the helicopter. I was surprised to see the same woman from the night before with Sookie, but I did my best to avoid looking at both of them.

I also avoided all thoughts of the island the entire ride to Guam and instead filled my head with the conversation I'd had with my father that morning. I still found it hard to believe that he'd said everything he had and I was a little worried he might take it all back when he saw me that evening.

We eventually made it to Guam and were immediately loaded into the jet. It was bigger than the last one and I was a little disgusted seeing my father's preferences in flight attendants still held true. I ignored her and found a seat in the back of the plane so I wouldn't have to see Sookie, knowing it would tear me in two again.

I don't know how much time had passed when I woke up to the sound of someone knocking on a door behind me. I'd had the nightmare again with Sookie running away from me while Sophie Ann stood at my side only it was different this time. This time Sophie turned to me and said, "Go after her Eric. You belong together." Her words freed my feet from the spot I'd seemed eternally frozen in and I looked at her gratefully saying, "Thank you Sophie," before I took off after Sookie.

The knocking had woken me before the dream could progress any further and I turned to see Sookie's companion knocking on the bathroom door while calling out, "Sookie? Are you okay?"

My worry for her health came back quickly and I could hear her getting sick in the bathroom. I thought maybe it was from being scared of flying on a plane again and I tried to calm myself knowing there was nothing I could do for her, but it was the knowledge that she didn't *want* me to do anything for her that kept me in my seat.

She eventually came out and I could hear her telling the woman she was okay as she made her way back to her seat. A part of me held out hope that she would at least look at me on her way up the aisle so I was crushed again when she didn't even turn her head to acknowledge I was there.

I must've been asleep for a while because as soon as she returned to her seat the plane started descending and the pilot's voice was heard throughout the cabin telling us to prepare for landing.

As soon as the plane came to a stop on the tarmac the door was opened by the flight attendant and we all filed out with Sookie and the other woman ahead of me. There was a large crowd gathered with lights and camera flashes going off everywhere temporarily blinding me as I stood halfway down the stairs.

When my vision returned my heart broke all over again when I saw Sookie standing on the tarmac with, I assumed by her description of him, her husband's arms wrapped around her in a loving embrace.

Chapter 19: Changed

Changed

SPOV

Once the plane had landed Claudine gave me a hug and told me that she would heading home from there since she lived in Shreveport herself so I thanked her for staying with me. She gave me her phone number and address telling me to call her if I needed anything and I was about to cry again seeing the compassionate look on her face, but once the door opened I couldn't get off of the plane fast enough. I was thrown for a loop when I saw and heard the loud crowd that had gathered on the tarmac, I was quickly overwhelmed by the cheering and blinded by the camera flashes. I felt someone wrap their arms around me, but I couldn't tell who just yet because my vision hadn't returned until he whispered in my ear, "Can you at least smile for the cameras and *act* like you're happy to be home?"

Bill.

My body automatically stiffened in his embrace and when I could finally see again I pulled myself away looking around for my parents. My father quickly strode over to me and picked me up in a bear hug while crying, "Baby girl, I'm so happy you're home."

My tears soon followed along with his as I hugged him back saying, "Me too Daddy." He set me back on my feet and I turned to see there was a podium set up for the news cameras that seemed to be everywhere. It hadn't occurred to me that our rescue would make the news, but I guessed it made sense.

People were shouting out questions left and right, but I just buried my face into my father's shoulder until I heard Bill starting to speak to the crowd. I turned my head enough to see what in the hell he was doing and noticed a huge fake smile on his face with my mother standing next to him practically beaming. He held his hands up in the air in a gesture meant to quiet the crowd and said, "As you can see I am truly ecstatic to have my loving wife back after all of this time and while I'm sure you're all anxious to talk to her I ask that you give her some time to adjust to being home. I can assure you that we will speak to you all very soon, but right now we just need some time to ourselves and I thank you for understanding."

The crowd started hurling more questions at him but he walked over and wrapped his arm my shoulders. I clutched at my father tighter when Bill leaned down and whispered, but I couldn't miss the menacing tone in his voice, "What's your problem? Can't you smile? Everyone is watching."

I was about to unleash years' worth of frustration on him when my father leaned over towards Bill and said with a lot of menace of his own, "I'm telling you right now Bill. If you don't back the fuck off and give Sookie some space I'm going to embarrass you in front of everyone. If you think I'm bluffing...try me."

I looked back and forth between Bill and my father and wondered *what in the hell happened while I was gone?*

Bill released his arm from my shoulders and gave the crowd a big smile before gesturing for us to follow him. I clung to my father as we started walking towards a waiting limousine and looked over at my mother to see the familiar look of disappointment on her face as she looked back at me. I really shouldn't have expected her to act any differently, but the tears formed in my eyes anyway.

It took all of my willpower to not turn around and look at Eric one last time, but hearing the crowd yelling questions out to him kept me facing forward. I knew if I *did* turn around the look on my face would've given away my broken heart to any of the cameras trained on us and I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of seeing how much he had destroyed me while watching the news later on. If he even cared, that is.

We climbed inside the limo one by one with Bill and my mother taking the seats facing forward while my father and I took the seats facing them. I couldn't help noticing the way my mother and Bill were glaring at me and turned to see my father glaring right back at them while protectively wrapping his arm around me and pulling me closer to his body. It was the first time I felt relaxed since before the rescue and I pressed against his side even harder. His scent was familiar and comforting to me, but it didn't take away my need to find out what was going on. I was obviously missing something between them all.

I was kind of surprised at how I was feeling seeing Bill again. I knew I had changed in the time I'd been gone and I'd felt it when it happened, but *knowing I still* felt just as strong seeing him now as I did then made me sit up a little taller. He no longer had the power over me that he once did. That power was *mine* again.

I fixed my own glare on him and asked rather tersely, "What's going on?" I gestured my hands at Bill and my mother indicating *something* was up, I just didn't know what.

He seemed taken aback at my attitude and said, "Nothing! Mother Stackhouse has been very supportive of me since you've been apparently working on your *tan* for the last six months." He made it a point to look me up and down with a tone in his voice that made it sound like I'd been on a vacation and not stranded on a deserted island. It had actually felt like I *was* on vacation up until the night we were rescued, but *he* didn't need to know that.

I could feel the angry emotions swirling through my entire body and I yelled out, "I was *stranded* after a *plane crash* you asshole! Where do *you* get off taking that tone with *me*?" I felt triumphant when his mouth fell open in shock and my mother continued to bore holes into my face with her eyes, obviously disapproving of what I'd just said. That was all I needed to see to unleash part two of 'Sookie loses her shit.'

I turned to face her and spat out, "And *YOU!* Your *MY* mother, not *HIS*, so why in hell are you glaring at me?"

The look of shock on her face was priceless, as was the sound of the deep belly laugh I'd heard come out of my father. I don't think I'd ever heard him laugh as loud or as long as I did right then and it made me feel a little sad that I couldn't recall him ever really laughing at all. I knew it was

because my mother had made him so miserable when I was growing up and that just made me glare at her even more.

She quickly caught herself and spat out, "Suh-keh Compton! You will NOT take that tone of voice with ME young lady!"

I could practically *see* the rage rolling underneath my skin, but before I could respond my father decided it was time for *him* to join in the verbal melee. "Her *name* is SOOKIE, not SUH-KEH you stupid bitch! What in the *hell* is *wrong* with you Michelle? We lost our daughter for *six* months believing that she might be dead." His voice broke when he said 'dead' and it made me hold him even tighter. He continued on where he'd left off with, "But, she wasn't. Our baby girl *survived* and *still* you can't just be happy that she's home?"

She turned her evil eyes onto my father biting out, "YOU'RE the one that picked out that STUPID name to *begin* with so I don't give a shit how you say it." She turned back to me saying, "And YOU, you ungrateful little brat, need to step up and act like a loving wife. Bill's poll numbers were high already with the news of your disappearance, but now that you're back they're through the roof. If you don't start acting like a loving wife that's grateful to be reunited with her husband you're going to ruin *everything!*"

Was she fucking serious? From the look of approval Bill gave looking at her, mixed in with a childish 'so there' look just for me, I guessed she was. I turned to look at my father and saw that he'd covered his face with his hand in exasperation so I was left to stew on it all by myself for a moment. *Lucky me* I thought because the limo pulled up to our house at that very moment.

There was another crowd of reporters and cameramen with their news vans lining our street when we arrived, so Bill directed the driver to pull up as close to the house as possible with the four of us rushing inside as soon as the car came to a stop.

I had a sense of *deja vu* walking in the door and everything looked exactly as it did when I left, but I didn't miss the fact that it didn't feel like *home*. The last time I felt at *home* was on the island. I noticed my parents had wandered off towards the kitchen having their own heated discussion and I wondered when *that* had all started. Was it with my disappearance, or my reappearance that had them at each other's throats?

I forced thoughts of Eric from my mind preparing to continue on with our family fight while wondering where I could stay until I could find a place of my own. I didn't want to stay at my parents' house with my mother there and I sure as hell didn't want to stay here. The house we'd once called 'ours' was really Bill's. He'd inherited it from his grandmother when she passed away years earlier. It never really felt like *mine* anyway since Bill never let me forget that it was just *his* name on the deed.

Hearing Bill sarcastically say, "Welcome home" pulled me back into the present. I turned to face him and I knew he was still surprised at the backbone I'd grown while I was gone. He stepped closer while looking down at me and said, "You've changed. What's *wrong* with you? *Why* are you *acting* this way? While your *situation* was regrettable, it helped to put me in the national

spotlight. I was on every news program you can think of and it moved our plans *beyond* the paltry *mayoral* election. Don't you *realize* what all of this *means* for me?"

Eric was right. He *was* a douche bag. My heart twinged remembering when he'd said it and I felt the hurt flash across my face for only an instant remembering how things had been between us back then, but I couldn't think about that right now when said *douche bag* was right in front of me.

I looked at Bill and stood up straighter telling him, "I really don't give a shit what this means for *you*. It was never *my* plan, it was *yours*."

THAT got him all riled up because he started yelling, "You ungrateful BITCH! After EVERYTHING I put up with for you, you have the *nerve* to say that to ME?"

"WHAT DID *YOU* HAVE TO PUT UP WITH FOR *ME*?" I yelled. Bill had never done *anything* just for *me* unless *he* got something out of it too.

"I indulged your whim to continue to working after we were married, even though it made it look like I couldn't support my own wife. And I would've stayed with you *anyway* even after finding out you weren't enough of a woman to bear me children."

Hearing him say it out loud was like a punch to my gut, but I didn't shrink away to go off and cry. I got MAD and before I knew it was happening I pulled my fist back and clocked him in his eye. Neither one of us was expecting it so we were equally shocked that it happened. He was more 'angry shocked' while I was more 'gleeful shocked', but we were both shocked nonetheless.

Bill looked as though he wanted to retaliate, but my father walked back into the room before he could and with the looks my father was giving him I had no doubt that whatever he felt from my punch would be nothing compared to what my father would do to him if he raised a hand to me. My mother came running into the room in the next second saying, to me apparently, "What have you *done*?"

My father piped up, "What she should've done YEARS ago. He's always been a pompous asshole."

My mother disappeared into the kitchen, quickly returning with an icepack in her hand which Bill would need considering I could already *see* the swelling forming around his left eye. It looked like it was going to turn into a black eye too. My lips twitched up at the corners just thinking about it.

Before any of us could continue on in our effort at being the most watched family in the history of The Jerry Springer Show there was a knock at the door signaling the arrival of what would turn out to be the secret Springer guest left back in the green room.

Her protruding stomach came through the door before the rest of her body did and it took me a moment before I recognized her as Lorena something-or-other. She was a paralegal at Bill's law

practice and I'd never gotten the warm fuzzies from her so I didn't really know her at all. There was no missing her baby bump though.

Bill's pale face turned even paler when she entered the house and he went over to her whisper shouting, '*What are you DOING here?*'"

Lorena didn't answer him and just stood there looking at me while I looked at her and in that moment I knew.

I softly smiled at her and asked, "When are you due?"

She softly smiled back answering, "Today."

I went over and looped my arm through hers, walking her in to the living room and helped her sit down on the couch. After insisting that she didn't want a drink or anything else I sat down next her, taking her hand in my own, and simply said, "So tell me."

She looked over at Bill which made me look as well and I could see the anger and defeat on his face while he looked at the two of us. Neither one of my parents looked shocked so I knew then that this wasn't news to them. I was the only one left in the dark until now.

I turned to face her again and watched as tears formed in her eyes while she looked at Bill. I could tell just looking at her that she loved him, although I couldn't fathom *why*. She took a deep breath and began from the beginning.

They had been secretly seeing each other for years with their affair starting shortly after Bill and I were married. He told her that he loved her and that he was going to leave me for her for years with him always coming up with an excuse on why he couldn't leave *just yet*. She hadn't planned on getting pregnant, but when she *did* she refused to "do away with it" like Bill had tried to talk her into. She had told him she was pregnant on the Friday before I left on the plane with Eric and as I thought back I remembered thinking Bill had been distracted that whole weekend and wondered why he wasn't pestering me about my upcoming trip. It all made sense now.

After our plane had disappeared Bill's political fame rose into the national spotlight and he swore to her that once he was elected and I was declared 'legally dead' that he would marry her and adopt his own baby so they could be together. She believed it all to be true because my own mother had supported the farce after learning about the affair and had even referred to Lorena's baby as her grandchild.

When it came out that I'd been rescued and was returning home Bill tried to back out of his promise to Lorena and knowing she had to look out for her baby now as well she decided to tell me herself and let the chips fall where they may.

I was shocked that I didn't feel shocked learning all of this, but I looked at my father wondering how *he* could've gone along with it all. He must have read the silent question on my face because he immediately raised his hands up in front of him saying, "I was *never* on board with *any* of

this. When your mother told me what was going on and her reaction to it all I'd had *enough*. I moved her out the next day and filed for divorce."

I'd never felt more relieved than I did hearing his words and I got up and wrapped my arms around him in thanks. He tilted my chin up to look me in the eyes and grimly smiled saying, "These were those *changes* I was going to talk to you about."

I looked around at our dysfunctional group and couldn't deny that things had certainly changed.

Chapter 20: Hidden

Hidden

Eric POV

I tried not to watch Sookie as she walked away, but it was like trying to not watch a train wreck happening right in front of you. Thankfully, before I could lose it all over again, my parents surrounded me with a group hug while telling me they were glad I was home. I wished I could say the same, but I knew I would go back to the island in an instant if it meant I could have Sookie back. *My Sookie* that is.

"What's with the crowd?" I asked my father in an attempt to distract myself from Sookie's departure.

My father growled out, "Bill Compton."

Hearing that one name was enough to make me break my gaze from Sookie's departing form and look at my father for the first time in six months. I'd gone longer than that in the past without seeing him and he'd always seemed to look the same. He might have a little more gray hair at his temple or the lines on his face might be a little deeper, but he never really seemed to age. At least, not that I could really tell. But now, he looked liked he'd aged ten years in the time we'd been gone.

He answered the unspoken question on my face with, "It's a long story. One that I'll explain later, but in the meantime one of us has to address them since they're here. Would you like to do it, or would you rather I do it?"

"You do it please?" There was no way I was up for a press conference. I wouldn't be able to hide the pain I was feeling inside if any of them asked me about Sookie and I KNEW they would ask me about her.

My father smiled softly at me and said, "Of course son. You head to the car with your mother and I'll join you in a few minutes."

My father started walking towards the podium while I headed to the one limousine left on the tarmac noticing only then that Sookie was already gone and the hole inside of my heart got even bigger.

My mother had wrapped both of her arms around my waist and didn't let go the entire way to the car which kind of shocked me. She'd never been the affectionate type, but now it would seem that I would need a crowbar to detach her from me just to get in the car. After I tugged on her arms a few times she finally looked up at me with tears streaming down her face and smiled softly saying, "I'm sorry." I got the feeling she was talking about more than not letting me go long enough to get in the car, but I wasn't going to make her say it so I just kissed the top of her head and said, "It's okay."

My father joined us a few minutes later and we spent the fifteen minute car ride in silence with them flanking me on either side just staring at me and smiling with relief. It felt nice after everything I'd gone through in the last 24 hours so I just enjoyed it while I could.

Once we got to their house they led me inside and we all sat in the study without any of us saying anything. My mind was still consumed with thoughts of Sookie wondering what she was doing and then feeling sick imagining her loving homecoming with Bill. The thought of his hands and lips on her threatened to relieve me of the small amount of food I'd eaten earlier that day so I figured I would drown my sorrows instead to try and numb the pain.

I stood up to get a bottle of whiskey from the bar my parents kept in the study, but when I opened it I found it completely empty. Before I could ask, my mother said, "If you're looking for alcohol, there isn't any in the house." She may have well said that the walls were made of water, simply impossible. From the look of disbelief I was sure I was wearing she smiled and said, "I haven't had a drink since we were told your plane disappeared." I watched the tears form back in her eyes as she continued with, "I knew I would drink myself to death worrying about you and I wanted to still be here WHEN you came home because I believed in my heart that you would."

*Will wonders never cease...*I felt like I was in the Twilight Zone. Sookie doesn't love me, my father would be proud if I joined the circus, and my mother was sober. *Huh.*

I sat back down and it was only then that I noticed my parents were sitting side by side...holding hands. I felt my eyebrow creep up into my hairline while looking at them because I'd often wondered if I was a test tube baby. Physically, I was the perfect blend of each of them so I knew I wasn't adopted, but they'd had separate bedrooms for as long as I could remember so I figured a team of doctors brought about my existence.

My father just shrugged his shoulders and smiled saying, "You'd be surprised what can happen when there's only one other person in the world that can possibly understand what you're going through."

I know he said it in reference to him and my mother, but hearing him say the words brought tears to my eyes thinking I *thought* I had found that one person in Sookie, but I was wrong.

That reminded me of what my father had said earlier about the press being there because of Bill so I asked, "What did you mean about Bill Compton being the reason for all of the media at the airport?"

I watched my father's smile disappear only to be replaced by anger as he said, "That callous ass has been using this whole ordeal to further his quest for political gain, playing the distraught husband to the press in one breath and then asking for their votes in the next. Meanwhile he's suing me, the manufacturers of the jet and Northman Inc. for the *distress* all of this has caused him. Like *WE* weren't upset as well! He even sued for "loss of consort" with his wife! WHO does that?"

Ugh., Just the *thought* of what him and Sookie could be up to at that very moment was enough to send me reeling so I just shook my head, telling my parents that I wanted to get some rest and went to my room. I didn't come out for three days.

My mother had been coming in to check on me and bringing me trays of food that went nearly untouched and never asking me what was wrong, but by my third day in bed she'd had enough. She walked in bright and early opening my drapes allowing the sunlight into my room and then sat on my bed staring at me until I finally acknowledged her.

"I'm just tired," I whispered.

She brushed the hair out of my eyes and said, "No, you're not. You're hiding. I just don't know from what." She smiled softly and asked, "Do you want to talk about it?"

I dropped my eyes from hers unable to say anything. I didn't want to say it out loud because the reality that Sookie didn't love me would be all the more real.

I involuntarily gasped and held my breath with her next question. "Does it have to do with Sookie?"

I had thought I'd cried myself out, but I realized I was wrong when they started silently flowing once more. Seeing my pain, my mother curled her body around mine, spooning me from behind while running her fingers through my hair and said, "Tell me."

"I fell in love with her." The words came tumbling out and I couldn't seem to stop them. "I fell in love with her and I thought she loved me too, but she doesn't. I was just a stand-in, a way for her to pass the time until we were rescued."

My mother hugged me tighter and asked with a little bit of an edge to her voice, "Did she tell you that?"

I sighed, "Not in so many words, but when the helicopter arrived she told the rescuers that our whole time on the island was one big nightmare and she wished it'd never happened. She wouldn't look at me or talk to me or let me hug her when she cried. I guess she felt guilty for

what we had done knowing she was going back to her husband." It was the only explanation I could come up with while I'd been in bed for three days.

My mother wouldn't drop it and said, "I've met Ms. Stackhouse a few times at your father's business functions and she always seemed very sweet. Were you two fighting before the helicopter arrived?"

"Her name is *Mrs. Compton*," I spat out before continuing, "and no, we weren't fighting. I'd just got done telling her that she was the only woman that had ever meant something to me. She started crying, I guess from the guilt, and then the helicopter arrived. She couldn't get away from me fast enough."

My mother sat up and looked down at me while mentally running through everything I'd just told her. "How did the topic come up?"

"She asked me how many relationships I'd had in the past and I told her none." My mother's eyebrow crept up into her hairline and I saw where I'd gotten it from. "I haven't! I'd never met anyone that I wanted to be with all of the time. They were nothing more than a...temporary distraction." I censored myself since she was my mother.

With her eyebrow still raised she asked, "And what did Sookie have to say to that?"

"Nothing. The helicopter showed up right then and she took off to get away from me." I didn't want to talk about it anymore so I pulled the covers over my head.

My mother pulled them right back down and asked, "But you *did* tell her that *she* meant something to you?"

I was about to say 'Of course I did', but as I thought about it I remembered how she had recoiled at my words when they'd come tumbling out of my mouth. *Didn't I say it?* The light bulb flashed above my head as I remembered, No! I *didn't* say it! "Uh...no, I didn't." I thought about it for another minute and said, "But, she didn't give me the opportunity too. And she called our time together a 'nightmare' and then the next day I overheard her on the phone telling her husband she loved him and couldn't wait to see him."

"Min älskling son, perhaps she was hurt by your words and thought *she* was among those other women who didn't mean anything to you. If that was the case, can you blame her for wanting to run away? And if she thought she meant nothing to you, maybe she thought she'd be better off being with her husband rather than being alone. Especially after everything you both went through."

Could it be possible? Did she REALLY not know how much I cared about her after all of that time? How much I LOVED her?

My mother left my room with the parting phrase, "If you really do love her, you should at least let her know how you feel."

I stayed in bed for another few minutes trying desperately to keep myself from hoping too much that maybe we could work everything out. I wanted nothing more than to spend the rest of my life with her, but at the very least after everything she'd told me about Bill, he definitely didn't deserve her.

With that thought, I threw the covers off and jumped into the shower. I still hadn't gotten a haircut, but I was in desperate need of one so my mother called her personal stylist to come over to the house and an hour later I was looking more like myself. I also felt ravenous all of the sudden so I ate a quick, yet big, lunch and then logged into the company's mainframe to get Sookie's address.

I hopped into my mother's car since it had tinted windows in case the news crews were still camped out at the entrance to our estate, which they were, but they thankfully didn't follow me. I wasn't so lucky when I got to Sookie's house though. There were 3 news vans parked along the curb, but I didn't want them filming me going up to her house so I drove around until it was dark. I went passed again after nine o'clock and they were finally gone.

I parked a few houses down anyway and walked up the street and to her front door more nervous than I'd ever been in my entire life. I didn't want to cause any problems for her with Bill if she had decided to stay with him, so if he was around I planned on just using the excuse that I wanted to see how she was doing.

My palms were sweaty when I knocked and I thought my heart was going to leap out of my chest when I heard someone approaching from the other side of the door. My heart fell when it was Bill standing in the now open doorway. His left eye was black making me wonder what had happened while, at the same time, making me wish that I was the one that had done it.

"What do YOU want? If this is about MY lawsuit you're wasting your time because I'm still proceeding with it," he sneered.

Douche bag! "I wanted to talk to Sookie, to see how she's doing."

He scoffed, "Oh please! Don't act like you haven't seen how that bitch has humiliated me on the news."

I felt my fists clench when he called her a bitch, but I had no idea what he was talking about. I was practically in a coma since we'd gotten back and I hadn't watched ANY news.

"I don't know what you're talking about. I merely wanted to check up on Sookie."

"That cunt walked out with her father on the night she got back, in front of ALL of the news cameras, with her suitcase in hand while telling them anyone voting for me would be a fool! I'm better off without her defective ass!"

I didn't know it was going to happen until I saw my fist make contact with his right eye, knocking him onto his ass.

"How DARE you!" he sputtered while clutching what I hoped would turn into his second black eye.

"Add it to your lawsuit." I turned and walked back to my car feeling better than I had in days.

I had no idea where Sookie's parents lived so I drove back home to formulate a plan. I still didn't know if she wanted and needed me as much as I did her, so I was still afraid of putting myself out there. I found their address on the internet and by the time I went to sleep I knew I couldn't keep my feelings hidden from her any longer. It was, again, now or never.

Min älskling son - My darling son.

Chapter 21: Positive

Positive

SPOV

After telling Bill, unsurprisingly, that I wanted a divorce and wishing Lorena the best because she would certainly need it, I packed up everything I would need for the next few days and left with my father. I hadn't planned on addressing the press still waiting outside our front door, but I couldn't seem to help myself and told them that anyone voting for Bill was a fool. My father let out another deep belly laugh as soon as the words left my mouth and I smiled back at him feeling somewhat hopeful that maybe things were going to be okay. I didn't have Eric in my life anymore, but I could only deal with one issue at a time and I felt relieved being rid of Bill for good.

Over the next few days I tried to keep a positive outlook on life, but I was just fooling myself. I was miserable without Eric and I had nightmares every time I closed my eyes, picturing him with a different beautiful woman each night. I avoided the news at all costs for that one reason knowing my pain would increase tenfold the moment I saw it with my very own eyes.

I was still having trouble keeping my food down, but it mostly seemed to just hit me only once or twice a day. I tried to keep track of what I ate so I could pinpoint what it was that was making me sick thinking maybe, in addition to my frazzled nerves, my body chemistry had changed while we were on the island and I couldn't tolerate all of the foods I had eaten before that time. My father tried to insist that I go see a doctor, but I just wanted to stay away from the outside world for a little bit longer. After I promised I would make an appointment if it didn't stop by the end of the week he finally backed off.

It was all I could do to get him to go back to work, but I couldn't take him watching me all day long to see if I would get sick again and I *knew* that was what he was doing. I think a part of him felt relieved when he finally agreed to go back because my crying fits that would start at the drop

of a hat had him feeling helpless. I didn't tell him *why* I was crying and thankfully he didn't ask. No matter how much I wanted to believe otherwise, I knew it was because I missed Eric.

The nightmares quickly abated to something even worse. Every time I closed my eyes I would dream of him and our time on the island. I recalled with perfect clarity every touch, every kiss, and every whispered word between us. I almost wished I would have nightmares instead because remembering how happy I had been with him only made the pain of losing him that much worse. Then I would think I hadn't *really* lost him because he was never mine to begin with.

I had felt pretty rundown since we'd returned and it was all I could do to drag myself out of bed each morning. I knew I was probably in a full blown depression, but I kept repeating the phrase '*Positive outlook*' in my mind over and over hoping to somehow convince myself to believe that life would get better.

After my father returned to work I spent one full day alone and wept nonstop until I knew he would be returning home. The next day I racked my brain trying to think of a way to distract myself and ended up calling Claudine under the guise that I wanted to return her sundress and sandals to her. She sounded happy to hear from me and I felt relieved when she agreed to come over for lunch that afternoon.

I didn't expect it to happen, but as soon as I opened the front door and saw her standing there the tears started flowing again. She quickly wrapped her arms around me and rubbed her hands on my back as I cried all over her shoulder. Once the sobs subsided she pulled back and asked, "Do you want to talk about it?"

For whatever reason I felt safe confiding in her even though I hardly knew her at all. There was something about her that made me feel protected, as if she would stand by me whenever I was in need. I nodded and she led me to the couch in the living room where we both sat down. She waited patiently while I gathered the thoughts circling inside of my head. I didn't know where to begin and said as much.

She gave me a knowing look and asked, "Does it have to do with Mr. Northman?"

The tears silently flowed again while I nodded my head and she smiled softly at me asking, "Have you talked to him since you've been back?"

A sob broke through while I shook my head 'no' and she pulled me back into her arms while I cried some more. Once I calmed down again she said, "Why don't you call him?"

"Because he doesn't want me," I choked out. "He made me so happy when we were on the island and I fell in love with him, but he doesn't want me."

Claudine's eyebrows furrowed when she asked, "Why do you think that?"

"Because that's what he told me," I said as the sobs racked through my body some more.

She tried to calm me down again, but it took a while before my breathing slowed to a normal pace. She studied me for a few minutes and said, "I don't know what happened, or what was said between the two of you, but I'll tell you what I do know. When you two first got off of the helicopter he never took his eyes off of you. It was as if he didn't see anyone else except for you and the longing in his expression tells me that you must mean a great deal to him."

I shook my head in denial saying, "He's just a genuinely nice guy and he knew I was upset. He was very sweet when he told me just before we were found that he'd never been in a relationship because no woman ever meant anything to him," I finished sarcastically. "I guess those six months we spent stranded together didn't mean anything."

Claudine opened her mouth to say something, but another wave of nausea swept over me and I got to the bathroom just in time to lose my breakfast. Claudine had followed me and held my hair back as I continued to heave into the toilet. Once I was sure it was over, she handed me a cool washcloth that I used to wipe down my face and neck and then I brushed my teeth before we went back into the living room.

"I'm sorry," I apologized. "I think something changed in my body chemistry while we were gone and now I can't handle processed foods or something."

Claudine's eyebrow rose up and the nurse in her asked, "How long has this been going on?"

I thought back before replying, "I guess it was the day of the rescue. I'd felt a little queasy that morning, but I didn't get sick until we were on the ship."

"And it's happened every day since then?"

I nodded and her eyes softened as she said, "This is none of my business, but is there any possibility that you could be pregnant?"

I shook my head replying, "No." When her face took on a look of disbelief I blushed and said, "Not because we didn't, you know... because we did," my heart hurt remembering, but I temporarily pushed it aside and said, "but I can't get pregnant."

I went on to tell her everything I had learned from my visit with the fertility specialist before the plane crash and once I was done she just looked at me like I took the short bus to school.

"Sookie, you said yourself that the doctor told you your chances of getting pregnant were *slim*, not *impossible*."

NO! I couldn't be *pregnant*, could I? I was sure my eyes were as big as saucers while I thought of the possibility that I *was* pregnant and then I started crying again. Whether or not it was because I *wanted* to be or terrified that I *was* pregnant, I didn't know.

I looked at Claudine completely at a loss and asked, "What do I do?"

She smiled and said, "We find out. Get your shoes on, we're going to the drugstore."

I got up without question with my body acting on autopilot and put my shoes on. Claudine suggested that I put my hair up and throw on a baseball cap in case anyone recognized me. There weren't any more reporters camped out outside the house since I hadn't come out in days so we hopped into her car and were inside the nearest drugstore five minutes later.

I grabbed a basket and I tossed in two boxes of every pregnancy test they carried because I knew no matter what the result was I'd want to check again and again and again. We went up to the register and when the cashier started ringing up the items she looked at me and happily asked, "Are you trying to get pregnant?"

My nerves were shot and I snipped out, "NO! I just like *peeing* on stuff!"

I heard Claudine trying to suppress a chuckle behind me, but I didn't care. I just wanted to get back home so I could find out one way or the other whether or not I was pregnant. With that thought, I grabbed a liter bottle of water and put it on the counter alongside the boxes of pregnancy tests and shot the cashier a look that said she'd better keep her comments to herself. It must have worked because she didn't say another word other than to tell me to have a nice day once we were done.

I chugged the entire bottle of water on the way back to the house and Claudine actually suggested that if I was bound and determined to use all of the tests that I would be better off peeing into a cup and dipping the test end of the sticks into it rather than trying to pee on them all. I was glad at least one of us was sane because I was pretty sure I was on my way to Crazyville.

I grabbed a plastic Solo cup from the pantry and went into the bathroom to get my 'sample' while Claudine sat at the kitchen table and started opening all of the packages. I came out a few minutes later with a cup full of pee to find 16 pregnancy tests all lined up on top of some newspaper Claudine had spread out on the table.

We removed the caps and methodically started dipping them into the cup, holding them in for the recommended length of time and then replaced the caps and set them aside only to repeat our actions with the following tests. Once we were done we set the timer and stared down at our handiwork while the clock ticked away. It didn't take as long as the test said it would before it became overwhelmingly clear what the results were.

Positive.

There were blue lines and pink lines, two lines, plusses and yes' in all of the windows saying I was indeed pregnant. The tears started flowing again because I was both elated and heartbroken at the same time.

I had no doubt whatsoever that I would be keeping this baby and I would be the best mother I could possibly be, unlike my own. I hadn't dared to let myself even fathom the thought that it

would ever happen to me because I didn't dare to hope, but I was so very grateful that I was blessed in spite of that.

Claudine stayed for a little while longer and promised to go with me to see my OB/GYN if I didn't have anyone else. I knew she was talking about Eric, but I let it pass without comment and just hugged and thanked her again for everything.

I quickly gathered all of the evidence and put it away in my room before my father returned home from work, not wanting to tell him just yet. I knew I would have to eventually, but I just needed to soak up the reality of it all first. I didn't think he would be surprised to learn that something had happened between Eric and I while we were gone because the one and only time he brought up his name I burst into tears and ran from the room. He didn't ask again.

Later on that night, as I lie in bed, I tried to figure out what I was going to do about Eric. I *had* to tell him I was pregnant. It was his child after all, but what else should I say? Do I tell him the truth? That I was in love with him? I'd meant what I said when I told Claudine that he was a genuinely nice guy and I knew he'd probably want to be a part of his child's life, but that didn't mean he wanted to be a part of *mine*. And I worried that he would feel obligated to return any sentiment of affection I declared to him for the mere fact that I was pregnant with his child. Even if he meant it I would *always* wonder if his feelings were true.

By the time I woke up the next morning I decided that I *would* tell Eric that I was pregnant and offer him the opportunity to be a part of his child's life. I would leave the amount of his involvement up to him. I would *not*, however, tell him that I'd fallen in love with him on the island. If anything, at least now I would always have a part of Eric with me for the rest of my life in the form of our child.

Not realizing how late it already was and knowing my father would've already left for work, I got out of bed and took my time in the shower, letting the hot water work all of the tension out of the muscles in my back and neck. I'd already put an end to my pity party because I knew I had someone else that I had to look out for, our baby. I took the time to dry my hair, only now realizing just how long it had gotten, and thought about getting a few inches cut off. I tried to discern if I had that 'motherly glow' everyone talks about, but thought I just looked like I had a really good tan. I put on one of my favorite sundresses knowing I wouldn't be fitting into them soon enough and then sat in the living room trying to figure out how I was going to break the news to Eric.

Should I call him? *Hi Eric, it's Sookie! How are you doing? By the way, I'm pregnant. See ya later!*

Probably not. Maybe I could write him a letter.

Dear Eric,

I just thought you should know that you ripped out my heart and squashed it like a bug that I'm pregnant. Do you want to be a part of the baby's life? Please check the appropriate box and mail it back to me.

_ YES _ NO

Sincerely,

Sookie Stackhouse

I giggled thinking I could fold the letter into one of those impossibly small origami birds that would magically sing *Surfin' Bird* as soon as you opened it. Again, probably not.

Before I could come up with any more equally stupid ideas to tell Eric I was pregnant, like telling him live on the Maury Povich "Are you the Baby Daddy?" special, the doorbell rang.

I looked through the peephole to make sure it wasn't a reporter, or worse Bill, and saw it was the FedEx guy. I opened the door and after signing my name he handed me a package addressed to me. I'd gotten several cards and letters from people I'd never met telling me how glad they were we were rescued along with their well wishes, so I figured this was just more of that.

I opened the box to find a beautiful leather book inside. It was a deep brown and the cover was plump with a gold border running along the edge. I opened it and saw the pages inside were all an aged yellow parchment paper like it was something made many years ago. The words all appeared to be handwritten calligraphy and when I read the title on the first page the tears sprung to my eyes.

Our Fairytale.

I turned page after page, dabbing my eyes with handfuls of tissues so they would fall onto the book, and read the fairytale Eric had made up for me while we were on the island. There were hand drawn colored pictures illustrating each page and I was fascinated how much they resembled Eric, the charming Prince, and I. Even Bill the Ogre was a surprisingly good representation.

He'd never really ended the story so as I came to the last part of the story I'd remembered I turned the page anxious to see what he'd done. I could barely see through the tears while I stared at the picture of the Prince down on bended knee holding the Princess's hand as he declared, "*I love you.*"

Could it be? Does he REALLY love me? My hands were shaking and my vision was still blurry from the tears, but I managed to turn the page only to discover the last few pages were completely blank with the exception of a folded piece of paper stuck in between the pages that read,

"Min alskare,

These pages are left blank because I don't know how our story ends. I know I've made a mess of things, but I beg you to please allow me to try and make it up to you. I know now that what I told you before we were rescued sounded as though I didn't see 'us' as being in a relationship and that it was something I didn't want, but nothing could be further from the truth.

I'm in love with you Sookie Stackhouse and I can't imagine my future without you in it. I can only hope that you feel the same.

Yours forever and always,

Eric

P.S. If you do feel the same, open your front door.

Chapter 22: Hope

Hope

EPOV

When I woke up the next morning I actually felt hopeful for the first time since we'd been rescued. I wondered what Sookie was doing and it killed me inside knowing she thought that I didn't want her. That she'd meant nothing to me. I mentally berated myself some more before I finally got out of bed. I'd come up with what I hoped was the perfect plan the night before and thought it would show Sookie that I did in fact love her because I would literally be spelling it out for her.

I quickly showered and changed before going downstairs to look for my mother. She had always had an interest in art and was a board member of the local art gallery so I hoped she would have the contacts I would need to start Operation Get Sookie Back. I found her in the kitchen reading the paper while drinking her morning cup of coffee and I stood there stunned for a few minutes just staring at her. I'd been so self absorbed with my own problems that it was the first time I really *looked* at her since I'd been home.

Just the mere fact that she was up before noon was an enigma in itself, but she looked so much healthier than I could ever remember. The dark circles were gone from underneath her eyes and her skin no longer had the dull quality that I knew had come from her excessive drinking. I'd seen pictures from her modelling days and knew she'd been beautiful, but that had given way to a much harsher edge from the alcohol as the years passed by. It was gone now and her former beauty had been restored. Knowing it was because she stopped drinking *for me*, I felt a warmth spread through my veins feeling my mother's love for me for the very first time.

She must have felt the weight of my stare because she looked up at me and smiled asking, "What?" as she smoothed her hair self-consciously thinking one might be out of place. I walked

forward and bent over giving her a kiss on the cheek and said, "You're beautiful." She actually blushed and her eyes started to fill with tears, but she quickly laughed it off and said, "You're a charmer, just like your father." I hoped that was true because I would need all of the charm in the world to try to get Sookie to forgive me. I crossed my fingers and sat at the table next to my mother while I told her what I wanted to do.

She openly wept as I told her about the fairytale I'd made up for Sookie while we were on the island and what I wanted to do. She kept saying how sweet it was while dabbing her eyes with tissues and then grabbed her phone saying she knew just the person who could help. She called an artist she'd met a few months back and asked her if she would be willing to help with a sizeable paycheck added as an incentive.

An hour later a strange girl named Thalia showed up at our house. Just Thalia. Like Cher or Madonna. She reminded me of an even more goth version of Wednesday Adams and I was worried that it the book would end up looking like a Tim Burton movie, but my mother assured me her artistic style was beautiful. I'd already typed up the story on a word document and she asked me to describe what I envisioned how the characters looked like.

I described every detail of Sookie's face, hair and body having memorized them in the time we'd spent together. At least, every detail with her wearing clothes. Thalia sketched while I talked and I was shocked when she turned her sketchbook around to show me her work. Without a doubt it was Sookie and I involuntarily held my breath seeing her again. All I could do was nod at her and when I finally looked over at her, Thalia had actually cracked a smile. It was a little disconcerting, but I appreciated it anyway.

She assumed correctly that I was the Prince and she quickly made of sketch of me that was just as realistic. The only change I had her make was to make my hair long enough to touch my shoulders, like it had been on the island. I figured we could both do without the beard.

When she got to Bill the Ogre she looked up and asked, "Is it that guy that's all over the TV running for office?" When I nodded my head she started drawing again and muttered under her breath, "He's a douche bag." I couldn't help laughing out loud, but when she asked about the evil queen I just gave a vague description of how Sookie had described her mother and left it at that. I had no idea of what was going on with their relationship now that we were back and I hoped that she was as lucky as I had been with my own parents.

Thalia returned the next day with the completed book and my mother cried all over again looking at it. I had to admit that it came out better than I had imagined with my own eyes filling up thinking back of when the story had taken shape. It was always told through whispered words at night with Sookie wrapped up in my arms and I hoped and prayed that I would have her in my arms again.

My mother said that I should bring it over to Sookie myself, but I just couldn't do it. I didn't want to influence her decision by standing right in front of her. And I honestly didn't think I'd be able to stand there calmly as she held my future in her hands. So I dropped it off at the FedEx office

with an overnight delivery scheduled for the next morning and went back home to wait out the longest night of my life.

I barely slept at all with my nerves wreaking havoc with my brain. I quickly showered and changed before going downstairs where my mother was practically bouncing with excitement. I started getting worried that she was planning on tagging along and tried to come up with a polite way to say '*No fucking way!*' Thankfully she just gave me a kiss on the cheek, handed me her car keys, and wished me luck, but before I could leave she yelled out, "Wait!"

I turned around prepared to tell her that she was NOT coming with me, but she stunned me into silence with what she held out in front of her. It was my grandmother's engagement ring. She had always said that it would be mine to give to the right girl when the time came, but until Sookie came into my life I had never imagined giving a ring to anyone. My mother placed it into my hand and said, "Just in case." Then she gave me a wink and walked away.

The book was supposed to be delivered before noon, but I knew they started their deliveries at 8 a.m. so I got to Sookie's parents' house at 7:45 and parked a little ways down from their house. I didn't want her to see me sitting in my car like a stalker, but I wanted to be able to see when the delivery was made.

The time both dragged on and flew by when I saw the truck pull up to her house three hours later. I had debated over and over if it was too soon to ask her to marry me. I didn't even know if she loved me, but even if she did she was technically still married. Would she want to be engaged so soon. Would she even want to get married again? I got out of the car and slowly walked towards her house as the FedEx truck pulled away deciding I would tackle one thing at a time and just contemplated what I would do if she didn't open the door? How long should I wait? What if she *doesn't* love me? What if she doesn't open the package right away? *Shit!*

I was so busy pacing back and forth in the yard in front her of porch wondering what I should do that I hadn't realized she'd opened the front door until I heard her gasp behind me. My head whipped around and my heart stopped seeing her again. Her eyes were puffy and red from crying and still just as beautiful, but I didn't know if they were happy or sad tears so I stayed put with my eyes pleading with her to give me a clue.

"You cut your hair," she said. Not exactly an '*I love you too*' but at least she didn't seem mad at me anymore so I nodded and waited.

I didn't have to wait long.

Sookie launched herself off of the porch and into my arms with us quickly becoming a tangled mass of limbs and lips and kisses and apologies and I finally felt whole again.

We stayed that way for a few more minutes until I couldn't take it anymore and pulled far enough away so that I could look into her beautiful blue eyes and said, "I love you Sookie. I fell in love with you the first week we were on that island and I'm so sorry I never told you until

now." I hadn't realized I was crying until she reached up and wiped my tears away with her hands.

"I love you too Eric. I knew it months ago, but I was too afraid to say it. I love you so much." She leaned forward and kissed all over my face before settling her lips on mine again. We quickly became lost in each other and didn't realize how far we were taking things until a car passed by honking their horn at us. I wasn't used to not just stripping Sookie of her clothes wherever we were having had her all to myself for six months straight.

She giggled and asked me if I would like to come inside. I had no plans to leave her side period, so I hoped I'd be able to convince her to go along with it. As I carried her into the house we quickly picked up where we'd left off outside with Sookie directing me to her bedroom whenever I'd let go of her mouth long enough to say anything.

I laid her on the bed and was starting to removing her dress when she stilled my hands with her own and said, "There's something you should know first." She sounded so ominous that I wondered if she hadn't gone and murdered Bill. I'd be more than happy to help her hide the body.

I waited as she took a deep breath and barely made a sound as she whispered, "I'm pregnant."

My jaw fell open as I processed her words and I quickly felt the warmth of pure joy course through my veins. I was still hovering on top of her so I leaned down and kissed the spot where our baby was growing inside of her. Tears of joy filled my eyes as I pressed my lips against her still flat abdomen and whispered, "Hi Baby, Daddy loves you."

The sound of Sookie sobbing above me made me look at her as I sat up asking, "What's wrong? Are you not happy that you're pregnant?" I quickly started to worry that maybe she thought this was a bad thing while I thought it was the second best thing I found out today with the first being that Sookie loved me.

"Of course I'm happy that I'm pregnant, I'm just even happier that you're happy too.." she sat up and wrapped her arms around my neck as she continued to sob against my chest and I made a mental note to read up on pregnant women and mood swings.

Her cries quickly subsided when her lips met mine again, but the frenzied passion from before was quickly replaced with slow and methodical movements. I wanted to worship every inch of this glorious woman that was carrying my unborn child. I gently eased her body backwards until she was lying down underneath me and kissed my way along her jaw to the spot behind her ear that made her moan in approval and my dick even harder.

While my lips made their way down her chest, my fingers found the zipper to her dress and I slowly peeled it down her body taking her underwear off with it. I took a moment to admire her naked form feeling as though it had been years since I saw her like this even though it had only been days. I knew after our first time together that I would never be able to have my fill of her and the overwhelming love I felt for her would've been enough to bring me to my knees if I hadn't already been on them.

I pulled my shirt over my head and tossed it aside as I leaned down kissed her again before moving down her body once more. I swirled my tongue around her hardened nipple while my hand gently caressed the other. Her fingers ran through my hair trying to find purchase in my shorter locks before she just settled her hand firmly against the back of my head.

Her hips were moving up and down against my torso so as I moved my mouth to her other breast I slid my hand down her body to her center and growled against her skin when I felt how slick she was with arousal. I ran them along the length of her folds coating my fingers in her juices before sliding one inside of her causing her to cry out in ecstasy.

Hearing that sound coming out of her lips made me move my lips further down her body until I was finally in between her legs. I looked up to see her staring back at me with her eyes filled with love and lust driving me forward. I slipped a second finger inside of her as I latched onto her small bundle of nerves with my mouth and watched her eyes roll back in her head momentarily before they met mine once more.

I continued pumping my fingers into her while I flicked my tongue over her clit in time with my thrusts. I could feel her muscles starting to spasm around my hand as she got closer to her release so I curled my fingers brushing them over that special spot inside of her while sucking her nub with a little more pressure and she screamed out my name as her walls clamped down on my fingers with her orgasm.

Her whole body trembled as I kissed my way back up her body and I stopped long enough to kiss the spot where our baby was safely snuggled inside of her before she pulled my lips back into another kiss while her hands worked to rid me of my pants. She got them down as far as she could before I kicked them all of the way off. I relished in the feel of our naked bodies pressed against each other, but I was careful not to let my body weight press down on her fully.

Sookie's hand snaked in between our bodies and stroked along my length and the feel of it nearly caused me to explode before she finally placed me at her entrance. I looked into her eyes and wiped the tears from her face as I declared once more, "I love you."

"I love you too," she whispered, but any other words she might have said were halted by the moan that made its way out of her throat as I slowly pushed into her. I could feel the pulse of my blood running through my veins beating against her inner walls and once I was fully sheathed inside of her we both sighed in relief.

It didn't take long for us to start moving our hips against each other in the familiar rhythm we had perfected over the previous months. I felt the love I had for her swell inside of me so much that I was surprised my whole body didn't shoot out rays of light because that's what she was to me. She was the light that had drawn me out of the darkness my life had been filled with before she came along and I would worship her until the last breath left my body forever grateful.

I watched Sookie's eyes glaze over as her muscles started to spasm harder around me and she pulled me down into another kiss as we both tumbled over the edge into an orgasmic bliss with our cries muffled by each others mouths.

Once our breathing returned to normal I slowly withdrew from her and laid down beside her pulling her body tightly against mine. I knew I couldn't be away from her again and I didn't want to. Ever. Sookie and our baby were the only things that mattered to me now and I knew that would never change.

I slid off the bed and pulled her with me until she was sitting up with her legs hanging off the side. Her eyes went wide as she watched me kneel before her and I said, "I meant it when I wrote that I can't see my future without you in it. I love you Sookie and I don't ever want to be apart from you again." I felt the hope for our future swell inside of me as I asked, "Will you marry me?"

Chapter 23: Epilogue Fairytale

Fairytale

SPOV

One Year Later

I took my morning cup of coffee out onto the deck to enjoy the morning sunshine. The weather was beautiful and it just added to the overall happiness that my life had been filled with over the last year. I was truly blessed and as I sat there I remembered everything that had happened that brought me to where I am now.

I was surprised when Eric proposed to me but I didn't hesitate accepting. I didn't have any doubts whatsoever that he loved me and I knew that my love for him was so great that I would never be whole without him.

I had already filed for divorce from Bill using the same attorney that my father was using to divorce my mother. Even if Bill didn't contest the divorce I knew it could still take months before it was finalized, but I really wanted for us to be married before the baby was born. Luckily Eric's father knew some very influential people and they were able to push it through the courts much faster so that I was officially divorced a mere six weeks later.

On the night that I had walked out on him a few of the waiting reporters had followed Lorena when she left the house and it didn't take long for them to discover that she had been Bill's mistress. He held one press conference to try and deny any wrongdoing and I couldn't stop laughing as I watched him try to worm his way out of it on TV with two black eyes. The press crucified him and the late night talk shows had a field day mocking him relentlessly. Bill's political supporters dropped him and he had no choice but to withdraw his name from running for office.

Lorena had a healthy baby boy a week after our meeting and once Bill's political future was no longer an issue he had surprisingly tried to be a good father. It wasn't until a few weeks later

when the baby's dark hair lightened to blond that he began to question the paternity because both he and Lorena were brunettes. It turned out that Lorena had cheated on him as well and the baby wasn't his. He tried to throw his hat back into the political arena but the public was having no part of it and he had to return to his law practice with his tail between his legs.

When the time came for Bill's ridiculous lawsuit against the Northman's to be heard by the judge I asked if I could testify on their behalf. Once I explained to the judge how our marriage had already been on rocky ground before the crash, as well as how I felt that morning in the doctor's office and Bill's horrible reaction to me afterwards I admitted truthfully that I would've left him not long after we returned even if the plane crash had never occurred. The judge appeared to have taken offense on my behalf when he'd heard that Bill had said I was 'broken' and basically laughed him out of court dismissing his claim against the Northman's.

After there was no doubt that Bill's future consisted of nothing more than a run of the mill lawyer my mother tried to befriend me again. I was leery of letting her back into my life fully, but I felt compelled to give her one last chance. I shouldn't have. As soon as she heard that I was marrying into the Northman family she started telling me all of the things that I should do now to be a proper lady of society and swamped me with real estate listings for over the top mansions that were on the market. I didn't want any of it and I certainly wasn't marrying Eric because his family was wealthy. The final straw came when she criticized my engagement ring saying I should trade it in for a larger one. I kicked her out and had nothing more to do with her. The last thing I heard about her was that she had sold her story to the gossip magazines playing the victimized mother left penniless by her gold-digging daughter and I couldn't have cared less. The people who were important in my life knew the truth and that was all I cared about although she had better watch herself if Eric's mother ever came across her.

I was apprehensive going to see Eric's parents for the first time which was the morning after we'd made up. I knew his father from work and I'd met his mother at business functions, but now I was meeting them again as their future daughter-in-law. Their *pregnant* future daughter-in-law. When we walked into their house his parents stood in the foyer holding hands beaming smiles at the two of us, but no one said anything at first. I couldn't take the awkwardness any longer so I smiled and said; "Vi klär av sig" saying what I *thought* was 'Good Morning'. Eric's mother's jaw dropped open while his father roared with laughter and when I looked over at Eric wondering if I'd said it wrong he was ten shades of red. When I found out I'd been telling him '*Let's get naked*' every morning for six months straight I could've killed him! It took weeks before I could finally laugh at it all, but I only trusted his mother to teach me Swedish from then on.

We had a small wedding ceremony in their backyard with just his parents, my father, Amelia and Claudine in attendance. Neither one of us wanted any fanfare and it was absolutely perfect. My waist was quickly disappearing by that point so I decided on an empire waist wedding dress that was custom made to look exactly like the dress in our fairytale book. I hadn't given Eric any clues on what the dress looked like and the recognition on his face when he saw me standing on my father's arm at the end of the aisle was priceless. Several tears and vows later and I was married to my real life Prince Charming who sealed the deal with a kiss that curled my toes.

We stayed with his parents until we found a nice home in between their house and my father's. Our story generated a lot of interest and we were approached by several companies wanting to publish it so we decided that if it was going to be told that Eric would be the one to write it. They were hesitant at first but when he sent them the draft of the first few chapters they absolutely loved his writing style and when Eric told them that he'd always wanted to be a writer they asked him to send in anything else he'd written. They were impressed enough to sign him to a contract to write two more books with the option to extend it if they did well and he couldn't have been happier. The best part was that Eric got to work from home so we were rarely ever apart which suited us just fine.

I chose to stay home to take care of our baby once he or she was born because I didn't want to miss a minute of them growing up. Our parents seemed to be more excited than we were and Eric's mother had made it her mission in life to buy every generic colored baby outfit on the planet. She taught me Swedish almost every day so I could teach the baby and she had quickly become the mother figure in my life. She confided in me what a mess she'd been while Eric was growing up, but anyone could clearly see that she was no longer that same person and Eric and I both looked forward to seeing her with her grandbaby.

We decided to wait to go on our honeymoon until after the baby was born since my morning sickness lasted through the entire pregnancy. Eric was worried, but the doctor assured us that it sometimes lasted throughout and as long as I still gained enough weight it wouldn't be a problem. Eric was very attentive of my needs and learned quickly that I sometimes cried for no other reason than the Lifesaver commercial I just watched was very sweet. Many times I was sure I was the largest pregnant woman on the planet and would cry out, "*Don't look at me, I'm hideous!*" only to ask him a minute later to go and get me garlic bread and Nestle's Strawberry milk. If anyone deserved a medal for most understanding husband it was him.

My libido was in overdrive throughout the entire pregnancy and finding ways to have sex around my belly was challenging, but thankfully Eric was always up for a challenge. Literally. He always told me how beautiful and sexy I was no matter how many times I rolled my eyes in silent protest, but I knew deep down *he* believed what he was saying even if I thought he needed his eyes checked.

My water broke twelve days past my due date and I'd never seen Eric more nervous than he was at that moment. He had acted swift and assured when our plane crashed in the middle of the ocean, but seeing the puddle of water forming in between my feet on the kitchen floor turned him into all three Stooges with him running around getting towels and my bag and the camera. The hospital was only a short ride away and my contractions weren't really painful yet so I stood there calmly while he packed the car like a madman, but when I saw him jump into the driver's seat and speed away I got a little worried. He only got halfway down our street before I heard the brakes screeching against the pavement as he turned around to come back for me with a sheepish and apologetic smile on his face.

My contractions became much stronger once we were at the hospital and Eric stayed by my side rubbing my back and feeding me ice chips until the sound of his breathing and blinking became too annoying and I made him go see our parents in the waiting room only to have the nurse go

and fetch him two minutes later because I missed him. Rinse. Repeat. After eight hours I couldn't take the pain any longer and asked for an epidural. By the time it kicked in I loved the anesthesiologist so much for giving me his wonder drug that if we had a boy I was going to insist on naming him Doctor Larry Feinstein.

That wouldn't be necessary because four hours later our daughter came screaming into the world. We still hadn't decided on a name yet, but as soon as I saw her I knew her name was Erica because she was the spitting image of her father. We counted her fingers and toes and peeked under her little knit hat to see her blond head. I cried tears of joy seeing Eric hold his daughter for the first time with tears streaming down his face and laughed when his first words to her were, "You're never dating."

More tears were shed when my father and Eric's parents came in to meet their granddaughter with each of them holding her in turn. We were able to take her home three days later and we put her on our bed in between us and just stared at her for hours while giving each other goofy grins. We were so in love with her it was sickening. I had started breastfeeding her while we were in the hospital and she took to it well so I was going to keep doing it for the time being and while Eric agreed that it would be the best for her I think he was a little put out at not having them all to himself anymore.

We eventually had a routine going with each of us doing what needed to be done in the house and with the baby. Eric would normally speak in Swedish to her whenever he held her and my heart melted each and every time. It also turned me on hearing him and he often reaped the benefits. She started sleeping through the night, well for at least five or six hours, by the time she was two months old and I thanked any and every God I could think of. I'd been trying to sleep whenever she did, but that wasn't always possible. Eric was a trooper too, always getting up whenever she cried and changing her diaper before bringing her to me to feed and I loved him all more for it knowing how lucky I was to have him.

We finally got to go on our honeymoon when she was four months old with Eric keeping our destination a secret. We took the Northman's private jet with Erica in tow because I was still breastfeeding and neither one of us could stand the thought of not having her with us for any length of time. When we landed at a private airfield there was a car waiting that took us to a marina where a large luxury yacht was docked. I thought *that* was the surprise, but I couldn't have been more wrong.

EPOV

We were at sea for a full day when I woke Sookie early in the morning asked her to come up on deck with me to see the sunrise. I tried to be romantic whenever I could and hoped this gesture wouldn't arouse any suspicion. It had been hard keeping this secret from her but I was pretty sure she'd forgive me. I knew she thought our honeymoon was going to be spent cruising on the yacht but I had other plans. I held her in my arms and once the sun started peeking up over the horizon our island came into view. She could barely see through the tears but I knew they were happy ones so I just hugged her a little tighter and we sat there and watched as it slowly got closer and closer.

It looked exactly the same only our hut had been replaced with a real house. It was our wedding gift from my parents and while I worried Sookie would balk at the amount of money they must have spent having it built I hoped she would love it too much to care.

One of the boat's crewmen ferried us over in a smaller boat and I watched Sookie's reaction to it all as we sped towards the shore and knew that she loved it just as much as I did. The house wasn't particularly large or extravagant but its simplicity is what made all the more beautiful. Practically the entire front of the house was nothing but windows and I knew the view would be spectacular. When we finally got to the shore the crewman helped unload our luggage and told us they would return whenever we said we were ready to leave before going back to the yacht.

We took our time walking up to the house with both of us in awe at the sight. I had known what my parents were planning, but they never showed me what the finished product would look like. When we got to the front door I made Sookie wait while I took Erica inside and then I came back and picked her up bridal style before carrying her inside and my eyes welled with tears remembering the first time we'd done that on this island. As soon as we were inside I pulled her lips to mine whispering "Welcome home" before kissing her until she couldn't see straight and I fell in love with her even more.

Erica chose that moment to wake up so our 'celebrating' would have to wait until she went back to sleep and we decided to tour the house in the meantime. There were solar panels on the roof to provide electricity and a satellite dish gave us telephone, television and internet access. The large pantry we found in the kitchen had already been stocked with enough non-perishable items to sustain a small village for months and the rest of the room was loaded with every modern convenience we could possibly need and while we'd made do the first time we were here I wasn't going to complain about having a real kitchen. Or a bathroom with a *toilet* and a *door*. Luxuries.

The entire downstairs was one huge great room with no walls separating the kitchen from the living room or dining area and the view of the ocean could be seen no matter where you were. We climbed the stairs that ran along the side of the room and found the master bedroom had its own bathroom and a separate door that connected our room to the nursery. Since there were two more bedrooms I didn't know if they were meant for guests or future children, but I loved both of those ideas so it made no difference to me.

It was time for Erica to be fed so I took her into the nursery to change her diaper and hoped she would be ready for a nap by the time she was done eating. She was starting to smile more and she had me wrapped around her pudgy little finger from the start. I never realized how much a parent loved their child until she was born.

I knew Sookie thought she looked exactly like me, but she was wrong. Erica had her nose and chin and I kissed those two spots often loving them just as much as the ones her mother had. I knew she would grow up eventually but I didn't have to like that fact and I was completely serious when I said she was never dating.

Having spent the years before I'd met Sookie as a manwhore there was no way any male was getting near my daughter. Sookie hadn't learned enough Swedish yet to know that when I spoke

to Erica I normally told her how much fun it would be to be a nun when she grew up and no man other than God himself was good enough for her.

I brought her back to Sookie to be fed and just enjoyed watching their bonding time while Sookie and I talked about all of the different places we wanted to go back and see again. The lagoon. Definitely. I could see how happy Sookie was being here again, as was I, and she said she was going to have to try and surprise me herself. There was a leer in her eye that made me think I would be liking her surprise very much.

SPOV

I was still in a nostalgic mood after I finished my coffee and I went back inside to change knowing Eric would be back with Erica soon. Over the previous couple of weeks since we'd been back on the island he liked to take her for walks down the beach, even though he was the only one actually walking, calling it his 'Daddy and Daughter' time while giving me some time all to myself. I used it to work on my 'surprise' for Eric and when I heard them come inside I stayed in the bathroom until I heard Eric go into the nursery before making a beeline downstairs.

I'd already set up my 'props' beforehand so when he came downstairs I hit the play button on the iPod and began my routine. Eric stood there with a shit-eating grin on his face when he saw me in his 'birthday outfit' consisting of the new grass skirt I'd made and lei of flowers. I started dancing seductively towards Eric and sang along with Harry Nilsson singing in the background:

Brother bought a coconut, he bought it for a dime; His sister bought another one, she paid it for a lime.

I was standing directly in front of Eric by then so I playfully started undressing him bit by bit, pushing his shirt off of his arms once the buttons were opened. I turned to slide the back of my body against Eric's half naked front and Eric joined in singing with me:

She put the lime in the coconut, she drank them both up. She put the lime in the coconut, she drank them both up. She put the lime in the coconut, she drank them both up. She put the lime in the coconut, she called the doctor, woke him up, and said, "Doctor, ain't there nothin' I can take, I say, Doctor, to relieve this belly ache?"

Eric wasn't waiting for the song to end because in the next minute he threw me over his shoulder and grabbed the baby monitor before taking me outside to a blanket we kept out on the sand. We hadn't ventured outside to have sex since we'd returned and by the way we were quickly stripping each other it seemed that we were both eager to experience it again.

I'd forgotten what a turn on it was having sex with Eric on the beach under the sun. As soon as he put his lips to mine I knew he'd taken Erica to the market because I could taste the pitanga berries he had eaten and remembering the first time we'd eaten them turned me on even more. It didn't take long before Eric started making his way down my body with his mouth and hands and I enjoyed feeling the goosebumps he raised on my flesh battling with the heat of the sun.

I cried out when his tongue made its first pass through my folds and he took his time bringing me to the edge of climaxing before backing off time and again. Just when I was sure my whole body was about to revolt he thrust two fingers inside of me and I was surprised I didn't pass out from the force of the orgasm that ripped through my body and when my vision returned I found Eric looking down at me while he hovered above.

He brought his lips to mine whispering "I love you" and I echoed it back to him as he pushed his way inside. Our bodies fell into a perfect rhythm and tears welled in my eyes feeling that we'd finally come full circle being here together again. I loved him so much and while I made sure to tell him that every day I don't think he had any idea of just how much. My life hadn't been my own to live until he came along and showed me the way to happiness. The tears finally fell from my eyes as we both tumbled over the edge and Eric leaned down kissing away my tears.

"Are you okay lover?" he asked with concern.

"Yes." I felt the smile form on my lips because I was so much better than 'okay'.

He settled beside me and pulled my body against his as he nuzzled his face into the side of my neck and asked, "So did the princess get her happily ever after?"

The sound of Erica crying came through the baby monitor at that moment signalling that her nap time was over and I looked at Eric and smiled saying, "She most certainly did."

Chapter 24: Goal

Goal

SPOV

I sat on the sideline with the container of orange wedges sitting on my lap enjoying the Indian summer weather as I watched the kids running around the soccer field. Our daughter Erica had grown into a very opinionated but loving six year old. She was naturally taller than the other kids her age, thanks to her father's genetics, and she was a definite leader amongst the other first graders. I attributed part of it to just being a Northman and the other part from four years of 'only child/grandchild syndrome'. We doted on Erica, but she was spoiled by all three of her grandparents. Eric and I *wanted* more children, but we also thought it would be good for her to have siblings as well since we were only children ourselves.

I started taking birth control pills not long after she was born because we both wanted to wait a while before having more children so we could fully devote ourselves to Erica. When she was about to turn three we were ready to try again with our goal being at least three children if not four when all was said and done, but it wasn't as easy as we'd hoped it would be. I'd been through a complete physical and the doctor assured us that the tumor that had caused my earlier infertility

had more or less burned out proven by the fact that my period had returned each and every month, so there was no physical reason why we hadn't been successful.

I'd become obsessed with getting pregnant again for months, with Eric and I having sex at every opportunity, but as I cried on his shoulder one night after my period had shown up yet again he convinced me that it didn't matter. We had Erica and if we wanted more children then we could just adopt. We sat on the idea for a couple of months because I didn't want to adopt a child merely because we couldn't have more of our own, but the more I thought about it the more that I realized we had all of this love to share with another child and it *didn't* matter if they weren't our flesh and blood, we would *still* be their parents.

The sounds of laughter caused me to glance over to my left and I saw our boys playing in the grass a few feet away from me. Like Erica, we considered them miracles as well, but for completely different reasons. Sam and Tommy were brothers with the same biological mother, but different fathers. They came to us two years earlier, at the ages of three and one, having been removed from their drug addicted mother's care. We started out as their foster parents with both of them being extremely malnourished and Sam acting very skittish and withdrawn because their mother would leave them home alone for days on end while she was off getting high. Tommy was 14 months old but he couldn't even crawl yet much less walk because he'd spent the majority of his life in a crib.

Eric had become a successful author and we were fortunate that he was able to work from home as well as having the financial resources for us to devote all of our time to our children. Sam bonded with Erica first since she was so close to his age and with her help he learned to speak with words instead of the grunts and hand gestures he'd used when he first came to us. They were quickly thick as thieves and both of them looked out for Tommy. It took Sam seeing Erica's trust in us for him to gradually be able to trust us as well.

We hired physical and speech therapists as well as a counselor to help with their physical and mental growth and over time we met each short term goal we'd set out to reach. I would never forget the sound of them laughing for the very first time, a little over a month after they'd first arrived, as they watched Erica singing and dancing along to the radio. Upon hearing them Eric and I immediately looked at each other and the tears in my eyes mirrored his own.

We'd received word that their mother had died from a drug overdose two months later and we immediately submitted the paperwork to adopt them both. Their fathers were listed as unknown and their mother had no known family so it went through uncontested and within a year we were a Northman family of five.

The therapists and counselor thought they were finally at the right stage of development for their ages around the time Erica was graduating kindergarten so we left Shreveport and spent the entire summer vacation at our island getaway home. We hadn't been back since we'd gotten the boys, but as soon as we stepped onto the beach we all felt the affect of the island's serenity immediately. The kids laughed and played in the sand and surf every day and we took them on hikes around the island letting them explore to their heart's content with Eric and I seeing everything as brand new through their eyes. We dubbed them our three little coconuts and they

each picked out and decorated a coconut in their likeness that we brought home with us. Building sandcastles became a family affair and they would get added onto each day to the point where they'd grown to twenty feet long down the beach.

The kids wore themselves out each day and would pass out in sheer exhaustion as soon as the sun would set leaving Eric and me to have our nights to ourselves and we took every opportunity we could to make love, even having the time to recreate the 'Lime in the Coconut' dance from our honeymoon. I thought my love and desire for him couldn't possibly get any greater than when I'd opened the door to see him waiting outside of my father's house the morning we told each other that we were in love with one another, but I was wrong. My love and desire for him then had been great, but it was merely a drop of what I felt for him now.

Over the last seven years we'd grown as individuals, as a couple, and as a family. I really felt like he was my true other half and I never had a moment of doubt where our relationship was concerned. Never a moment of hesitation. Never a second guess. To say that I loved him wasn't enough to describe my true feelings for him, but there were no other words I could use. His love made me whole and I lusted after him now even more than I did way back when we'd first met. I call him *insatiable* but that would probably be a more accurate description for me. Even more so now that he was Erica's recreational soccer team coach. I didn't know what it was, but just the sight of him running up and down the field wearing that blue Under Armor shirt and shorts with the horde of six and seven year olds as he tried to teach them to dribble the ball with their feet got me all hot and bothered. I overheard a few of the other mom's sighing as they watched him run by so I knew it wasn't just me. I wasn't worried about them though because I knew Eric only had eyes for me. Eric reiterated that fact as he ran past me and blew a kiss my way causing yet another sigh from the gaggle of moms standing close by.

EPOV

I knew the attention span of a six year old wasn't great, but they were having a hard time grasping the concept of dribbling a soccer ball. I'd been coaching Erica's team for a month now and I really hadn't made much progress in that time. Half of the kids were busy picking the grass out of their cleats while the other half were running away from whatever bug they'd spotted hovering too close to them for their liking. All except for Erica and another little girl named Meg. Erica was naturally competitive and wanted to succeed in everything she did. Meg seemed to have a natural talent for the sport and had so much energy she would literally run circles around the other kids which made Erica declare her name was no longer Meg, but **Makesmyheadspin**. No hyphens. No spaces. Just one word.

Meg was an easy going kid and thankfully didn't mind Erica changing her name. Erica told me that Meg was secretly in love with me which I thought was sweet and a boost to my ego until Erica informed me that while she thought I was handsome I was a daddy so that was gross. Thankfully Sookie didn't feel the same way. I was still working on convincing her to become a nun when she got older, but if her reaction to Justin Bieber was any indication the outlook wasn't good. It didn't help that Sookie only laughed at my feeble attempts now that she knew enough Swedish to understand what I'd been saying. The upside to that was she would tell me all of the

dirty things she wanted to do to me and have done to her in Swedish when we were out in public. I created a dirty talking monster and I loved every bit of it.

Whenever I would feel my patience wearing thin with the kids on the field I would look over at Sookie and the sight of her would calm me down again. She was still the sun in my universe, as well as the kids' and we all revolved around her. Without her I wouldn't have had the life I lived now which was full of love and laughter. The way she transformed our boys with her love from scared and withdrawn babies into joyful and outgoing little men left me in awe of her. She was meant to be a mother and I was grateful that she chose me to be her partner in creating and raising our family. I knew she'd been disappointed that we weren't able to have more children of our own, not that I minded trying, but if we had been successful we wouldn't have Sam and Tommy in our lives now and I couldn't imagine our family without them in it. They were *our* sons no matter whose DNA they were made up of.

Once practice was over all of the kids ran over to where Sookie was waiting to get their orange wedges and juice boxes while Sam and Tommy helped me gather all of the soccer equipment. They were still too young to play on the team, but their skill level when we played at home already exceeded a lot of the older kids' abilities and I couldn't wait for when they'd be on the team. We'd be unstoppable and my fatherly pride in my kids threatened to swell my chest and head to epic proportions.

We threw the equipment bags into the back of our Suburban (I refused to get a minivan no matter how many kids we had; I'd buy a bus before I drove one of those) and waited for the last of the kids to get their snacks before heading home. We were greeted at the door by the newest addition to our family, a cat the kids named Bob. He was a stray that showed up at our house a few weeks earlier that refused to leave. We put up fliers with his picture all over the neighborhood, but nobody claimed him so he was ours now. I didn't like him and I was sure the feeling was mutual given that he was only affectionate with Sookie and the kids, but when Sam said we should adopt him so he'd be loved like him and Tommy were I couldn't say no.

The kids had been outside running around playing all day long so I knew as soon as they had dinner and their baths they would be out for the night. Sookie must have been thinking the same thing because when I said I was going to change out of the soccer gear I'd been wearing she came over and whispered, "Leave it on and you'll get the chance to make your own goal later on." I didn't know what turned her on about the outfit I was wearing, but I wasn't going to question it. Our sex life hadn't diminished one bit in all of the years we'd been together and I still wanted her now just as much as I did when we'd first made love on the beach.

Once the kids were fed, bathed, stories read and tucked into their beds for the night Sookie took me by the hand and led me to our bedroom. She took the time to light a few candles scattered throughout the room before coming to stand in front of me again. Just seeing the lust in her eyes was enough to make my arousal obvious in the baggy shorts I'd been wearing and she wasted no time in stripping me of my clothes, but when I made a move to reciprocate she batted my hands away. As soon as I was lying in the center of the bed she disappeared into our walk-in closet and stepped out a few minutes later wearing a feminine version of a man's black pinstripe suit with a white button down shirt, a red tie, and a black fedora hat on her head.

I was confused until she hit the play button on the iPod in the docking station and the sound of Joe Cocker singing 'You Can Leave Your Hat On' filled the room making my dick twitch as I realized I was getting a show. Sookie strutted towards the space at the end of the bed seductively stripping off her clothes in time with the music and I had a difficult time restraining myself from pulling her down onto the bed. I watched with rapt attention as the jacket slid down her arms onto the floor and then as she slid her pants inch by inch over her hips and down her legs. I didn't notice the shoes she was wearing until she stepped out of her pants and growled out loud when I saw she was wearing black stilettos which she'd previously dubbed her 'fuck me' shoes. I hoped *they* would be staying on because if she wanted to be fucked I would be more than happy to oblige her and got my wish when she made no move to take them off as her hands moved to the knotted tie around her neck.

She slowly loosened it as her hips swayed in time with the music until it was completely unknotted and held onto the short end as she slowly pulled it down her body. As it travelled over her breasts I noticed that she was wearing a red bra underneath her white shirt and the resulting throb in what she'd nicknamed my gracious plenty had me clutching the sheets on either side of my body so I didn't launch myself at her.

She flung the tie off to the side and ran her hands up her body and cupping her breasts while she squeezed them and throwing her head back making me watch as she aroused herself. Just when I thought I wouldn't be able to lay still any longer her hands moved to the buttons of the shirt, opening each one revealing inch by inch the skin that I longed to touch underneath. I bit my lower lip when the shirt fell from her arms and revealed the red lace bra and matching thong underneath. I could see the dampness in between her legs and I wanted to shout 'Thank God!' as the song drew to a close leaving Sookie in nothing more than her underwear, the hat, and her 'fuck me' shoes.

"You like?" she asked coyly while standing at the edge of the bed. My only response was another growl as I yanked her down onto the bed and devoured her giggling mouth with my own. Her giggles were soon replaced with moans of approval as my lips made their way to her breasts and I licked and nibbled away at each one over the fabric of her bra before taking it off of her body and repeating my actions on her bare skin.

Her hips were gyrating against mine when I decided to move farther down her body until I was situated in between her legs. I picked up her left leg and slowly kissed my way from her ankle to her hip before repeating the process on her right leg until my mouth hovered directly in between them. I looked up the length of Sookie's body to see her lust filled eyes watching me as I leaned forward and licked the length of her folds over the scrap of fabric still attached to her body and her hips bucked up at the sensation. I pulled the ties holding it in place on each side of her hips and freed it from her body, tossing it aside as I leaned forward once again with my tongue parting her folds as I lapped up the juices that spilled out of her.

I knew her body well enough that I could take her to the edge and back down again over and over and that's just what I did knowing when she finally did have her release it would make her see stars. When I couldn't wait any longer I sucked her clit in between my lips and thrust two

fingers inside of her brushing over her g-spot and she screamed out my name as her muscles clamped down around them with her orgasm.

Her body was still trembling as I kissed my way back up to her breasts when she grabbed a hold of my face bringing my lips to her own in a frenzied kiss. She wrapped her legs around my waist and said, "I love you" as I slowly pushed inside of her. "I love you too," I whispered against her lips and had to close my eyes at the sensation of her inner muscles still twitching along my length. I could feel each pulse of my blood running through my veins as they throbbed inside of her before I slowly withdrew and then pushed back in again.

Our rhythm steadily increased, but I wanted to see more of Sookie so I flipped us over with me still inside of her in a move we'd perfected over the years never breaking stride as she bounced up and down on top of me with my hands on her hips helping her along. I could tell by the look in her eyes that she was close to coming again and my gaze was torn from her eyes as I watched her hand slide down her torso to where we were joined. She rubbed circles over her clit with her fingers and seeing her pleasure herself on top of me was almost too much when her body suddenly tensed with her release. I gripped her hips and held her in place as I forcefully thrust up inside of her while pulling her hips back down yelling out her name as I came deep inside of her.

Sookie flopped down on top of me and we lay there for a few minutes with me still inside of her before she slowly moved off of me to snuggle up against my side. As we lay there together in our post orgasmic haze Sookie looked over at me and asked, "Would you mind getting me a glass of water from the bathroom?"

I leaned down and kissed her lips replying, "Anything for you." I slid out of the bed and walked into the dark bathroom not needing to turn the light on to see what I was doing, but when I reached for a cup my attention was drawn to a piece of plastic lying on the counter. Without thinking I picked it up and walked back into the bedroom so I could see what it was and I stared at it in the candlelight realizing what it was as I asked, "What's this?"

It was a pregnancy test and I'd seen enough of them two years ago to know this one had a positive result. My breath hitched in my throat and my heart pounded with joy as I looked over at Sookie and saw lying next to her on my pillow was a coconut made up to look like a baby wearing a bonnet. Her eyes were glassy with the tears that trailed down her face as she smiled and said, "Apparently you put the lime in the coconut."

Chapter 25: Passage of Time

Passage of Time

EPOV

It was a beautiful spring day in northern Louisiana so I was able to hear the sounds of the girls laughing and giggling upstairs through the open windows from where I was outside. Sookie was

helping Erica get ready for her eighth grade formal dance later on that evening while Pam hovered around them wishing she could go too. Our youngest daughter had just turned seven a week earlier and was the girliest girl there was. She refused to wear anything but dresses and amassed a sizable collection in an array of assorted rainbow colored pastels that lined her closet, with pristine sandals on her dainty little feet. I was wrapped around her little finger, as Sookie pointed out on a near daily basis, but it wasn't as if I tried to hide that fact. It was true. She was my baby and I doted on her to her heart's content. Where Erica's features mostly favored mine, Pam was the spitting image of her mother and, like I would for her mother, there was nothing I wouldn't do for her. The same held true for each of our four kids, but Pam definitely got special treatment for being the baby and she'd known how to manipulate me from day one. Where Sookie and I had both been eager to see the other three grow into the impressive young adults they now were, with Pam I felt both proud and sad with every milestone she passed knowing she would more than likely be our last.

Erica seemed to grow up in the blink of an eye and was already filling out into a woman's body which made me...cautious. Sookie's choice of words were, 'overbearing' and 'near homicidal', but she just didn't understand what it was like as a father to see your baby girl grow up, knowing how the mind of the male species worked. I was no longer delusional believing I could convince either one of my daughters to join a convent, but I would put the fear of God into any boy that darkened my doorstep looking for one of my daughters. At least Pam hadn't shown any interest in boys yet and that was just fine by me.

And, knowing how the mind of the male species worked, my boys had no problems with the parenting approach I used with them. I seemed to turn into a giant kid whenever we were together which Sookie would find either cute or frustrating, depending on the circumstances. Both Sam and Tommy had grown into strapping young men at the ages of 13 and 11 with each of them having a natural athleticism making them star soccer players. I coached their recreation team and we'd won first place in our division three years in a row thanks to them. Their birthdays fell close enough to each other that they were able to play on the same team for now, so I was lucky to be able to have them both on the field every game day.

I'd taken the whole family on a trip to Sweden a year earlier and was able to get us tickets to see my beloved Hammarby Futbol team. I'd picked them as my favorite way back during my days at boarding school because they played for the same hometown where my mother had been born and my loyalty to them hadn't waivered once, no matter how many losing seasons they had. The boys enjoyed the atmosphere wholeheartedly while the girls mostly grumbled about being cold. I may have enjoyed one too many beers since we could walk back to our hotel and Erica was later horrified, while I became the boys' personal hero, when I'd stood up during the game and coaxed the crowd in the bleachers into singing the team's fight song while Sookie recorded the whole thing. She posted it on YouTube and got quite a few hits on it, but Erica's humiliation only grew when Sam linked it to his Facebook page and it went viral amongst all of their friends. I wasn't ashamed, if not a little drunk at the time, so it was all good to me.

"Hostile approaching at your six," Tommy's voice came through my earpiece putting me on alert.

I peered through the branches of the large bush I was hiding behind and saw Erica's date for the dance coming up our walkway. As soon as he got to the front porch I leapt out in front of him while the boys circled around to his rear, effectively trapping him within a circle of Northman. The enemy had let out a shriek in fright as Sookie opened our front door and saw the three of us dressed in camouflage and war paint. The boys each held giant Nerf guns, with Tommy's pointed at his head and Sam's pointed at his crotch. My chest swelled with pride knowing they took their sister's honor as seriously as I did.

"Eric Northman! What do you think you're doing?" Sookie berated.

"Jag visar honom hur lätt han kan dö om han lägger en hand på min dotter. Han kommer aldrig att se oss komma, rätt killar?" (*I'm showing him just how easily he can die if he lays a hand on my daughter. He'll never see us coming, right boys?*)

Our whole family was fluent in Swedish now, which cut down on Sookie's dirty talk to me whenever the kids were around, but it came in handy at times like these.

Sam and Tommy were laughing, high-fiving each other, with Sam telling his younger brother, "Det var jävligt ninja!" (*That was pretty fucking ninja!*)

I couldn't stop the chuckle that erupted from my throat as Sookie let out a stern, "SAM!" while giving me the stink eye.

I looked back at her with all of the innocence I could muster as I doubted now was the time to list the merits of the HBO miniseries the boys and I watched together. I shrugged my shoulders while cocking my eyebrows at the boys purely for show. They both straightened up and mocked saluted me saying, "Sir! Ja, sir! Vi kommer att försvara vår systers ära tills vårt sista andetag!" (*Sir! Yes Sir! We will defend our sister's honor until our dying breath!*)

I would have been able to keep up my 'stern face' if they hadn't ended by pounding their closed fists over their hearts, after their practiced declaration, and lifted their Nerf guns into the air, firing a barrage of Nerf darts into the sky like freedom fighters that rained down on Erica's date. Did I mention how much I loved my boys?

They each let out a battle cry and took off firing darts at each other, leaving me to face their mother's wrath alone as she invited the enemy inside. Traitors.

I followed them into the house and nearly tripped over fucking Bob who'd decided to sprawl out on the floor by the front door, soaking up the sunshine that filtered through the door. The fat bastard was worthless as far as I was concerned, but the kids and Sookie all loved him so there was nothing to be done about it now.

"Erica! Stan is here," Sookie called upstairs. She grabbed the camera and my breath caught in my throat seeing my little girl coming down the stairs all dressed up and looking much older than I wanted her to be.

When had she grown up?

It seemed like just yesterday when she was born and if I had the power to turn back time, I would. I watched as she came to a stop at the bottom of the stairs and looked at me quizzically before shyly glancing over at the enemy cowering by the coat rack. Sookie decided to move and stand in the way of my glare, shielding him from the telepathic death threats I was sending his way, and said, "Stan, why don't you go and stand next to Erica so I can take some pictures of you two together?"

As the enemy named Stan shuffled his way across the foyer, Sookie took the time to turn around and whisper, "Kommer du sluta? Du skrämmer den stackars ungen till döds och Erica kommer aldrig att förlåta dig!" (*Will you stop it? You're scaring the poor kid to death and Erica will never forgive you!*)

I could tell I was about to be relegated to the dog house so I swept Sookie up in my arms and tickled her cheek and neck with my whiskers. As soon as she giggled I whispered in her ear, "Lover, you know what hearing you speak Swedish does to me." I was like one of Pavlov's dogs because whenever she said anything in Swedish all I wanted to do was throw her down and have my way with her.

"That's because you're waiting for me to suggest we get naked, tell you I want to do very dirty things to you, and how I want you to make me scream your name," Sookie whispered back.

Maybe the kids could disappear for a while because as much as I loved them, their mere presence was delaying the gratification only their mother could give me. I heard Erica's not so subtle cough in case we'd forgotten they were in the room (it wouldn't be the first time) and I reluctantly sighed before saying, "All perfectly acceptable suggestions my dear wife, perhaps later?" From her responding smile I knew I was getting lucky later on; now if only there was a way I could clean the camouflage paint from Sookie's face without her knowing about it and I'd be all set.

SPOV

I'd given up on trying to figure out the magic voodoo powers Eric seemed to possess whenever I tried to be mad at him. We had our share of disagreements, but I could never stay mad at him for long no matter how hard I tried. All he'd have to do was shoot me a lustful look and a boyishly charming grin and my anger would vanish; more often than not my panties would too. You'd think after fifteen years together the novelty would have worn off, but I wanted him now just as much as I did back in the beginning, if not more so because now I *knew* what I had to look forward to.

I would love Eric no matter what he looked like, but I certainly knew I was lucky that he still chose to take care of himself as he got older. His body hadn't changed much in all of our years together from him working out in our home gym a few days a week and running every morning. He even took it in stride when the kids likened his running stance to that of a T-Rex because of the way he carried his arms and didn't care one bit that I laughed long and hard realizing how

true their observations were. It worked out well for me when he attacked me like caveman later on, after the kids were in bed, and he ended up roaring for me a few times before the night was through.

We both loved our children more than life itself, but at times we had to become like ninjas to have sex, trying to avoid being caught by them. Having four little people all trying to vie for your attention at the same time made it difficult to find the time for each other, but we never sacrificed our relationship knowing we had to stay happy with each other in order for our family to be happy as a unit.

After I convinced Eric to wash the camouflage paint from his face, and he clued me in that my own face needed a good scrubbing, we got some pictures of each of us with Erica in her gown before Stan's parents came in to take some pictures of their own. They took the kids to drop them off at the school for the dance and they would be attending an after party at one of their friend's homes afterwards before Eric would be picking them up around midnight. After his little battle chieftain display earlier that afternoon I wasn't sure that was such a good idea, already worried about Stan's psyche, and Erica would be bringing home her best friend Meg for a sleepover, so that left little time for us to have sexy time.

The kids somehow morphed into nocturnal creatures when the weekend hit and I had no doubt they would outlast Eric and I when it came to staying awake, so we needed to find time *before* then. I had already started cooking dinner which called the boys inside all on its own when they smelled it wafting through the open windows and a pouting Pam had already planted herself firmly in her favorite person's lap. Eric's.

I could hear her trying to convince Eric to throw her a party where she could wear a gown like Erica's and from the look on his face, her batting lashes were working on him. I walked into the family room where they were sitting and collected the empty juice boxes left behind on the table from one of the kids saying, "No."

Incensed, she turned to me whining, "But it's not fair! Why can't I get dressed up and go to a dance too?"

"You can," I replied and her face lit up before I finished with, "when you're about to graduate the eighth grade."

She crossed her arms under her chest and huffed before asking, "Can I call Grandpa or Mormor and Morfar?"

Eric was like a prison warden on death row compared to the leniency the kids got from my father and Eric's parents. I had to put the kibosh on more than one of their well meaning *gifts* the kids had begged for and Pam still hadn't really forgiven me for sending back her pony. I raised my eyebrow at Eric letting him know it was time for him to step in and he reluctantly said, "Honey, your grandparents aren't going to be throwing you a big party just so you can wear a fancy dress and dance. We just had a birthday party for you last weekend."

"But no one danced! I want to have a dance party!"

We were both to blame for Pam's behavior having spoiled her as our youngest and we were paying the price for it now. I'd already decided I was *done* with her nonsense, but Eric must have lost all of the oxygen going to his brain since he was so tightly wound around Pam's little finger.

"How about we have a little party here tonight with just the family? You can dress up and we can dance," he offered.

"But won't you dress up too? You always look so handsome when you do."

I swear, I was about to spread out some towels underneath him to catch whatever leaked to the floor from him melting over her words. I could tell she saw it too and I didn't know whether to be proud or scared she was my daughter.

"I will if Mommy will," his voodoo magic eyes met mine and I sighed, nodding my head.

"Yay!" Pam shot up off of Eric's lap and ran to her room with me dreading the mess her closet was about to turn into.

I turned and headed back into the kitchen with Eric on my heels saying, "It'll be fun. You *like* dancing with me."

I checked the casserole baking in the oven, while Eric checked the curve of my butt with his hands, and stood agreeing, "I *do*, almost as much as I enjoy doing *very dirty things to you*, but you realize now we won't have any time to ourselves and we still need to pick up Erica, Stan, and Meg at midnight."

I rubbed against the growing bulge in his pants with my backside and couldn't help laughing at the look of horror on his face as the reality of our busy night sank in and tried to make him feel better saying, "Maybe we can have morning sex before they all wake up!"

"Too, Lover, not instead. We can have morning sex *too*; not *instead of* tonight."

"By all means," I pushed against his gracious plenty again, making him groan as punishment for making promises his body couldn't keep, and pointed at the clock hanging on the wall saying, "show me the mystery block of time where we won't be peeling Sam and Tommy apart from a death match over the X-Box, where Pam won't be in her perceived proper place firmly attached to you, or where one of us won't even *be* here since we've got to pick up Erica."

I should've known by now that Eric didn't fight fair, just ask poor Stan, because suddenly one hand was making its way down the front of my pants while the other slipped into my shirt as he whispered, using his voodoo magic voice, asking, "How long until dinner will be done?"

The things that man could do with his fingers alone could make my head spin in an instant and I shook the haze from my brain, looking at the timer on the stove and said, "Seven minutes; not enough time."

I started pulling his hands from my clothing, not wanting to start something only to be left frustrated, but he merely tightened his arms around me saying, "Seven minutes is *plenty* of time. Didn't you ever play 'Seven Minutes In Heaven' growing up?"

His fingers were still working my small bundle of nerves like a finely tuned instrument and even as I wantonly ground myself down on his hand and gripped the back of his head to keep his lips attached to my shoulder, I still managed to sound indignant saying, "*No!* I was a *good* girl."

Eric managed to somehow lift me without ever stopping his fingers from playing my body and carried me off to the laundry room, saying, "Well you're about to get a crash course in being a very bad, bad girl."

He shut the door with his foot and licked his way up my shoulder, teasing the outer shell of my ear with his tongue and causing me to moan my approval before he whispered, "You have to be *quiet* or they'll *hear* you." Of course he followed that with a kiss and a nip to the spot below my ear that always drove me wild and just him saying I had to be quiet made me want to be that much louder.

The fingers of one hand dipped inside of my bra while the fingers of his other hand dipped inside of *me* with his palm rubbing up and down, applying delicious friction to my clit. My back arched and my lower half bucked wildly while I bit my lower lip trying to stifle the urge to cry out and reached around behind me to stroke Eric; it only seemed fair.

As soon as my hand slid inside of his jeans I felt, more than heard, the low growl in his chest. The sound of his excitement and knowing we could be interrupted at any moment was enough to have me tumbling over the cliff with nothing more than a choked sigh to possibly give away our location.

I turned my face to kiss Eric, trying to catch my breath at the same time, but he was having none of that. He pulled back after a moment declaring, "Five minutes, Lover."

Was he seriously keeping track? I was just hoping the kids didn't walk in, but Eric was standing close enough that his foot could block the door from opening. I no longer cared about the casserole, we could just order pizza if it burned. I would've told Eric all of that if he hadn't pulled my pants down around my ankles and shoved my upper half forward so I was bent over in front of him with my hands leaning on the washing machine; it would be rude to interrupt him after all.

I felt the length of him slide its way through my folds as he whispered in my ear, "Tell me what you want Lover."

"Jag vill att du ska knulla mig som du menar det. Tid är tynar bort." (*I want you to fuck me like you mean it. Time is wasting away.*)

I wanted to laugh and chide him for growling so loud, but he quickly pounded the sentiment straight out of me. I knew the effect my speaking Swedish, not to mention dirty talk, had on him and loved his reaction whenever I combined the two. I loved the feel of him inside of me, never truly feeling complete without it, and gritted my teeth, whispering the words instead of begging out loud, "Ja baby, ja... hårdare... hårdare..." (*Yes baby, yes...harder...harder...*)

I nearly squealed in delight when he did just that, gripping my hips with one hand while snaking his other in front of me and working my clit in sync with his thrusts. My head dropped down, my neck unable to keep it upright any longer as all of my strength was tied up in the coiling tension low in my body. When Eric leaned forward I could feel him swell larger inside of me and knew he was close, so when he gently bit down on my shoulder, muffling his grunts from denying himself his own release, it was enough to make me explode from the inside out, as quietly as possible, with the only telltale signs being the spasms of my inner walls milking Eric's own orgasm from him and the shuddering of my entire body.

Eric's arms were the only thing keeping me from face planting on the washing machine and while I had no clue as to how he had any strength left, I was grateful nonetheless.

"Jag älskar dig," he whispered against my neck before planting the lightest of kisses on my flushed cheek.

"I love you too." God knows I did, more than anything.

Just as he was pulling out of me we both heard the oven timer sound that the casserole was done and he chuckled saying, "What did I tell you? We had more than enough time."

I quickly righted my clothes and turned, wrapping my arms around his waist and looked up at him feeling nothing but the love I had for him saying, "Never...I'll never have *enough time* with you."

Eternity wouldn't be long enough.