

Stacy

March 1993 – July 1994



It was the most serene, free, and non-invaded Saturday morning of my life. My world was completely silent and undisturbed. Despite a minor adjustment at 8:43 a.m., when I'd pulled the covers over my head to block out the morning light, I'd slept in the complete sprawled out wonderfulness of my bed for the first time since my freshman year of college. At 10:58 a.m. I reluctantly opened my eyes. Seeing the empty pillow next to me, I pulled it in close to reunite myself with my long-lost cotton-filled night companion. The all-too-familiar smell of Aqua Net and Liz Claiborne assaulted my nose. Sabrina. *To do list today: Wash the sheets.*

With the comfort of my bed interrupted by ghost smells of girlfriend past, I elected to move to the wonderful spaciousness of my couch. I threw back the covers and the cold air hit me. EVERYWHERE. Glancing down, I quickly realized I was naked and in need of some Tylenol and apparently, a shave. Foggy, liquor erased memories of the night before slowly crept their way back into my head; Sabrina packing up the rest of her belongings and a few of mine while I sat quietly, figuring a few CDs and a couple of T-shirts were a small price to pay for freedom. Sabrina's parting words: Blah, blah, blah, fuck you, blah, blah, blah, I love you, blah, blah, blah, don't ever speak to me again, blah, blah, and everyone is expecting you to be in my wedding so you're going, blah, blah. My replies: Sorry, I know, okay, I don't think that's a good idea, the neighbors can hear you, okay fine but I'm not wearing some stupid poufy, teal dress. Then she left.

I remembered sinking into the couch as I realized the person with whom I'd spent nearly every waking minute of the last 3 years, had just walked out of my life. Sabrina was my first girlfriend, my first real love, and there were times I thought we'd be together forever. But now

she was gone and the life we had been living was over and... and I decided to celebrate.

I'd gone to the liquor store to pick up a bottle of champagne only to realize that I'd now be living alone, (as Kristi had moved out the semester prior with a basketball buddy, not the Someone Special), which meant I'd now be paying the bills alone and my champagne tastes would need to be replaced with my new Boone's Farm budget. And that's where my memory began to fade. I'm relatively sure I drank two bottles of Boone's Farm, ate an entire frozen pizza, stripped off my clothes, and made two naked laps around my house ending with a naked victory dance, before throwing up the pepperoni and the cheap, toxic, red liquid. This explained my current naked status, my nauseated stomach, my irritated throat, the dull throbbing in my head, and, after a glance in the mirror, my newly acquired red mustache.

Despite my earlier "do-nothing-all-day" proclamation, I threw on my favorite lounge wear; holey sweats, T-shirt, no bra, no underwear, and stripped the bed of its memory-scented sheets, deposited them in the washer, took three Tylenol, brushed my teeth, and washed my mustache. Twice. I decided I could live with a red lip and moved to the couch where my plan was to spend the rest of the day. After forty minutes of random channel flipping (because I could without protest and complaints), there was a knock at my door. I prayed it was the Chinese delivery guy with an order of egg rolls and shrimp fried rice. But since I hadn't actually called an order into Master Wong's and I doubted Master Wong had begun using psychics as order takers, I figured it was the eight-year-old neighbor girl who was going to come into buying some five-dollar candy bar or a twenty-dollar candle. Or it could be the Jehovah Witnesses, sending in their recon team after our last encounter. Not wanting to fork out cash or have a religion conversion so early in the day, I ignored the knock and resumed my channel flipping.

The knocking persisted, making me wonder how much those trapdoor into the alligator pit set-ups cost. It was obvious after five minutes of unrelenting pounding that my unwanted visitor was not going to be discouraged. Definitely the eight-year-old.

She so better be selling something edible or she's going to end up on the back of a milk carton. Mmmm, milk. Maybe she's selling Girl Scout cookies.

With the potential of a delectable box of Shortbread cookies or Peanut Butter Patties, I leapt to my feet. I opened the door looking for the four-foot-tall, green adorned sales leprechaun peddling boxes of cookies but instead was greeted by Stacy sporting a suitcase, a trash bag, and the beginnings of a black eye. This was sooo not going to be

as good as Girl Scout cookies. I watched as tears began to slide down the cheeks of my normally tough talking, somewhat spirited, and strong-willed teammate and childhood friend. I assumed or hoped this had to do more with the black eye versus seeing me in my current unwashed, red mustache, holey-clothes-wearing state.

“What the hell happened to you?”

Stacy moved past me and into my house. “We got in a fight and she hit me.”

And by “we” I could only assume she was talking about her girlfriend. “Okay?” I watched her drop her suitcase and trash bag in the middle of my living room. Still looking at Stacy, I began to shut the door only to have it met with resistance. I looked down at a tennis shoe. I looked up and it was attached to Sheila, Stacy’s kind, goofy, overly nice sidekick, whom I’d only recently met.

“Hey,” Sheila said, carrying her own armful of belongings.

I watched as Sheila too unloaded her things in the middle of my living room. I glanced out the door to see if any more baggage toting women were on my porch and if overnight someone had erected a sign in my yard advertising “Home for Wayward Lesbians.” Nothing. I closed the door and Stacy threw her arms around me.

“Sooo, what’s going on?”

“We got into a big fight. She found out about us,” Stacy said.

“Us?” I asked. “Exactly what did she find out? And how?”

I was curious because there wasn’t really an “us” or I hadn’t really thought there was an “us.” There was, for the last few years, a “Stacy flirting with me, but I was with Sabrina and I’d never done anything in return, ‘us’.” Well, not until last week when Sabrina and I officially ended our relationship for the third time and there was a moment on a softball trip that I might have felt vulnerable and Stacy might have slid her tongue down my throat, but I didn’t think that qualified as an “us.” *To do list tomorrow: Get a lesbian dictionary and see if making out was Lesbianese for relationship.*

“And she found out about us too,” Sheila said.

I looked at Sheila then back to Stacy for an explanation.

Not that I needed an explanation. I knew about Stacy and Sheila’s little college dorm affair their freshman year. I was looking for how all this information had come to light so early in the morning on my peaceful, do-nothing-all-day day.

“I told her,” Stacy volunteered.

“I know it’s Sunday, but I think you’re only required to confess your sins in a church and to a guy with a collar, sitting in a closet-like thing,” I informed her.

“Well, we were fighting and it all just came out. Then she hit me and kicked me out of the house.”

“She kicked me out too,” Sheila chimed in.

“So can we stay here?” Stacy asked, tears still sliding down her bruised cheek.

Ahhh, damn. “Sure,” I sighed, as the thought of living alone faded to a distant memory. “But, Sheila, you have to order some Chinese food and if the Jehovah Witnesses or a short blond girl shows up today you’re dealing with them. If the girl is wielding cookies, I want two boxes.” Sheila shrugged in compliance. *Maybe this wouldn’t be so bad?*

An hour later, Sheila was settled in the front bedroom, once occupied by Kristi, and Stacy was asking where the sheets to my bed were while settling into my bedroom, once occupied by Sabrina. So, I guess there’s no need for the lesbian dictionary.

With the foundation of a friendship and rivalry that began in elementary school, Stacy and I fell into a relationship easily. We’d known each other since I was in 6th grade, she in 5th. She’d grown up in a small neighboring town and we played together on a regional traveling softball team. During the summer, we were teammates and friends and during the school year we were rival schools and arch sport enemies. When she arrived at the same college, we ended up playing for the same team again. We quickly rekindled our summertime friendship, despite that when she arrived I was dating Sabrina. Sabrina had taken an instant dislike to Stacy and Stacy was still dating her high school girlfriend, who had taken an instant dislike to me. But now Sabrina was gone and after the girlfriend’s recent career change to boxer, Stacy and I had turned our friendship into a relationship.

Sheila and I became quick friends. Besides being sweet, fun, and just plain likable, she would order the pizza, answer the door for the very persuasive eight-year-old neighbor, and entertain the persistent Jehovah’s Witnesses, who after four visits in a one month period, I was now convinced were targeting my house because there was extra “Heaven credit” for converting lesbians.

My life was coming together quickly and adulthood snuck up on me. I acquired a new best friend-girlfriend, a new best friend whom I wasn’t sleeping with, and I graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice. My summer internship with the local sheriff’s department had turned into a full-time job as a deputy, and like every irresponsible person does with their first real paycheck, I spent it all on a boat. Stacy and I loved to water ski and Sheila loved to... try.

“Can I drive?” Sheila asked.

I flashed back a few months to the last time Sheila asked me this same question. We were visiting my mom and step-dad on our farm and we decided to dust off my old 70cc motorcycle. Stacy and I had both taken the motorcycle out for a couple of spins around the vast, unobstructed, and sprawling hillsides of the farm before Sheila asked if she could drive it. She'd gotten on it and drove exactly 50 feet, directly into the side of my mother's house (a small fact my mother doesn't let Sheila forget).

I quickly assessed the damage potential while looking around the lake. Nice open water with no boats, no houseboats, no houses close to the shore. I looked in the glove box for my insurance card and under the seat for the floatation devices. Check. No apparent and immediate dangers and unlike last time, I'd be seated two feet from her versus running two feet behind her yelling, "Brake! Brake!"

"Sure, why not?"

While Stacy was out in the water getting her ski on and into position, I gave Sheila a brief instruction on basic boat driving.

"Steer like you do in a car. Push this lever down to go faster and pull it back to go slower." Sheila nodded her head in understanding and I looked back at Stacy to see if she was ready.

Stacy looked and recognized I was in the passenger seat versus the driver's seat and began to give me hand and finger gestures that were not usually in the hand signal dictionary for water skiers.

I took that as a ready signal. "Hit it!"

And Sheila did. Full throttle. As I was being thrown to the back of the boat, I realized there was one hazard of letting Sheila drive that I failed to recognize: My girlfriend was going to kill me or at best never sleep with me again. When I righted myself from the floorboard in the back of the boat, I looked back at Stacy. Amazingly, and despite Sheila's over-enthusiastic acceleration, she'd gotten up with her arms still in their shoulder sockets. However, she was now frantically trying to hold on while flipping me off, giving me the slowdown signal, and attempting to put her bathing suit back in the usually preferred "covering your privates" position. Oh yeah, definitely never going to sleep with me again.

"Slow down!" I yelled at Sheila and she did, to nearly the speed of a paddleboat being powered by a one-legged eighty-seven-year-old. *Crap.* I watched Stacy's eyes go wide and then saw her frantically start gathering the excess rope over her head as she began to sink.

"Speed up, speed up!" I yelled again. And in a consistent and overly literal manner, Sheila did. I dove for the throttle before Stacy got yanked out of her ski, but I was too late. Not only did I watch Stacy get jerked forward from the force of Sheila's near stop to warp speed

acceleration, but I watched as Stacy's face and body went skipping across the water while her ski went flying in the air, followed by her legs, both going in different directions.

"She's down, she's down. Stop!" I instructed.

I looked back at Stacy only to see half a butt cheek sticking out of the water. *Oh damn. Yep, we're definitely never having sex again. Why couldn't Sheila have just hit a house boat? I have replacement insurance for that. I'm pretty sure my coverage doesn't include loss of copulation privileges. Which now, thinking about it, might be a good policy to have for the future. To do list tomorrow: Call State Farm.*

"So how'd I do?" Sheila asked. I again looked back at Stacy who was struggling to get upright.

"Oh, I think you'll know in a minute," I replied and watched Stacy's head surface while at the same time she began giving hand gestures that were definitely not associated with water skiing. *Well, at least I have life insurance.* "If by some miracle of God you survive and I don't today, make sure my mom knows I want to be cremated."

"What?" Sheila asked. Then she too turned to look at Stacy. "OH SHIT!"

"Exactly," I replied as we watched Stacy walk on water, more like stomp on water toward us. I briefly wondered if I was dating She-Jesus, but once she reached the boat and unleashed her cussword-filled scolding on both of us all thoughts of that dissolved.

After the better part of the rant was over I tried to expedite the conversation's end.

"Stacy, it's okay. You're okay. Sheila was just learning. She didn't mean to-"

"You get your happy ass out there and let me pull you around like a bat out of hell," she yelled.

I didn't think it would be a good time to correct her that my ass wasn't all that happy at the moment, after being chewed on for the last ten minutes. Nor did I think it was a good idea to point out that it wasn't likely bats could ski, considering that even if they could hold the rope with their freakishly small hands, their wings would cause them to have more of a parachute effect so maybe parasailing would be a better option over water skiing. Plus, with the rumored temperatures of Hell it was unlikely that there was any water, since it would all evaporate. I refrained from expanding on the bat-skiing theory because I didn't want to ruin the very slight chance of having sex with her again someday and by this time she had turned her attention back to Sheila, telling her some very interesting things she could do with her head and her ass, some of which were in combination with each other and some to be done individually.

It took a week, a cookout, and a case of beer for Stacy to forgive Sheila and me for the boating incident. And it wasn't because she wanted to forgive us or that we'd been the ones to throw the cookout or buy her the case of beer. It had taken those things for her to do something equal to, if not worse than, an almost drowning.

Stacy had gotten a summer job and after work one evening her company had a family and friends cookout for all the customers and staff. Since Sheila and I were still on "I hate you" probation, Stacy went alone. After a few hours of sulking and boredom, Sheila and I decided to meet up with some guys from work and have a few beers of our own. As we were leaving the house a car pulled up and a very drunk Stacy got out of the passenger seat.

"Where are you bitches going?" Stacy slurred.

"We were going to go have a couple of beers with the guys," I replied.

"Cool. Let's go. I need a couple more beers," she said with a drunken smile.

"You sure about that?" I asked as Sheila raced over just in time to catch Stacy from falling face first in the yard.

I got a glare in response. So, I have two options: Don't take her and prolong the "I hate you" probation or take her and take advantage of her drunken happy state.

"Put her in the car," I instructed. Sheila maneuvered her into the back seat of my car and we headed to the bar. "So you had a good time today?" I asked.

"Yep. I had like seven hotdogs. They were sooo goood."

"And you apparently washed them down with a couple of beers?"

"Yep, had seven of those too."

I parked and turned to see my girlfriend laid out in the back seat. "We're here, baby." I got a grunt as a reply. I looked at Sheila. "Maybe this wasn't a good idea."

"We should probably take her home," Sheila suggested.

I glanced back. Stacy was snoring. "Or we could leave her in the car, lock it, have a beer, then come back out and check on her?"

"There is that option."

Ten minutes later, I returned to the car, like a good girlfriend, and checked on her. Still snoring. *She'll never know if I have just one more beer.*

I went back inside. Two beers, an hour, and just a small bit of guilt later, we decided we better head home. As I reached the car I saw Stacy sitting up and in a feverish fight with her shirt. I sprinted the last twenty yards to the car and unlocked it just in time to catch Stacy's shirt as she threw it out the door.

“What are you doing? You’re in the middle of the parking lot. Put your shirt back on!”

“Fuck you. I’m hot.”

Okay, so we’re not out of the “I hate you” phase yet. “Come on, let’s get your shirt on then I’ll turn on the air conditioner.”

“I don’t feel good,” she said as she hunched over then turned onto her side.

I registered the pre-puke signs a second too late. I reached out to catch her head in an effort to keep it from hitting the side of the car and to strategically guide it out of my car to avoid her vomiting on my floorboard. But instead of catching her head, my hands arrived at the perfect time to catch her puke. I retracted them as quickly as I had offered them only to watch as hotdog chunks slid through my fingertips to the pavement and the tops of my shoes. Well, that just crushed my childhood wish of wanting to be an Oscar Meyer wiener and I was so never going to be able to sing that song again.

Lying in bed later, Stacy leaned over. “You forgive me for puking in your car and your hands?”

“You forgive me for letting Sheila almost drown you?”

“Yes.”

“Then, yeah, I forgive you.”

“You want to have make-up sex?” she asked with a smile.

I kissed her then pulled back quickly.

“Wait. Did you brush your teeth and gargle?”

She hit me in playful response. “Yes, stupid.” Then kissed me hard, only to pull back herself a few seconds later. “Did you wash your hands?”

“Like fifty times.”

After a year of duty at the sheriff’s department, I’d worked hard and proven myself. And as there were no other female deputies, they began training me in investigations. Two years into adulthood, I had a girlfriend, a job, and a roommate-servant who orders the pizza, answers the door, and actually likes to mow the lawn... So I decided to buy a house. Also in that time frame, in an effort to even out the testosterone with some estrogen, and because Stacy, Sheila, and Alexis asked me to, I got all three of them jobs at the sheriff’s department. Stacy and Sheila started in dispatch and Alexis started in the jail.

Things were good until the demands of the detective job began to intrude on the fun we were having. I was on call a lot, limiting my lake and fun time. I was being called out in the middle of the night to respond to rapes, suicides, homicides, and tractor thefts. I loved every minute of it. I was young, I was a detective, and I was breaking down doors of drug dealers, solving crimes, and arresting the bad guys. I was

living out my childhood dream of being the Lone Ranger, except for the small detail of not having a horse, a mask, or a Native American sidekick. But I was fighting crime and I would every once in a while yell out "Hi-Yo, Silver!" as I jumped in my piece of crap unmarked 1980 silver Crown Vic.

Stacy, however, did not love it. She wanted me to stay in bed with her when the 2:00 a.m. phone calls came. She didn't like it when I was on a case working 12+ hours for days at a time and she didn't like me putting myself in danger. But despite her protests, I'd jump out of bed, kiss her on the forehead, and say "I gotta go" as I grabbed my pants, a shirt, my badge, my gun, my jacket that had "Detective" written across the back in big reflective letters, and run out the door to go save the world. Or a four-wheeler.

"What do we have?" I asked as I walked up to the deputies who were standing around the bed of a beat-up old Ford truck with a four-wheeler that was halfway in or halfway out, depending on whether you're an optimist or a pessimist.

"Well, we haven't really taken a statement from the victim yet," Deputy Hines said.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Well, he was sort of naked when we arrived. It took us a minute to get him calmed down and to get some clothes on him," Deputy Hines said, smirking and pointing in the direction of the house. "Deputy Thomas is talking to him now."

I turned in the direction Deputy Hines was indicating and under the porch light I could see the side view of Deputy Thomas talking to the victim. I assumed this was the victim because other than the baggy overalls and pair of work boots, the guy might as well have still been naked. Every time he raised his arms in animated gestures I could see the side of his man boobs, the side of his bare belly, and the side of his ass. Someone should really sue the overalls company for false advertisement because they definitely weren't over all of his "alls." I looked at Deputy Hines then walked toward Deputy Thomas and "Farmer Free-for-all-to-see." I strategically positioned myself directly in front of him to limit the visual assault of seeing his grey hair sticking out the sides, the back, and the top of his overalls.

Apparently, he whose name I came to know as Ed, was sleeping when he heard his four-wheeler start-up outside his window. He'd grabbed his shotgun and ran outside to find a guy trying to steal the four-wheeler out of the back of his truck. He said he'd fired a "warning" shot and the guy ran off. I looked back over toward the four-wheeler where I'd spotted blood when I first walked up. *A very close warning shot.*

“Okay, guys. Let’s spread out and look for a bleeding guy,” I instructed.

“He ran toward my barn,” Ed added.

“Okay. Let’s start with the barn.”

“I think he might have had a gun,” Ed continued.

“Okay. So let’s CAREFULLY start with the barn.”

“Yeah. Let’s get this sons-a-bitch,” Ed yelled from behind me.

I stopped quickly and turned to inform him that HE would be returning to his house while WE searched for the “sons-a-bitch” but halted as I got another and more all-inclusive view of Exhibitionist Ed, who was leaning over to lace up his boots. In matching fashion to his chest, shoulders, armpits, and back, Ed was gray everywhere and *ughhh*, Holy Pop Goes the Weasel, he was gray *there* too. I turned back quickly and considered gouging my eyes out but refrained, figuring they would come in handy while searching for the possibly wounded, possibly armed, middle of the night four-wheeler thief in the very dark, spooky, and probably creaky old barn.

“You’re staying here! And PUT ON SOME UNDERWEAR FOR GOD’S SAKE!” I ordered Ed from over my shoulder. By this time, I was wondering if the wannabe thief actually ran because of the warning shot or because he got the whole unobstructed view of Ed.

“The hell I am!” he said as he racked a shell into the chamber of his gun.

I halted again, curious as to whether he was protesting staying behind or putting on underwear. It didn’t really matter since both protests could be equally detrimental. If I let him go, I risked a civilian getting shot in the middle of a police matter and if I let him go without underwear, I risked shooting myself in the middle of a police matter. I quickly glimpsed the completely dark, horror-film like barn.

However, I was thinking, I’m the only girl here and in the horror movies it’s always the chick that gets killed first. So maybe I could let Ed go underwear-less into the horror-film barn with some deputies for protection. He’d scare out the bad guy while I wait outside. I’ll grab the perp when he runs out, effectively avoiding the horror-film barn and Ed’s side show. Plus, it is his barn and he does have the much bigger... gun.

“Lead the way, Ed.” I said.

Three hours later, I walked into the sheriff’s department empty-handed, coated in fingerprint powder and cow shit. Ed and two of my deputies had gone through the barn’s maze of stalls, loft, and hay bailing equipment while I staged outside the barn. The only flaw to my grand plan was that the area surrounding the barn’s exit was the exact location where Ed fed his cows and apparently where said cows

immediately processed and disposed of said food. Which of course I subsequently stepped in, knelt in, and ultimately slipped in, causing me to fall on my ass in.

Alexis caught me outside my office, got a good whiff of me, stepped back two steps, and then asked if she could ask me for a favor.

“Clean the cow shit off my shoes and you can have anything you want,” I replied.

She glanced down at my shit-caked shoes.

“Huh, yeah, never mind,” she said, taking another step back.

“Okay, fine. What’s up?” I asked.

“You think I can stay at your house for a few days? It’s getting pretty bad between Claire and me. We broke up last night.”

Claire was the girl Alexis began dating after she and Whitney broke up. Claire was another tall, attractive blonde, but with an artistic flare. I liked her a lot and was sorry that things weren’t working out between them. Several times Alexis had said they were having problems but I didn’t know it had gotten to a breaking point. After the proper “what happened, are you okay?” questions and concerns, Alexis and I made arrangements to meet at my house after work to talk more and to let her stay if she needed to. She needed to, so we let her stay in “Stacy’s room;” the room which Stacy occupies only when parents or grandparents are in town or after I eat Indian food.

The next day, my mom called to advise me that my grandmother had injured her arm and was having trouble doing things around the house. I immediately offered to go and stay for a while to help. I came home later that night and told Stacy. She understood my grandma needed me but was upset that I’d be three states away. I asked if she wanted to come with me but she couldn’t get the time off work on such short notice. The following day Stacy drove me to the airport. For the entire ride, while we waited for my flight to be called, and up until the time I had to board she held on to me, tearfully begging me not to go, but knowing I needed to. I smiled and pulled her close. I felt loved, needed, and wanted. I kissed her.

“I’ll be back before you know it. It’s only five days.”

“I don’t want you to go,” she sniffled as more tears slid down her cheeks.

“I have to.”

“I know, but what if your plane crashes... I wouldn’t know what to do if your plane crashed.”

I laughed. “My plane is not going to crash.”

“You don’t know that for sure. It happens all the time.”

I pulled her close. "It doesn't happen all the time. And I promise I'll keep my tray up and my seat back in an upright position the whole time, just in case. I'll call you when I get there. I'll call you every day."

"Three times a day."

"Okay, three times a day. I love you. I have to go. I'll see you right here in this same spot Friday morning."

"I love you too. Call me the second you land so I know you didn't crash."

"Okay." I kissed her one more time then went toward the gate. I turned before walking down the jetway and caught one last glance of her waving good-bye with tears still streaming down both cheeks. My heart hurt. *How did I get so lucky?* I smiled as I turned to board the plane.

As promised, I found a phone after I landed and called Stacy. I assured her I hadn't crashed and that I loved and missed her. With tears still prevalent in her voice, she told me the same.

"Call me back before you go to bed," she threw in before I hung up.

"I will, promise. I love you," I replied.

"I love you too."

The second day came and went and I made my required call-ins. My heart ached as I listened to her sniff into the phone after telling me she missed me for the hundredth time. I did my best to reassure her that I'd be back in a very short three days.

On the third day, I got up, helped grandma and grandpa around the kitchen, and then snuck off to make my girlfriend call. No answer. *Interesting.* Maybe she was called into work early. That evening, I made another call.

Stacy answered after the fifth ring. "Oh, hey. How's it going?"

"It's good. Grandma is doing a lot better. I miss you," I said, knowing I needed to give my sensitive girl some attention.

"I miss you too. I'm kind of in the middle of something. Can you call back a little later? Or, I can just talk to you in the morning."

"Sure. What are you doing?"

"Umm, nothing. I'll talk to you tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay. I love you."

"Yeah... Love you too." And she was gone.

I stared at the phone. Okay. Apparently, she's adjusting to me being gone. *Maybe she's busy... planning me a welcome home party. That's silly, I've only been gone for three days. She's probably just cleaning the house or mowing the lawn or painting the bedroom like we've been wanting to do, just to surprise me when I get home. She's so sweet.*

I called the next morning, now just a little eager myself to talk to my girlfriend. No answer. Okay, no big deal. She probably started a morning aerobics class or maybe she decided to take the breakfast shift for Meals on Wheels; she does like the elderly. I waited an hour and called again. No answer. I called every hour on the hour. No answer, no answer, no answer. What was I thinking? She probably got called into the sheriff's department. Since I had gotten her the dispatcher job only a couple of months ago, she was the low man on the totem pole, which meant someone probably called off and they called her in. I called the sheriff's department and got Christen.

"Stacy working with you today?" I asked her.

"No. I haven't seen her all day. I don't think she works until the day after next."

I waited another few hours and called the house again. Sheila picked up. "Sheila, what's going on? Where's Stacy?" I asked, equally concerned and irritated.

"Umm. I don't know."

"Sheila, what's going on?"

"I don't know. I'm staying out of it."

"Staying out of what?"

"Nothing, nothing, or something. I don't know. Please don't drag me into the middle of this."

"I'm not dragging anyone into the middle of anything. I just want to know why four days ago my girlfriend was crying and didn't want me to get on a plane but now she doesn't care if she talks to me or not."

"I'm sorry. You need to talk to her. She and Alexis should be home soon."

She and Alexis. Instantly, my world slid out from beneath me.

"You okay?" I heard Sheila say from what sounded like a million miles away. I stared at the phone.

"No," I replied dully. *She and Alexis.* I hung up. I spent a sleepless night wondering how I could've been so stupid to leave my Stacy and Alexis in the same house together. Everyone knows you can't leave two lesbians alone in the same room, or the same car, let alone in the same house.

I flew home the next morning. When I got off the plane I looked around the same waiting area where only five days before had been the big dramatic scene of kisses, hugs, a long good-bye, and lots of tears. There was no one.

Apparently, sleeping with my friend cures one's fears of planes crashing.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Of someone else...