

The Unlikely Visitor

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Fiction By AZOutback

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A Guide to the Characters

Ron Merlot: Owner and operator of AZOutback Consulting, a computer and network services company. Ron builds and installs computer networks and systems for BDSM Suppliers in the Phoenix and Las Vegas markets. Ron also builds an occasional website on the side.

Laura Merlot: Ron's older sister and business partner. Laura lives on the eastern outskirts of Las Vegas. Her job is to insure the computers talk to each other and the main server. When it comes to hardware she is clueless, she wouldn't know a USB Port from a ZIP Disk. Gets quite sexually crazy when drunk.

Martina Frosh: Ron's first wife. Martina is a couple French Fries short of Happy Meal but has a killer body, which she devotes all of her free time to maintaining. Of course that is when she is not having a wild night out with her girl friends at the local clubs.

Sara Rae: Ron's current wife. Sara was the former maid/salve for the Merlot's until Martina's Unlikely Affair with Ron's sister.

Maya Rae: Sara's younger *big* sister. Used to live in Frisco, Texas. She moved in with the Merlot's while she works on getting her Masters

Marc Frosh: Ron's best friend and Martina's boss and now husband. Conciser Manager for a local resort near the Merlot's and has very close circle of clients. Marc can get you a good deal on almost everything, as he always "knows someone, who knows someone" or else they owe him a favor.

Gary Zinfandel: Ron's best client and owner of ACME BDSM. Based out of Las Vegas, but with a "satellite office" in Phoenix, ACME BDSM specializes in high quality, custom-made bondage supplies and equipment at low price and fast. He has built and provided equipment and "toys" for both Ron and Laura's playrooms. Gary also has a close circle of clients in the BDSM community and is constantly giving Ron new client referrals.

Bunny Zinfandel-Gris: Gary's wife, a craftswoman of custom-made leather body harnesses. They met at a convention in Henderson a few years back.

Bambi Gris: Bunny's sister and business partner. While she does make some of the harnesses herself, Bambi is more a model than a craftswoman.

Andy McGrawl: Former owner of a chain of computer stores in the Tucson metro area, recently opened stores in Fountain Hills and North Scottsdale.

Lindsay McGrawl-Sauvignon: Andy's bi-sexual wife. Model/sales associated Budget Holstein North.

Jed Rae: Sara & Maya's father.

Tess Rae-Whitewater: Jed's wife.

Anna Adela aka 'Peaches': Whitewater Ranch caretaker.

Linda Holstein: Owner of Budget Holstein Leather Works, better known as Budget Holstein and co-owner of Corona de las Estrella's. She was Ron & Laura's very first client, specializing in leather S&M outfits, shoes and specialty items such as high end corsets and lingerie.

Olivia Esmeraldes – Kayré's best friend from high school and co-owner of Corona de las Estrella's.

Kayré Holstein: Linda's daughter and business partner.

Kacie: Kayré's girl-friend

The Unlikely Visitor is the next part of *The Unlikely Stories* series by AZOutback and picks up where *the Unlikely Holidays* ended. The Merlot Family is winding down from *The Holidays*, little would they know the New Year would bring an Unlikely Visitor to the Merlot's Manson. A man with a mysterious past, loved by some hated by others, but with a business proposal that is so good no one, even Ron's sister can refuse.

Chapter 1: A Man With A Mysterious Past

Things had slowed down once again with the completion of the Corona de las Estrella's job. It was a lazy Sunday afternoon a couple weeks into the New Year and I had been falling asleep reading various news feeds about Microsoft's next great version of Windows dubbed *Windows Blue*. I was suddenly awakened with Wynn announcing, "Dinner is served!" over the intercom.

Wynn had made her spicy Meatloaf, a favorite of all us. We were just making small talk when Lindsay asked, "Ron, y'all have anything planned in the coming weeks?"

I looked up from my Meatloaf and replied, "Nothing really. I think Maya is going to be going back to school soon but otherwise nothing. Why?"

Andy replied, "Well, we may be getting ready to make an offer on a site for the Rio Verde store. We were going to wait until mid-spring to open though. We would need to hire a sales manager. Kinda wish Dunn hadn't accepted the offer in Wyoming he was most the qualified and would have been great for Fountain Hills. However, Zina has done really well and am glad to have her. Both stores are doing so well so can't complain."

Lindsay added, "Even Fountain Hills is doing really well too. Of course it helps that we are closer and able to take care of any issues before they get out-of-hand."

I commented, "That's good, we don't see another Glen Campbell incident again!"

Andy concurred, "Oh heck no. Anyway it is just a thought, still not sure if we are going to do anything yet."

After dinner I was helping Wynn with the dishes when Maya approached and asked nervously, "Ron can I see you in your office? I need to talk to you about something."

I turned to Wynn who told me, "Go ahead, I am almost done here."

Maya and I headed to my office where she sat down on a nearby sofa. She was extremely nervous, "I know I may not show it, but I really do appreciate you and Sara allowing me to stay here. I kinda know we had an agreement, but...um..."

I was a little puzzled as I don't recall us having any type of a formal or even verbal agreement, "Maya? I am a little unclear as to this 'agreement' you speak of."

Maya doing her best to keep calm, "Well, if I were...um...to go to school, I could stay here and use the Hummer."

Well, that was news to me, "Hmm, okay. I guess so. I mean you are welcome to stay here regardless, you're family after all. The Hummer is yours as far as I am concerned."

Maya was still a bit uneasy, "But I don't want to seem like...I'm...well..."

Not that I was angry with her but I did raise my voice a bit, "Maya, will ya just say what y'all have to say!"

She was a little startled by my request but she replied, "Okay here goes, I want to take this semester off."

I laughed, "That's all?"

Maya looked at me blankly, "What do you mean 'that's all'?"

I told her, "Exactly. Hey that is fine. Hell, I know the University is not easy. I spent two very intense years in the ASU Business Program as an undergrad. I know it can be tough and that was just for my Bachelors. I can't even begin to imagine what the Graduate Program must be like. I know you spent a lot of time last semester involved with the program..."

Sara knocked on my office door and I motioned her to come in, "Hey just wanted to let you know Lindsay and I are going to go take in a movie. Andy has something he needs to do with Gary at the ACME Deer Valley office."

I told Sara, "Okay have fun, call if you are going to be late." Sara left closing the door behind her. Turning my attention back to her sister, "Maya, as I said before you are family and will always be welcomed here. If you want to take the semester off, go for it. I am sure there will be plenty for you to do between my work and *The Budget Holstein*, not to mention Vinnie's. You are still going to be working for Vinnie's aren't you?"

Maya replied, "Yes, I still do nights at Vinnie's, it is the only way I can afford to pay for the Hummer's gas. Besides Diane and Drew would be lost without me. I suppose you are right, there will be plenty for me to do."

Back in the kitchen Wynn has just finished up with the dishes when the house line rang. She answered, "Merlot residents."

It was the gatehouse, "Yes, we have Jed Rae here to see Ron Merlot."

Wynn thinking it was one my clients and not really paying attention to the last name replied, "Okay, send him through." After she got off the phone she paged me on the intercom, "Ron, were you expecting a client tonight?"

I checked my schedule in Thunderbird and told Wynn, "On a Sunday? Not that I am aware of, why?"

Wynn told me, "Well, the gatehouse called and said a Jed Rae is here to see you."

While the name meant nothing to me at that time, I saw a look of surprise on Maya's face as she turned ghostly white and asked, "Wynn, did you say Jed Rae?"

Wynn confirmed, "Yes, ma'am do you know him?"

Maya replied nervously, "Yes...Yes I do. He's my father."

I thought back to the wedding and sorta recall being introduced to him, "Wasn't he at the wedding?"

Maya told me, "Yes he was, but he took off during the reception. Which really didn't surprise me as much as him showing up. Wonder why he is here?"

I wondered the same thing, "Good question. Of course I am wondering why he wants to see me."

We made our way to The Great Room when the doorbell rang. Wynn answered the door to see a tall stranger dressed in worn jeans, flannel shirt cowboy hat and boots, "May I help you?"

Jed looked up at Wynn, "I hope so, this Ron Merlot's residence correct?"

Wynn replied, "Yes, come on in. Shall I take your hat?"

Jed walked in and handed his hat to Wynn who set it on its top upon the hall table. She led him to the Great Room. Jed greeted me with a firm handshake, "Hello Ron, good to see you again." He turned his attention to Maya with a hug, "Wow Maya, you look really good."

Maya blushed, "Thanks. Um you do to..."

Jed laughed, "Well, I made a few changes in my life. Hey, where's your sister?"

I explained, "Sara's out with Lindsay at a movie. I am not sure when they are going to be back. Come, sit down."

Wynn asked, "Shall I bring some cheese and crackers?"

Maya and I looked over at Jed who replied, "Yes please, bit famished from the trip."

Maya asked, "I don't mean to be forward, but what the hell you doing in Arizona and for that matter here?"

I was a little surprised by Maya's treatment of her father, but then I really didn't know anything about him or their relationship. Jed replied calmly, "Ah, I see you are still a bit bitter."

Maya almost angry, "I have a right to be. You weren't exactly a model father, especially after our mother's death..."

Jed tried to get a word in, "...Maya..."

Maya was almost in tears now, "...I am not done with you yet! You dare to show up to my sister's wedding, walk her down the aisle then disappear during the reception. What was it, needed to get to the bars before they closed? I don't even know why I am talking to you..." She was in tears now. Wynn had returned with some wine along with cheese and crackers plus a box of tissues for Maya.

Jed looked up at Wynn, "Oh sorry dear, I should have mentioned I don't drink wine. If you have some coffee that would be great if it is not too much trouble."

Wynn replied, "Yes we do and no it is not a problem." She made her way back to the kitchen.

Maya was a little calmer and asked a bit surprised, "Since when do you turn down wine?"

Jed answered, "Since about this time last year. I almost got myself killed driving home from a bar. Police found me pretty badly banged up several hours after I had drifted into a snow bank then plowed into a tree. The DA cut me deal, if I checked myself into rehab and stayed sober I wouldn't face any jail time, just fines and community service. It was that point I decided I needed to clean up my life..."

My cell phone rang, I looked at the caller ID and announced, "It's Sara."

Jed asked, "Don't tell her I am here, I want it to be a surprise."

I nodded and answered, "Hey Sara, what's up?"

Sara told me, "We are going to catch the last movie here as Gary and Andy are going to be a while. Should be home a little before midnight."

I confirmed, "A little before midnight, okay."

Maya had finally calmed down, "Oh my god. I am so sorry. So that's what is different about you, you're sober!"

Jed laughed, "Yep, odd ain't it. So sorry about the wedding I really wanted to stay but it was a difficult time for me. Seeing Sara all dolled up, she looked just like Lydia on our wedding day many, many years ago."

I inquired, "I'm going out on a limb here, but was Lydia the girls' mother?"

Jed replied almost in tears, "Yes, she was. God I miss her but I am doing better..." We were interrupted by an unknown cell phone beeping. Jed pulled out a very small phone from his shirt pocket, "Hmm...earlier than I was expecting."

Um, I need a bit of a favor."

I asked, "Sure, what do you need."

Jed replied, "I need someone to take me over to Deer Valley Airport, Tess's flight came in a bit earlier than I expected."

Maya looked at Jed and asked, "Who's Tess?"

Jed smiled awkwardly, "She's um...well....um she is my wife."

Chapter 2: The Man Named Jed and Surprise!

Maya was dumbfounded, "Wife! Dad I am so happy for you. How did you meet? When did you get married? Why didn't you say anything?"

Jed laughed nervously, "You were always full of questions, weren't you. We can talk on the way to the airport. Oh and one more thing...we are going to need a hotel."

I wasn't going to say anything as I didn't want to upset Maya. Maya turned to me and I was expecting her to ask me to call Marc or The Boulders, but instead she asked, "Okay if they stay in the Queen Suite?"

I told her, "That is fine with me if it is okay with you and Sara."

As we walked downstairs she explained, "Sara won't mind, she's usually much more forgiving than I am." She turned to Jed and explained, "You and Tess can stay here we have a guest suite we can put you in."

Wynn heard us and yelled down the stairs, "I'll get the Queen Suite prepped."

Maya yelled back up, "Thanks Wynn!"

I wasn't sure who was going to be driving or which vehicle we were going to take. Out of habit Maya went into her garage to the Hummer. Jed looked at the Hummer then Maya and joked, "I thought red was your color, or did this fade in the Arizona sun?"

Maya laughed, "Very funny dad! Red is still my color, this use to belong to Martina, Ron's ex-wife."

Jed replied, "Ah yes, the Lady in Pink, that make much sense now. Anyway, to answer your questions about Tess. We met at widows counseling and hit it off right-away. We helped each other out through our tough times. We got married right after your sister and Ron did. She couldn't make it out the wedding and I

was going to say something then, but again when I saw Sara..." I swear he wiped a tear from his eye as he continued, "...any way um....we got married right before Christmas."

I had to ask, "Now Jed, what brings you and Tess out to Arizona?"

Jed knew me well, "Well I suppose just telling you that I am here to see my daughters won't get past you."

Man he was good! I replied with a simple, "Nope."

Jed laughed, "Simple and to the point, I like that. What tipped you off?"

Maya was confused, "What do you mean dad?"

I replied, "He means, what makes me think he is here for something else? Well, let's see...the fact that when he arrived he asked for me by name both at the gatehouse and at the front door."

Jed was impressed, "Good point. Well, I won't go into full details but it does involve Ron and his AZOutback Crew. You are still partnering with the McGrawl's, correct?"

I told him, "Yep, in fact they are staying with us while their house is being built."

Jed was excited, "Good, this is working out better than I planned. How about that sister of your's, Laura?"

I replied, "Yep, she still does work for me from time to time. Kinda hard since she is in Henderson."

Maya was curious, "How did you know about Ron and his AZOutback Crew?"

Jed reply was simple, "Jason."

Maya confused, "Jason?"

Jed laughed, "Yep, his last name is the same as his first."

I asked, "I believe he means Jason Jason, from Boots over in Frisco, TX."

Jed replied, "Yep, that be the one. A very good friend of mine. Spoke very highly of you and the AZOutback Crew."

I suddenly remembered, "Funny, I got an email from him a couple weeks before Christmas asking about referrals out of our normal market area."

Jed continued, "I ain't going to say much more about this until we've all had a chance to sit down together. Of course I know Laura cain't join us."

I explained, "I can always get her on conference call in my office, but would have to wait until morning for that."

Jed told us, "That would be fine."

We arrived at Deer Valley Airport and Jed informed us, "Okay she is arriving on Great Wyoming Charters flight 555."

A few minutes later Jed called out, "Tess over here!" An older Native American lady, very much resembling Cher with dark hair came over to us. Jed introduced us, "Tess, this is Ron Merlot, Sara's husband and Maya, my youngest daughter. This is my wife Tess."

Tess and I shook hands while her and Maya hugged, "Nice to meet you. Is Sara with you?"

I explained, "No she is out with The McGrawl's but should be home later this evening."

Tess commented, "Well I waited this long, I suppose I can wait until morning to meet my other daughter-in-law."

I told her, "That won't be necessary you and Jed will be staying with us."

Tess not wanting to intrude, "A hotel is fine with us, really."

Maya let her opinion be known, "You two are staying with us and that is final!"

Tess laughed and turned to Jed, "I see what you mean about her. How did it go when you first arrived."

Jed replied, "Well after she was done tearing me limb-for-limb, quite well."

Maya trying to defend herself, "I wasn't that tough on him."

Playing along with Jed, "Yes she was."

Maya looked at me and demanded, "Hey! Just who's side you on anyway?"

I calmly replied, "Who said anything about taking sides...but given your farther is approaching me with a business opportunity, it would be in *my* best interests to side with him." Maya was about to say something but I continued, "Which by the

way could help you out since you have decided to take next semester off."

Jed was surprised, "Maya, you went back to school? Good for you."

Maya explained, "Yes I started this past fall, I am working on my Masters."

Tess commented, "Wow that is a tough route to go."

The skycap came into the terminal with Tess's bags and asked, "If you like, I can take these right to your car." I told him to follow me out the Hummer. Tess saw the Hummer but before she asked I told her, "It use to belong to my ex-wife. Pink was Martina's favorite color. She gave it to me as part of the divorce settlement. I gave it to Maya so she could use it for her job at Vinnie's."

Tess asked, "What's Vinnie's?"

Maya explained, "It is the pizza parlor I work for. I do delivers within the community. It pays for the gas and other things."

The skycap loaded all of Tess's bag into the Hummer and I tipped him \$20. We were just exiting the Pima Freeway onto Pima Highway when my cell phone rang. Again it was Sara, "Hey Sara what's up?"

Sara informed me, "The movie wasn't so hot, it didn't have much of a plot. Besides, Gary and Andy wrapped up early too. We should be leaving Desert Ridge in a few minutes. So see you when we get home."

I breathed a sigh of relief, "They are going to be leaving Desert Ridge shortly, should give us about 15 minutes or so. I am going to call Vinnie's and have them deliver over a few pies."

Given how late in the evening it was there was not much traffic on the Pima Highway we made good timing home. As we neared the exit to Desert Oasis Parkway, I called Wynn to let her know we were almost home and meet us down in the garage. As we turned on to Fairy Duster it was then that Jed noticed the McGrawl's house, "Say wasn't that where you had the wedding?"

Tess looked and asked, "Where?"

I pointed to the McGrawl's house, "Where that house is being built. We had the wedding on that plot of land. That is the house the McGrawl's are having built."

We pulled into the garage and Wynn was waiting. As Wynn unloaded the Hummer I introduced her to Tess, "This is Wynn, our maid, chef as well as my business assistant. She took over for Sara after we got married. Wynn use to work for the McGrawl's."

Wynn replied, "Nice to meet you Tess. Now if you will kindly follow me, I'll show you up to your suite."

Jed went over and moved his truck to under the Porte Cochere behind the main gates and then retrieved his bags. He followed Wynn and Tess to their suite. I informed them, "Just leave your bags here and come downstairs. Sara and The McGrawl's are going to be back any minute and Drew will be by in about 10 minutes"

We headed down to the Great Room and talked a little bit. Sara and the McGrawl's came in through the kitchen. Andy was coming out of the kitchen and was asking, "Hey Ron, did you know there is truck with Wyoming plates parked under your Porte Cochere?"

As he walked into the Foyer I told him, "Yes." I noticed and Sara and Lindsay weren't with him, "Hey where the twins?"

Andy replied, "Oh they went straight upstairs to freshen up, they should be down shortly. I didn't realize you had company."

I told Andy, "Come, I like you to meet Jed Rae and his wife Tess."

Andy didn't catch the name at first, "Pleasure mister and misses Rae. Hey isn't that the girls' maiden name?"

Jed replied, "I'm their father, you may have saw me at the wedding."

Andy thought for a second, "Okay I knew you looked familiar."

The doorbell rang and Maya got up, "That should be Drew."

She answered the door and the door and was greeted by Drew, "Hello Maya. Wow, it's been a while since I've been here. Well, here you go, I need to get back Diane is waiting on me. See ya."

Sara came down the stairs followed closely behind by Lindsay, "Was that Drew I just heard..." She froze in her tracks as she saw her father in the Foyer and was almost knocked down the stairs by Lindsay.

Lindsay complained, "Geez...Sara why did you just stop?"

Sara replied a bit angrily, "Um...sorry Lindsay...just a bit surprised."

Lindsay then noticed Jed and Tess in the Great Room and asked unknowingly, "Who are they?"

Sara explained, "Well, the guy in the flannel shirt is my father..."

Chapter 3: Reverse Deja Vogue and Okay So The Reason We Are Here...

Jed was about to introduce Tess, but Sara laid into him, "...who walked me down the aisle and just kept on walking. Who has the nerve to show up here with his 'girl of the week'. Hell, I surprised he isn't drunk!"

Much to everyone's surprise and for the first time ever Maya scolded her older sister, "SARA! Stop that, I've already given him the third degree AND forgave him."

Sara unnerved by her sister yelled back, "You may have, but I haven't. This is personal! Especially after what he did at MY wedding day. Hell, he might as well not even showed up..."

Lindsay slowly backed up a few stairs and sat down a bit shocked as to what was going on, almost a reverse deja vogue from that famous 'Glen Campbell' night a few months back. Seeing this I tried to gain control of the situation, "Sara, your father came all this way..."

Sara stubbornness got the best of her and she was determine to win this fight, "Shut up Ron, him being here doesn't involve you."

Both Maya and I replied at the same time, "Yes it does."

Sara stood there stunned and in tears. She sat down on the stairs, Lindsay got up and came down and sat next to her holding her hand, trying her best to calm Sara down, which was a complete role reversal for her.

Andy broke the silence, "Talk about reverse Deja Vogue!"

I replied without even looking at him, "Tell me about it."

Jed did not approach Sara, but simply and calmly replied, "I was expecting some hostility from your sister and I guess I should have expect some from you. Somehow I thought you would be more forgiving, but I understand what I did hurt you. For that I am so sorry. If I may explain why?"

Sara in a sarcastic manner, "Oh this I've got hear."

Maya coming to her father's defense and nearly in tears, "Sara, give him chance he makes a very valid point. Will you please for me?"

Sara still determined not to back down, but gave into her sister momentarily,

"Okay fine."

Jed continued, "First off Sara, I've been sober for nearly a year now. I almost got myself killed this time last year. Long story short I was given a choice, check myself into rehab or go to jail for many, many years. It was then I knew I had to change my life around. Your mother's death was not easy on me and I know it wasn't for the either of you. About the wedding, seeing you all dolled was more than I could handle. I couldn't stay, I didn't want you to see me in the condition I was in. It was your day after all and I didn't want to spoil it for you."

Sara still stubborn but a bit confused, "Well you did and I don't understand why."

Jed explained, "Sara, may be you don't realize it, but that day you looked so much like your mother on our wedding day. I'm so sorry."

Sara was starting to cave-in and yet still putting up a fight, "Oh now you drag our mother into this!"

We all looked at Sara then Jed who replied, "What is that suppose to mean?"

Sara still very angry, "After she died you never spoke of her and for that matter never told us what happened to her."

Maya was trying to get control of the situation, "Sara! I don't think we should be talking about this."

Sara replied, "Stay out of this...it is between our father and me now."

Jed explained, "I suppose I should have told you before. She went to a New Years Eve party over in Rockhill. She apparently had way too much to drink, was wasted so a taxi was dispatched. She collapsed and expired before the taxi even arrived. The police investigated and determine her death was caused by interaction of her medication and all the alcohol she had drank that night. I should have told y'all this all a long time ago."

Well, that certainly filled in a lot of blanks, but only seemed to anger Sara more, "All these years you refuse to talk about her, but tonight you show up with this bimbo and now you let it all out!"

Again Maya scolded her sister, "SARA! How dare you. Show some respect for the lady for crying out loud!"

Lindsay was in about as much shock as was Sara, "Who the heck is that and what has she done with your sister?"

Jed asked, "May I introduce you two?"

Sara still fighting, "I suppose so...."

Jed continued, "Tess, this is Sara my eldest and sometimes stubborn daughter. Sara this is Tess, my um wife."

Sara turned very red, "Oh shit! I'm sorry Tess, I didn't mean to..."

Tess sat down next to Sara and put her arm around her, "It's alright dear, I understand. Your father and I were very much alike when we met in rehab. I guess you could say it was like seeing ourselves in a mirror, except the mirror was the other person. Your father has worked very, very hard to get his life back in order. He has come a long way in the past year, albeit one step at a time. He wanted me to come with him to your wedding, but I thought it would be best if he didn't. May be that wasn't my best choice, may be it would have made things a little easier on him or may be not. I am not here to replace your mother, that is something I will never be able to do. But what I can do is provide support and love to your father and to both you and Maya."

Maya suggested, "Sara may be you will feel a little better once you have pizza."

Sara finally gave in, "Your right, let's eat." She asked Jed, "You really think I looked like our mother?"

Jed with his trademarked one word answers, "Yep." Then he laughed, "Well, except for the chains part, that was a bit odd."

Sara laughed, "Well, you just gotta kinda understand our lifestyle."

Jed replied, "I kinda do now."

Sara didn't really pay much attention to his answer she was more curious as to why he was here. She asked, "Okay, now I am curious why are you really here? Especially since *both* Ron and Maya are defending you."

Jed explained, "I was referred to Ron and the AZOutback Crew by a very good friend of mine."

Sara was racking her brain, "Gary?"

Jed replied, "Nope, not Gary. I'll give you a clue, think about when you were reunited with Maya."

Sara was trying to comprehend her father's clue, "When I was reunited with Maya? I was in Oro Valley with Ron when I talked to her. Then we met up in Frisco on the way to The Boots' Job..." The light bulb came on, "Jason Jason?"

Jed was impressed, "Yes, very good. Like I said he has been very good friend of mine. I called him when I had my accident and he was the one who made me realize the deal the Police Chief and the DA were giving me was good. It was either rehab or jail. He came out to Wyoming to see me after I was finished with rehab which was right before Ron and The AZOutback Crew started his job. He offered me stake in the business said he was looking to expand. We spent the next couple months looking for a location we could build. Little did we know that Tess's folks owned a couple dozen acres of land out in Chugwater. They gave us the 4000 square foot Ranch and Guest Houses for our wedding. They wanted to get something smaller and closer to town in Cheyenne."

I was curious, "So have you started build yet?"

Tess explained, "We broke ground the day after our wedding! Then headed up to Caspar the next day for a mini-honeymoon."

Jed continued, "We've gone a prefabricated route so the structure itself is already done. What we have currently is a giant shell split into three sections."

I took a shot in the dark, "Let me guess, warehouse, production and sales?"

Jed laughed, "Yep, much like Jason's place. They are suppose to start the internal framing this week and should be done by the end of the week. From that point we have 30-days to make any adjustments before they come in and do the final wall boarding."

Andy asked, "Curious, how big is this place compared to the one in Frisco?"

Jed explained, "It is about 2/3 the size of Jason's building in Frisco. In case you wanted to know we need about 75 machines."

Andy one step ahead of me, "Give us a break-down if you could."

Tess replied, "Simple enough 25 for the warehouse conference rooms and offices, 20 for the sales floor and 30 in the production area."

I asked Andy, "Could we get a 75 systems built that quickly?"

Andy explained, "Kinda depends on what they will need. I imagine we could get away with economy systems in the warehouse/offices as well as the sales floor so that would knock out the first 45 machines. We can order those pre-built directly from our supplier and have them drop-shipped. The production area machines is what I am worried about." Turning his attention to Jed and Tess, "Do y'all know what kind of software you are going to be running on those?"

Tess started listing all the software they were going to need but Andy interrupted her, "Okay, good. Sorry, this is really all Greek to me...that is more Laura's department."

I asked, "Do you have all the software listed in say a Word file that I could send to my sister?"

Tess replied, "Yes, but not in a Word file. Ever heard of OpenOffice.org?"

I told her, "That would work fine."

She told me, "Okay well, I can get it for you tomorrow."

Since it was nearly midnight I suggested, "Yes that is a good idea. We can continue this discussion tomorrow. I'll try to get a hold of Laura and see what she can do."

The next morning after breakfast we all piled into my office. Jed and Tess could not get over the view from my office of The Thirsty Cactus Wash and the surrounding desert foothills. I had Tess transfer me the software list so I could put it in an email for Laura. I announced, "Okay I am about to get Minnie Pearle on the phone, so beware."

Tess asked, "Minnie Pearle?"

Maya laughed and told her, "You'll understand shortly."

I entered the speed dial for Laura and put it on speaker. After several rings I thought I was going to get her machine but Sophie answered, "Meyer's residences."

I asked, "Oh hey Sophie, Ron here. Is my sister around?"

Sophie replied, "Morning Ron! Yes sir, give her a moment."

A minute later Laura came on her with her famous greeting, "HOWDIE! RON!"

Turning the volume back up, I started out the conference call, "Morning Laura. I've got you on speaker as I have the AZOutback Crew here in the office along with a prescriptive new client." Turning to Jed and Tess, "Introduce yourselves please."

Jed replied, "Jed Rae."

Tess followed, "Tess Rae-Whitewater."

I continued, "They were referred to us by Jason Jason. Hemingway, they have a very similar project to Boots, but on a slightly smaller scale."

Laura asked, "What exactly do you mean by 'slight smaller scale'?"

Jed explained, "Our facility is about 2/3 the size of that of Jason's. Further we only will be requiring 75 systems."

Laura was intrigued, "Only 75? Hmm, okay interesting. What kind of software?"

I explained, "Tess has compiled a list, I just sent it to you via email. Andy has some questions for you."

Laura replied, "Okay, logging on to TBird. Go ahead Andy."

Chapter 4: The Anatomy of A Deluxe System

Andy presented his system requirements quandary, "Laura, since you are familiar with our system classes, we need to know what would we would need given the requirements of these applications."

Laura asked, "Jed or Tess, two questions and they are sorta similar. First, what portion of the 75 systems will need this software? Second, of those total number of systems how many do you plan on using in the next say 3-6 months?"

Tess answered, "These are for the production area so 30..."

She didn't get to answer the second part of the question as Laura stopped her, "...sorry Tess, I should have also ask what is the time line on this project?"

Tess continued, "Quite alright Laura. We plan on being live in about 2-months. However we have a 30-40 day window in which we have to have these system done and installed. Finally to answer the second part of your first question I would say around 20 will be live within the next 3-6 months."

Laura explained, "Ah, I see. Okay please keep in mind I am not trying to tell you how to run your business. However as a consultant I feel obligated to tell you a few things."

Tess laughed, "Well Laura, keep in mind I am not trying to one-up you here, but I have a Masters in Computer and Information Systems."

Laura egged her on, "You go girl! That trumps my Bachelors! Okay, well my point here is I hate to see you spend all this money on computers that are going to sit mothballed for 6-months to a year. Then when you are ready to use them come to find they already inadequate."

Tess concurred, "I understand where you are coming from Laura. Assuming you are reviewing the list, you will notice that most of the software we plan to use is open-source. Further much of it has been custom made for us and our demands which include being able to least us at least 3-years with these new systems."

Laura was getting giddy, "Wow. Cool! PHP based applications. Nice! I've actually heard of a lot of these and these are some great applications. Okay then well I have a question for Andy."

Andy had kinda fallen asleep, "Huh?"

Laura asked, "On the deluxe systems, is the video integrated on to the motherboard?"

Andy was more awake now, "Deluxe systems run a stand-alone video card. What did you have in mind?"

Laura explained, "Mid-range NVIDIA or GeForce cards should work. I would also suggesting adding another gig of RAM."

Lindsay objected, "It is better and cheaper, in the long run that is to add two gigs sticks now."

Laura agreed, "True, the upfront cost would be offset by not having to try and find one gig sticks in the future. Hmm, if you are going to do that you may be able to use the base video cards for that level of system."

Tess asked The McGrawl's, "Could you get us a cost break down on upgrading the video cards?"

Andy replied, "Off the top of my head, you are looking at may be \$50 per system. Of course that is a base retail price, with a bulk discount I would say around \$36-\$40 per system."

Jed asked The McGrawl's, "Do you have enough information now that you could give us a quote on these systems."

Lindsay replied, "I think so. Was there anything else you needed to know Laura?"

Laura responded, "In regards to the systems not really, but I do have one other questions for the Rae's."

Tess replied, "Yes Laura?"

Laura inquired, "Where is this job anyway?"

Tess replied, "Chugwater, which is about 45 minutes north/northwest of Cheyenne."

Laura was silent for a bit then asked, "Cheyenne, as in Wyoming?"

Jed replied, "Yep."

Laura joked, "Wow. Whatever happened to the good ole days when we use to do work within the Phoenix and Las Vegas markets?"

I replied, "Well, I know this is outside our usual markets, but it does involve family."

Laura asked, "How so? Oh wait, you said Rae didn't you?"

I replied, "Yes they did. Is this going to be an issue? I don't want to put pressure on you, but you're kind of a make/break on this project."

Laura cringed, "I was kinda fearful of that. I should talk this over with Miss Kitty...but then again...I really could use the work. The consulting jobs are not what they use to be. Crap! Oh hell with it, I need a break from here anyway. But I will only come out on one condition..."

I asked, "Which is?"

I was not surprised by Laura's answer, "No tin cans!"

Tess looked at me and asked, "No tin cans?"

I explained, "She is referring to those smaller commuter planes that resemble a tin can with wings."

Tess laughed, "Ah okay. Laura, you need not worry about that. Great Wyoming Charters uses Gulfstream G650's which are the largest of commuter jets."

Laura seemed a bit calmer now, "Cool I like Gulfstreams. Well when y'all have a time line let me know. Miss Kitty just got home, gotta run."

I told her, "Okay sounds good, I'll keep in contact with you and let you know more."

I turned my attention to Jed and Tess, "Okay, the crew and I need to discuss this amongst ourselves before we make a final decision. Is there anything else you wish to add for our consideration?"

Jed handed me a couple rolls of blueprints and explained, "This is the layout of the center. We have marked whereabouts we are going to have the computers."

I looked at the blueprints and commented, "Wow, this place is dual-level."

Tess explained, "Yes. Very similar to way your house is situated on this hill. The reception area, sales floor, and some of the conference rooms as well as the shipping department are all on the lower level. The upper level is the production area, executive offices, another conference room and the receiving department."

I was still in awe over the plans, "Well, this is certainly going to be more complicated than we expected. Is there anything else you wish to present to us?"

Jed turned to Tess and said, "I guess we should tell them our part of the deal."

Tess nodded and replied, "Also we should tell them Jason's contribution as well."

Jed informed us, "Okay two things. First off, Jason Jason is financing this project. He has allocated a total contribution of 75% of the total *contracted* price of his project. Correct us if we are wrong, but the *contracted* price of the Boots job was \$72,500 all inclusive."

Maya was confused, "What does he mean by contracted price?"

I explained, "The contract price that Jason and I agreed to was \$72,500. However, he contributed another \$1,000 to cover some unexpected expenses such as the additional server and having to fly Andy out to help me on the job. So doing some quick math here, 75% is a little over \$54,000."

Jed confirmed, "Yes that is correct."

Maya asked, "Okay, so what is the second thing?"

Tess laughed, "Nothing gets by you does it? Actually, there are two more things we will give you a 2.5% stipend which works out another \$1,350 to cover travel expenses such as gas, lodging in Santa Fe and Laura's flights."

Lindsay asked, "Why Santa Fe?"

Tess explained, "It is a good mid-point to stop at when coming to/from Phoenix."

Lindsay explained, "Actually I meant why only cover our lodging in Santa Fe? Why not in Chugwater?"

Jed answered, "Well, that is the second thing. You will be staying at our ranch while you are working on our building. The site is less than 10 minutes from our

ranch."

Tess added, "The Ranch is an old Bed & Breakfast so we have plenty of room there are currently nine bedrooms and nine bathrooms."

Jed concluded, "So that is our offer for your consideration."

I asked, "Does any one have any final questions for the applicant?" Andy had been studying the plans along with Maya raised his hand, "Yes, Andy?"

Andy asked, "Do you have any stipulations as to where we are to place your sever or servers? I should also point-out we usually have them in their own room or closet off to the side. So it is not like it is going they are going to be sitting out in the middle of the floor for all to see."

Jed replied, "No. Wherever works best."

I explained, "Okay then if there are no other questions, The McGrawl's and the rest of my crew will talk this over and crunch the numbers. We should have decision by this evening."

Jed replied, "Understandable, it is a big decision to make. We will leave you all to discuss it."

I told them, "Wynn is going to take y'all out to Old Town Scottsdale for the day. Enjoy."

After Jed and Tess left my office with Wynn, Lindsay announced, "Sara and I need to head on over to work at the Budget Holstein North. But I do want to say that if the numbers work out I am all for this project."

I told her, "So noted. What about you Sara?"

Sara told us, "If Lindsay does it, I'll do it."

I turned my attention to Wynn, "How about you Mistress Wynn?"

Wynn looked up surprised, "Mistress? Ah...um don't matter to me, but I didn't think I was going to be involved."

I was a bit taken back by her response, "You are just as much a part of the crew as everyone else in this room. You were a tremendous help on the Budget Holstein Oro Valley job last month. Besides, I wouldn't want you here all by yourself for two weeks while the rest of us are having fun."

Wynn cheered up a bit, "Thanks Ron, that is nice of you. Now if you excuse me I

need to get the breakfast dishes taken care of before we leave."

Wynn along with Sara and Lindsay exited to go about their business. I turned my attention to Maya and Andy, "Okay guy and gal we have a lot of work to do here. We have a \$54,000 budget that we need to work within. The nice thing about this is that is exclusively for parts and labor."

Chapter 5: The Nitty Gritty & Deal or No Deal?

To start I asked, "Okay so what do we need?"

Maya walked over to the white board and replied, "Well for starters 75 systems, 75 outlet box kits, 75 patch cables, some hubs and a ton of network cable."

Andy added, "We will need a server. The 75 systems we need to break down as 45 economy and 30 as deluxe. We also need 2 GB memory sticks that we can use for upgrade on the deluxe systems."

Maya was worried, "Are we even going to be able to make anything off of labor? Seems like the parts are going to eat-up our budget." I didn't say anything, just sat there thinking how we could cut costs. Maya raise her voice slightly to get my attention, "RON!"

Still kinda lost in thought, "Huh? There has got to be a way we can save on parts...hey wait a minute..Catalina Foothills."

That name got Andy's attention as he nearly fell out of his chair, "What the hell?!"

I explained, "The solution to our problems."

Maya asked, "Uh, Ron have you lost your mind?"

I laughed, "Nope. Recall while Sara and I were away on our honeymoon Andy shipped me all his extra inventory from the *original* Catalina Foothills store. Let me take a look at my inventory..."

Andy replied, "Holy crap, that's right and we ended up writing all that inventory off as part of the 'collapse' of the Tucson area stores. So whatever we charge them for those items is technically 100% profit."

I got StockZilla up and running. I started a new ticket, "Okay, so we need CAT-5 cable and we do have a bunch of 500-foot rolls lets take 3 of those and a couple of 1000-foot rolls. Patch cables 10-foot, we need 75. So far so good, what else? Ah yes outlet box kits, we get the box and the face plates, 75 of those as well. Hmm...seems like I am missing something here..."

Maya figured it out, "We will need connectors for each end of the cables to the switches then to the outlet."

I informed Maya, "Ah yes that is what I was looking for. Got tons of those we need 150."

Andy got on the phone with Max at PC's and Things, "Hey Max, Andy. Say Ron's got himself another huge project. What kind of deals can we get for 45 Economy Systems, 30 Deluxe Systems and 75 Flat-Panel Monitors? Plus we need all shipped to Cheyenne, WY"

While Andy was talking to Max, I called up Doyle on my cell, "Doyle my man! I need a really good price on 2 GB RAM, I need 30 sticks."

Doyle put me on hold to check on this. Meanwhile Andy was relaying the info to Maya as he got it from Max, "Okay go for it! Economy \$335 each; Deluxe \$415 each; Flat-Panel Monitors \$115 each; Shipping, all inclusive \$500 with guaranteed arrival in 2-weeks. Great that is the info we needed. We present to the applicant tonight and if they want to go on this."

Andy has just wrapped up with Max when Doyle came back on the line, "I could get 30 sets in by the end of the week and you are looking at \$85 each."

I advised Doyle, "Okay not bad. Now for my next challenge. Ultimate Server with rack, two routers and four 24-port switches. Needs to be shipped to Cheyenne, WY"

Doyle laughed, "Ron you are not going to believe this, I have an Ultimate Server in stock over in Fountain Hills. Have no idea where it came from as I couldn't find an order or for that matter an invoice. Zina thinks it may have been ordered by the manager that Lindsay 'Glen Campbelled'. I'll sell it to you for say \$5000? The switches are \$140 a piece and we can order a really nice enclosed rack for around \$1000 including shipping."

I told Doyle, "Wow, that is good news and \$5000 sounds good on the sever package. We will meet with the applicants tonight and let you know tomorrow."

The last area we needed to focus on was labour I advised Maya and Andy, "Keep in mind on the installation parts we are making essentially 100% profit so keep that in mind when you figure labour."

Maya informed us, "Based on what I see on the plans and the fact we will have six people doing the wiring and outlet installs we should be able to knock out in a couple weeks, with a week being 30 hours at \$55 per hour. You usually charge a flat \$500 for a sever install."

Andy replied, "For the RAM upgrade that is barley going to take anytime I am going to guess 5 hours for the 30 systems at \$35 an hour."

I commented, "The only rate and time I am not sure about is Laura. I'll go ahead and allocate her at \$72.50 an hour for 10 hours. So...madam Maya what is the bottom line?"

Maya had been inputting everything into a custom order spreadsheet, "Whoa! Talk about cutting it close...\$53,990. Here's the Nitty-Gritty:"

Boots Chugwater

Item	Quantity	Price/Unit	Total
Wiring			
CAT-5 10-Patch Cords	75	\$3.13	\$235
CAT-5 Wall Boxes/Plates	75	\$10.00	\$750
CAT-5 Network Cable 500'	3	\$55.00	\$165
CAT-5 Network Cable 1000'	2	\$100.00	\$200
CAT-5 Connectors	150	\$3.00	\$450
Computers			
Economy Systems	45	\$335.00	\$15,075
Deluxe Systems	30	\$415.00	\$12,450
Flat-Panel Monitors	75	\$115.00	\$8,625
2 GB RAM Upgrade	30	\$100.00	\$3,000
Shipping	1	\$500.00	\$500
Server			
Ultimate Server w/ Router	1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000
Server Rack/Enclosure	1	\$750.00	\$750
24-Port Switches	5	\$155.00	\$775
Shipping	1	\$250.00	\$250
Labor			
Wiring/Jack Install	60	\$55.00	\$3,300
RAM Upgrade	5	\$35.00	\$175
Sever Install	1	\$500.00	\$500
PC Install	24	\$44.50	\$1,068
Software Install	10	\$72.50	\$725
Wiring Total			\$1,800
Computers Total			\$39,650
Sever Total			\$6,775
Labor Total			\$5,765
Grand Total			\$53,990

I commented, "Wow we did really good. So, what do y'all think?"

Andy asked, "What would be mine and Lindsay's share?"

I explained, "50% of the wiring total plus 50% of the Labor total less \$725 which will be Laura's share. So you are looking at \$2900."

Maya asked, "So do Wynn and I get a portion of the other \$2900?"

I confirmed, "Yes you two will get each get a quarter which is \$725 a piece."

Maya was lost in thought, "Hmm...what could I do...oh sorry. Well, sounds good to me."

I was going to ask Andy but he beat me to it, "\$2900 would be very nice. After all, we do have a new home we will need to furnish. I'm in, but would like to run this past Lindsay tonight if you don't mind. I know she said she would be in if I was, but I would just feel better."

I concurred, "I kinda want to do the same with Sara and Wynn. The six of us will meet tonight and I will also try to get a hold of Laura as well."

Chapter 6: So, it is like this... and You Know?

Earlier in the day Tess and Jed returned from their excursion with Wynn and headed up to The Queen Suite for a nap before dinner. Wynn came into the office and asked, "So how it did it go with the three of you?"

I looked up and replied, "Not too bad. How did you do with the Rae's?"

Wynn laughed, "Surprisingly, not too bad either. They asked a lot about Sara and Maya, but I wasn't that much help to them. I really don't know much about them, at least that I willing to discuss with their father and Tess. So did you guys reach a decision?"

I explained, "Sorta. If you could sit for a moment I would like to discuss a couple things with you."

Wynn sat down and nervously asked, "Does this have to do with the Rae's project?"

I told her, "Yes. The six of us will discuss this together tonight and I am going to try get Laura on the line as well. Basically we were able to meet their budget with \$10 to spare. If we do this, you and Maya will be getting a good chunk of money. I don't have the exact figure with me at this moment. We would be leaving in about a week or so and would be out there for about two to three weeks. I'll have more details when we all meet tonight. You are dismissed."

Since it was a warmer than usual January afternoon we ended up grilling some

burgers on the Cabana. Oddly enough neither Tess nor Jed mentioned anything about the project during dinner. They did approach me after dinner only to tell me they were going to take a walk around the community. I told them, "Okay, you have about an hour before the sun goes down and then it becomes very dark. By the way, I will be holding a meeting with my crew shortly to go over a few details before we announce our decision."

Tess replied, "Okay that sounds good. We promise to be back before dark."

They headed down the driveway out towards Fairy Duster. I headed back inside and gather everyone in my office. Once everyone was seated I began, "This is a brief discussion of what Andy, Maya and I were able to workout earlier today. First off, had it not been for us having a large majority of parts in-stock already as well as some good deals from Max and Doyle with PC's and Things this project would not have been possible. We were given a budget of \$54,000 and the bottom line is we came in at \$53,990. So, should we accept this bid and do not run into any unforeseeable extra expenses, we will make a total of \$6550. \$725 of this is going to Laura, which would leave \$5800 for the six of us. The McGrawl's will get 50% or \$2900 as will the four of us which works out to \$725 each for Maya, Sara, Wynn and myself. Should we do this project, we would be leaving in about a week and would be there for about 3-weeks. All the supplies we need for wiring installation we have in stock and the server is available for pick-up at the Fountain Hills store. The sever mounting rack along with router and switches will have to be shipped."

Lindsay asked, "What about the 75 systems?"

Andy explained, "Max has assured me the systems will be ready and shipped to Cheyenne no later than 2-weeks. Unfortunately, since these are coming directly from the manufacture we will have to add the 2 GB RAM to the deluxe systems once they arrive. We will have the memory before we leave."

I asked everyone, "Okay are in agreement so far?" Everyone nodded in agreement and I continued, "Okay let me see if I can get Laura on the line." I dialed Laura's number and was surprised when Miss Kitty answered, "Hey Lynette, Ron here with the crew. Is my sister around?"

Miss Kitty told me, "She should be let me have Sophie go fetch her."

We chatted for a bit when Laura came on, "Evening Ron and crew. I thought I would be getting a call from you tonight. So how did it go?"

I explained, "Bottom line we were able to come in at \$53,990."

Laura was in shock, "Wow. How badly did we have to cut labor to reach that figure?"

I told her, "Didn't really have to cut into labor. All the materials we are using for wiring we had on hand already. They were 'donated' by Andy when he closed the first Catalina Foothills store last fall, giving us a \$0 cost on those items. I figured your labor at \$72.50 per hour..."

Laura was starting to complain, "Geez Ron, I usually charge around \$125 for doing work outside of Nevada. I don't know if \$72.50 per hour will cover it."

I reminded her, "Remember, The Rae's are going to pay for your flight to and from. You will be staying at their Ranch House during the approximately 3 days you will be there. I have allocated you 10 hours at the \$72.50 rate for this job which means you are getting \$725 in addition to the free flight, food and lodging. This is a fixed payment amount so if only takes you 7 hours you still get the full \$725. However should you go over the 10-hours you *may* not get the overage. This would depend on the circumstances and would be the Rae's discretion to pay out from their 'contingency fund'. Your services would be needed in about 2 weeks."

Laura acknowledged the agreement, "Okay, that sounds fair enough and fine with me. Has everyone else reached an agreement?"

I informed her, "Yes they have, we were waiting on confirmation from you. Now that you are in we will notify the applicant that we will accept their proposal. I will be in contact with you with more information as we get it."

After Laura hung-up I asked, "Anyone have any questions?"

Lindsay asked, "What kind of a work schedule are we doing on this?"

I explained, "Since there are going to be six of us working I have estimated between the wiring and install it is going to take about 60 hours. We will working Monday-Friday for six-hours a day. I am going to try to setup us up on a 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM schedule."

Wynn pointed out, "Um...that's seven hours per day."

I complimented her, "Very good. I am giving ourselves an hour for lunch daily. Anyone else have questions?" There were no other questions so I advised, "Okay Andy and Maya I need you to stick around everyone else go do as they want."

Sara announced, "Lindsay and I will be down in the playroom."

I told them, "Okay, have fun." Wynn was starting to walk out the door, "Wynn...When the Rae's return send them on in please."

Maya asked, "Why do you want me to stay?"

I explained, "You are my assistant for this here project."

Maya was confused, "But I don't know all that much about what you do."

Andy joked, "You know more than you think."

Wynn paged, "Ron, The Rae's have returned and I am sending them over to your office."

Jed and Tess walked and I directed to them sit over on one of the sofas. Tess commented, "Nice community. So where does the road go at end of the block here?"

I replied, "It goes south about 1/2 mile into the Foothills Condos. Marc and Martina live down there as do Kayré and Kacie who work at the same store as Sara."

Tess asked, "Is that the Budget Holstein North? We've been wanting to go there and to Andy's store."

I informed them, "Well, I suppose we could all go to the Good Egg for breakfast and stop at the stores on the way back..."

Wynn paged, "Ron, Gary is calling on the house line should I put him through or take a message?"

Gary's timing was always something. I asked, "Any ideas as to what he wants?"

Wynn was confused, "Said something about looking for an excuse to go to *The Unlikely Cowboy* tomorrow night?"

Maya just started laughing, "God he sure does love that place doesn't he?"

I responded, "Yep about as much as Bunny and his chairs. Wynn, tell him tomorrow is fine and we will have eight."

Wynn replied, "Okay will do. Thanks."

Jed asked, "What is *The Unlikely Cowboy*?"

Maya answered, "It is restaurant we frequent quite a bit down at DC Ranch. We made the mistake of taking Gary there once and now he can't get enough."

I added, "It is where we usually take our guests or have shin-dig. Chances are

they will invite the Frosch's as well."

Maya said, "Chances are Kayré and Kacie will be there as well, kinda holds some sentimental value for them."

I laughed, "Yep that was an interesting night...Anyway turning our attention back to your proposal...You gave us a budget of \$54,000 to work with. We had a bit of hard time trying to stay within that figure. Maya..."

Maya looked up and laying on the BS thick, "Well, after some intense negotiating with our vendors and cutting a deal with Laura we ended up at \$53,990."

I explained, "We have everything we need to start the wiring as soon as your ready. A rough guess here but we are looking at about 10-days working 6-hours per day. The PC installs will take about 4-days which includes us adding the extra RAM to the 30 Production Systems. We've also estimated a time frame of about 2 days for the software install, although most of that will take place over-night."

Maya explained, "Laura is being hired on as a sub-contractor and we have already informed her she will paid a set amount for the 10-hours at \$72.50 per hour regardless how long the install takes. Unless there are circumstances beyond her control and you agree to use your 'contingency fund', she will not be paid for the extra time. Further you have agreed to cover her flight from Las Vegas to Cheyenne and back. Do we have an agreement for Laura"

Jed agreed, "Yes we agree to the terms you have specified for Laura."

Tess asked, "How much do we need to pay to start?"

Maya replied nervously, "75% which as about \$40,500."

Jed said, "Okay, can we do a wire transfer through your bank?"

I told them, "Yes. If you like we can stop there on the way home tomorrow. My bank is over in the Market Place."

Tess asked, "Where are Sara and Lindsay?"

Andy without thinking replied, "I think they are down in the playroom..."

I was wonder what was running through Maya's mind at the moment. It looked like she was going to say something but then Tess replied, "Ah I've heard you've got quite the playroom thanks to Gary."

Maya was in a bit of shock, "You know about our lifestyle?"

I replied, "Maya, remember Jed *was* at the wedding and did walk your sister down the aisle locked in her full set of prisoner transport chains. Plus he has worked with Gary and Jason. Now, why don't you take Tess down to the playroom. That way Andy, Jed and I can talk shop without boring you and Tess to death."

Maya was still shocked, "But...oh yeah that's right...okay." Turning to Tess, "Come with me."

Chapter 7: You Want Me To Do What? and So Tell Me About...

Maya was still in a bit of disbelief of what just happened. Tess could sense some hostility from Maya and commented, "You don't like me very much do you?"

Maya sat down at the foot of the stairs to the playroom and replied, "No I don't have anything against you. I guess I am taking my aggressions towards my father out against you."

Tess sat next to her, "He has worked very hard to get this point in his life. Both of us have."

Maya replied, "I know. I just don't feel right about you as our mother."

Tess reminded Maya, "Please don't think of me as your mother or even step-mother. Think of me as a friend. Can you do that?"

Maya sighed, "I suppose so. This is just so much for me to handle. Haven't seen my father in years...other than briefly at my sister's wedding last year and now he suddenly comes back into our lives with you. I want to be friends with you, but I am not comfortable with you."

Tess replied, "Ah I see, perhaps this will help.." She began with kissing Maya on each cheek then kissed her on the lips.

Maya was a bit taken back at what just happened and was trying to pull herself away from Tess, but yet the feeling from her body were fighting to pull herself closer to Tess. In the end her feelings got the best of her and she started French kissing Tess passionately. This only last for a couple minutes but felt like hours to Maya. Finally she recovered, "That was strange..."

Tess asked, "In a good or bad way?"

Maya thought, "Oddly enough in a good a way."

Tess smiled, "Good that worked. Let's go down, please?"

Maya gave in and headed down into the playroom with Tess. As they came down

the stairs Maya noticed Sara was sitting in one of the jail cells gagged, in leg irons and a rigid fiddle, wearing her belt. She then noticed Lindsay in a red Dominatrix dress using a bamboo cane on Wynn who was also in a fiddle. Maya cleared her throat which caused Lindsay to jump and turn around. Lindsay saw Maya and Tess and turned red. Maya asked, "So what did Sara do?"

Lindsay laughed nervously, "She was touching herself while I was getting Wynn setup. So I put her back in her belt and also making her think about her actions."

Maya laughed, "She doesn't learn does she?"

Tess commented, "Well, she can't do that now even if she wasn't in the fiddle." She noticed our 'One-Size Fucks All' Fucking Machine and became hypnotized, "oh...a fucking machine, get me on it Maya..."

Maya stood there with her jaw to the floor and looked at Tess blankly, "You wanna me to do what?"

Lindsay walked over and advised, "Unless you want to end up like your sister, I would suggest you do as the lady asks."

Maya still just stood there. Tess commented to Lindsay, "And here I thought Sara was the stubborn one."

Lindsay laughed, "Well, I think she gets it from Sara. Looks as if I am going to have teach her a lesson as well. Help me out and I'll put you on the cross when we are done."

Tess smiled, "I think we are going to have to. What do you need?"

Lindsay directed her, "Hold on to Wynn as I remove the fiddle off of her." Lindsay unlocked the fiddle and removed the leg irons from Wynn. She handed the fiddle and lock to Tess and asked, "Know how to use one of these?"

Tess replied, "Looks pretty self-explanatory." She placed Maya's wrists and neck in the fiddle and then locked it shut. Lindsay cuffed Maya's ankles with the leg irons.

Maya was starting to protest now so Lindsay asked, "Go find me a gag for her." and pointed to the treasure chest closet.

Tess went over to the closet and looked in amazement at all the toys. She saw a trainer ball gag with blindfold, but then saw the muzzle. She grabbed both and headed back to Lindsay. She set aside the trainer gag and handed Lindsay the muzzle."

Lindsay took the muzzle from Tess and commented, "Well, this ought to shut her up!" Before Maya could really understand what was happening she had been muzzled, ironed and placed in a fiddle. She was now being led to the other jail cell. While still holding on to Maya, Lindsay instructed Tess as she pointed to the to of the cell, "Connect the chain from up there to the lock on the fiddle." Tess reached up and attached the chain. Lindsay was impressed, "Good job. We'll let her stay in here and think about what she did..."

Tess added, "...or didn't do."

Lindsay laughed, "Good point. Now come on, I'll have Wynn get you setup on the fucking machine." They closed the door to the jail cell and headed back to the center of the playroom. Wynn had already started getting the fucking machine prepped. Lindsay instructed Tess, "Across from the toy chest are dressing rooms." Tess headed over to a dressing room to change. She emerged shortly in a green bra, pantyhose and high heeled boots. Tess walked back to Lindsay and Wynn. Lindsay commented, "Going to have to lose the pantyhose..." Then she noticed they were crotchless, "...ah crotchless, well never mind then." Tess then handed Lindsay the trainer gag and blindfold combo. Lindsay looked at it and laughed, "The blindfold will certainly make it more erotic, but the gag? Oh wait, we wouldn't want to disturb the boys' upstairs!" Wynn secured Tess to the cross while Lindsay placed the blindfold trainer gag on Tess's head. Lindsay explained, "This thing has multiple speeds and settings. I'll start it off easy and see how you handle it then go from there."

Meanwhile back upstairs in my office Jed was asking, "So how much do you know about my daughters?"

Andy laughed, "Well since Lindsay met Sara last year they've been inseparable! They are like sisters. Can't say I know that much about Maya, she tends to keep to herself."

I told Jed, "Sara and I've known each for a few years. I had hired her as an assistant and model when I was back in Vegas living with my sister. I met Martina and for whatever crazy reason we got married. Laura and I had decided to widen our business market so I came out here with Martina and Sara. Marc got us the house, who knew in a couple years he would also get Martina!"

Jed laughed, "Some friend."

Andy added, "Oh, yes he is. Did Ron a huge favor getting Martina off his hands."

Jed asked, "So how did you and Sara..."

I explained, "I guess it was after I caught Martina screwing around...with my sister."

Jed asked, "Your sister?"

Andy joked, "I know it sounds like something out of Jerry Springer."

I laughed, "Yep. I was on my way out to Vegas to a job for Gary. We had a really bad dust storm which had caused a 100 car pile-up on I-10 out in Tonopah. DPS closed several miles of the highway in both directions. So, I ended up turning around and coming back home to discover a Gold Cadillac in the driveway. At that time my office was still upstairs, in what is now Maya's room. The door to the King Suite was cracked open slightly and that was when I saw Martina going at it with my sister."

Andy added, "Didn't Martina and Laura try to get their way with Sara prior to this."

I explained, "Yes they did. Funny thing is Laura did get her way with Sara when we were there last. Except instead of Martina it was Miss Kitty."

Andy asked, "This whole thing with Laura and Martina, was that why Sara got the belt?"

I replied, "Yep. I have you know I have never required her, Maya or Wynn to wear one."

Jed replied, "Ah, so that explains it. Gary had said he has made belts for Sara and Maya. Speaking of Maya what you know about her?"

Andy looked at me blankly and replied to Jed, "Not a whole lot. We think she has a thing from Bambi."

Jed asked, "Bambi, isn't she Gary's sister-in-law?"

I told Jed, "Yes she is. Anyways, we *rescued* Maya from Frisco a few months back when we did the Boots Job. She started working for Vinnie's to pay for the gas for the Hummer so she could go to school down at ASU. She has unofficially become my assistant now that Sara is working with Lindsay over at the Budget Holstein North. She even helped out quite a bit at the ACME Las Vegas and Corona de las Estrella's jobs. Other than that, don't really know much about her. Oh and I think she scares Martina."

Jed asked, "How so?"

I thought, "I have no idea, I just notice Martina doesn't try to be pushy with her. Hard to explain."

Andy changed the subject for a bit, "So, I guess we will need to make a trip over to Fountain Hills store to get the server.."

We were interrupted by one of the sofas ringing. Jed laughed, "Ron your sofa is ringing."

I was about to say something when Andy commented, "I think that is Lindsay's phone she must have gotten it stuck in the cushions." Andy started removing the cushions but could not locate his wife's phone. "Ron call her cell number." I hit the speaker and then Lindsay's cell speed-dial. Again the sofa began to ring and Andy determined, "Must have fallen underneath, help me move this sofa it is heavy enough to double as boat anchor."

Between the three of us we managed to move the sleeper sofa and not only did we find Lindsay's phone but also discovered a long narrow box that had gotten wedged between the sofa and the wall. I picked up the box, "What in the world?" After further examination it had a Road Runner shipping label dated from back in October, "I think this from you Andy." I took it to my desk and opened it up to discover a 10-pack of 24-port switches.

Andy looked at the now empty box, "Yep, it came from Catalina Foothills. How did it end up behind the sofa?"

I explained, "Well, you should have seen my office when Sara and I came back from our honeymoon! It looked like Santa had been here. It likely fell back there as they kept piling more stuff in here. I'll have Maya add these to the inventory. Guess we won't need to order these either. Well, we see Max and Doyle tomorrow. I suppose we should head down to the playroom and see how Tess and the girls are doing."

We headed into the kitchen then downstairs into the playroom. The first thing I saw was Lindsay in her Dom Dress over at the table going at it with Wynn. Once downstairs is when I noticed both Sara and Maya in the jail cells gagged and in leg irons along with the fiddles. I commented to Andy, "Wonder what those two did to end up in there?"

Andy laughed, "Especially Sara..." He then noticed Tess, "Hey? Isn't that Tess over there on the fucking machine?"

I looked over to see Tess in a trainer gag and blindfold 'enjoying the ride' on the fucking machine.

Andy called out, "LINDSAY!" While Lindsay did have her head buried in Wynn's pussy she did faintly hear her name. She looked over to see Andy, Jed and I.

Lindsay got up and walked over to us and asked, "You bellowed?"

Andy commented, "Funny thing, the three of us were sitting in Ron's office and suddenly one of the sofas started ringing."

Lindsay being a smart ass, "So did you answer it?"

Andy laughed, "Nope, it stopped ringing by the time we found your phone underneath." He handed Lindsay her phone.

She took the phone from Andy and looked to see who called, "The last call was from Ron's office?"

I explained, "We had to call it to find it. Speaking of finding though, when we moved that boat-anchor...err...sleeper sofa we discovered a box of switches that had become wedged between the couch and the wall. They had been there since Sara and I were on our honeymoon."

Lindsay laughed, "Worked out..." She looked through her call logs, "...ah Kacie was calling, I better call her back."

She started to walk away but I grabbed her by the arm, "Not so fast Dungeon Mistress. Could you kindly explain why Jed's daughters are 'detained' and heavily restrained?"

Lindsay gave a nervous laugh, "Because they were misbehaving?...Sara was touching herself when I was caning Wynn. While Maya wouldn't do as Tess and I were telling her to do."

I let go of Lindsay and told her, "Okay. I'll take care of them. Go ahead and call Kacie then you two should be heading to bed, we will be getting up early to go to breakfast." After Lindsay headed up stairs I looked over the fucking machine, Lindsay had set it to random and there were still 10 minutes left. I told Jed, "She's still got 10-minutes left on that thing. Help me release Wynn and then we will take care of your naughty daughters over there." I explained to Jed, "Once I release her ankles and neck, you will need to help her up as she is in a straitjacket."

Jed laughed, "That would explain why it so cold down here."

I explained, "That and the fact we are technically underground, sorta like your warehouse is." I released Wynn's ankles and then unlatched to collar and instructed Jed, "Okay, lift her up so she can sit on the table then I will undo the straitjacket." Jed carefully helped Wynn sit up on the table and also removed the blindfold.

Wynn's eyes were adjusting to the light, "Ah thank you. Lindsay was being a bit

over dominate tonight."

I laughed, "Gee, I hadn't noticed!" I released Wynn's arms so she could remove the straitjacket on her own in the dressing room, "Okay your arm's are free now, go change." Wynn hopped off the table and headed towards the dressing rooms. Meanwhile Jed and I headed back to the prison cells. I instructed Jed, "Push in the lever and turn to the right to open the door. Be careful though the door is self latching. I'll take Sara you take Maya, here are they keys for the irons and fiddles. Unhook the chain from the fiddle so she can sit while you remove everything else." I opened the door to Sara's cell and unhooked the chain from the fiddle and told her, "Sit so I can remove this fiddle." Sara did as she was told and I removed the fiddle, the leg irons and then the gag.

Sara asked, "What did Maya do to piss off Lindsay?"

I told her, "Not sure, something to do with not doing as she as told by her and Tess. You can ask her in a moment, your father is releasing her."

Jed walked into Maya's cell, reached up and unhooked the fiddle from the chain. Maya collapsed onto the stool under the weight of the fiddle. Jed unlocked and removed the fiddle from around Maya's neck. She then proceeded to undo the leg irons. Maya removed the gag and Jed asked, "So what did you do to end up in this situation."

Maya laughed, "Disobeyed Lindsay. She told me to setup Tess on the..." The fucking machine beeped its two-minute warning. Maya continued, "...fucking machine." She glanced over and commented, "Looks like she is enjoying herself. She has less than two minutes left on it so we might as well get her released." Maya and Jed headed over to the fucking machine which was now going though its 30-seconds of final minute warning beeping. Sara picked up the fiddle and leg irons from her cell and then went over to Maya's cell to collect the items in there. I helped her get the fiddles back in their cases and then finished tidying up the playroom. The fucking machine stopped and Maya discovered Lindsay had set it so that it would end with the dildo fully penetrated. Maya handed Jed the key, "The neck and ankle bolts use the larger socket, while the wrists use the smaller socket. Now let me see if I remember how to manually eject the dildo." Maya walked over to the fucking machine and pulled a lever attached to the dildo rod.

While Jed was undoing Tess's ankles, Maya went over and removed the trainer gag/blindfold combo. After Tess's eyes adjust she saw Maya standing over her and commented, "Wow! Now that was quite a ride." She saw Jed and commented, "I've got get one of these!"

Jed was releasing Tess's wrists and laughed, "Great just what we need more toys!"

I told them, "Well this wasn't something I had planned on getting. Gary ended up giving it to me after he couldn't sell it. You can ask him tomorrow night when we meet for dinner, he might have an old one on clearance."

Maya asked, "If you don't need me down here any more may I go upstairs?"

I looked at her oddly but replied, "Sure."

Maya quickly exited the playroom. Jed asked, "What was that all about?"

I wondered the same thing myself. Tess explained, "She still has some hostility towards me, not sure why."

Jed commented, "Well Sara hasn't exactly been very forthcoming with me."

I reminded him, "She is still very sore about the wedding. Not that there is anything you or Tess can do to correct that. Give them time, they will start getting more forgiving...I hope. Plus they are still in shock over learning what happened to their mother."

Jed replied, "I know. I've been trying so hard to be friends with Sara."

Tess added, "As I have with Maya."

I felt like I was Doctor Phil, "Perhaps you two should give them their space, let them come to you."

Tess understood, "I know, but I feel so bad for Maya. I want to be friends with her and she keeps pushing me away."

Jed asked, "This not going to pose a problem with our project?"

I kinda wondered, "Hope not. I think by then things should be a little calmer. I have a feeling they are both in shock over you coming back into their lives. Tess kinda complicates matters. There is no use worrying about this now. I'm heading up to bed."

Chapter 8: The Grand Tour and Ah Our Best Customers!

The three of us headed upstairs to the kitchen then up to the upper floor. Tess and Jed headed to the Queen Suite. I thought about talking with Maya but seeing as that her light was out, I opted not to. I headed over to the master suite. I walked in and noticed Sara had already changed for bed and was sitting on the edge of the bed. I went into the closet to change. When I returned Sara was still sitting there lost in thought. When I got into bed she asked, "Why can't I forgive my father?"

Not trying to be a comedian I asked, "Who do I look like, Doctor Phil?"

Sara laughed, "No...I just don't know what to do."

I replied, "Well if it is any constellation, your sister doesn't seem too accepting of Tess." Although I could understand the girls' anxiety of Jed returning suddenly into their lives. Still, something seemed very odd about this whole situation, especially the way Tess and Jed acted around each other.

Sara explained, "Well, she was very close to our mother while as I was with my father. She didn't take well to our mother's death. I think she sees Tess as my father's way to 'forget' about our mother. I know she is not and has helped him so much. I still can't let go of what happened at the wedding."

I thought for a moment and asked Sara, "Are you happy he came?"

Sara replied, "Yes."

I continued, "And were you happy he was sober?"

Sara laughed, "You know, that is the first time in a long time I saw him sober. So Yes."

I asked, "Do you feel he spent enough time there?"

Sara replied, "No."

I concluded, "Well, Two out of Three Ain't Bad!" Sara looked at me confused, I explained, "While he may not have spent much time there, he DID make an effort to show up and was sober. Focus on that, not on the fact he only stuck around for a short time. Always focus on the positive such as you got to have your father walk you down the aisle."

Sara sighed, "Your right, I've been a bit unfair to him. I just wish Maya would be more accepting of Tess."

I told Sara, "Give them sometime. Now, let's get some sleep need to get up early."

No sooner had we gone to sleep when were awoken Tuesday morning by the Rooster and Ty Pennington's greeting. Wynn then came on over the intercom, "Good morning everyone. We will be departing for The Good Egg in about 45 minutes. Please meet in the kitchen when you are ready."

Sara and I headed to the closet to get dressed. Sara suggested, "How about

mister and misses Johnny Cash?"

I looked at her and said, "Okay why not." I found a black dress shirt along with black jeans and boots. Sara took out a black sleeveless top, black Capri pants along with black fishnet stockings and mules. We both emerged all in black and headed down to the kitchen. Jed and Tess were sitting at the table while Maya and Wynn were talking in the corner.

Maya saw us dressed in all black and asked, "Who died?"

Sara smirked, "Very funny. We are going for the Johnny Cash look." Turning her attention to Jed, "Dad, may I have a word with you?"

Jed looked up surprised, "Sure, go ahead."

Sara explained, "I owe you an apology. I shouldn't have jumped down your throat as I did the other night. I am glad you did make it to my wedding and got to walk me down the aisle. Even better you were sober. I really wished though you could have stayed, but hey Two out of Three Ain't Bad. Thank you!"

Maya applauded her sister, "Wow Sara, that was very nice of you. I guess I too need to stop focusing on the past and just be glad we have this time to spend with our father."

Andy and Lindsay came down the stairs. I asked, "Okay, so how are we going to do this?"

Andy explained, "Well I suppose Lindsay and I can take Sara."

I replied, "Alright so Maya, Wynn, Jed and Tess you will come with me."

Sara followed Lindsay and Andy out to Lindsay's mini-cooper, meanwhile the five of us piled in my PT Cruiser and headed up the Good Egg. As we passed The Boulders I explained, "I was going to have you two stay there. Marc and Martina work there in the Concierge's Office, but Maya wanted y'all to stay with us at The Manson."

Tess thanked Maya, "We appreciate that, such a lovely place y'all have."

After breakfast we headed over to the center. Jed went with me and Andy over to PC's & Things while Tess went with Lindsay and Sara over to The Budget Holstein North. Doyle saw us walk in, "Morning Ron. Here on business?"

I replied with a strait face, "Nope! Just thought I'd stop in with my client and say 'Hi!' Here's your sign!" Turning my attention to Jed, "Jed I'd like you to meet Doyle, general manager PC's & Things. Now, where's Max?"

Doyle greeted Jed and then told me, "Max is over at Fountain Hills today, they were getting a bit backed up on their tech work. What can I do you for today?"

I explained to Doyle, "Remember the Boots project a few months back?"

Doyle laughed, "How could I not? 150 systems, that was insane."

I continued, "Well this is a similar project but with half the systems. Andy had talked to Max yesterday about getting 75 systems, 45 Economy and 30 Deluxe and 75 flat-panel monitors."

Doyle thought, "I know we talked about a server and some switches...let me see if Max left any notes over here...ah here we go. Oh and you needed 30 2-GB RAM chip sets as well."

I told him, "We want to go ahead and place that order. But, I don't need the switches, found a bunch in my office behind the ringing couch."

Doyle caught the last part, "Ringing couch?"

I laughed, "Yep. Somehow Lindsay's phone ended up underneath the couch and Kacie had tried to call her last night."

Doyle laughing, "Okay that makes sense. Anyway, let me call this in real quick. I need an address to ship this here order to."

Jed told Doyle, "Put the order in the name of Tess Rae-Whitewater. Ship it to Whitewater Ranch, Chugwater, WY 82210."

Doyle confused, "That's it?"

Jed explained, "There is only one Whitewater Ranch in Chugwater, they will know where to deliver."

Doyle was satisfied, "Okay, if that works." Turning his attention to me, "Okay Ron, that will be \$36,150 how you paying for that?"

I whipped out my card, "With my Plutonium Card of course!"

Jed joked, "Plutonium Card, does that thing glow in the dark?"

Playing along, "Only if I report it stolen, then the thief will also glow in the dark as well."

Doyle had finished up my order when Max called my cell, "Hey Ron. Max or at

PC's & Things Fountain Hills. I was looking through their inventory here and discovered they have a ton of the 2 GB RAM you needed. I'll go ahead and set that aside along with the server for you. Any idea when you are going to be up here."

I explained, "Not sure, I'm at the Far North Scottsdale location right now. We might stop over there later today. Do you have a total for me on that?"

Max ran the numbers, "\$8990, including tax."

I told him, "Sounds good."

Meanwhile Tess walked into the Budget Holstein North and was just amazed at the merchandise, "Wow, this is some really nice stuff. I think I'm going to here a while."

Jed's phone rang, "Yep. Ah I see, most of the day. Okay, well I think Ron and I are going over to the other store to get the server and the extra RAM. Okay see you tonight." He turned to me and laughed, "Tess is going to occupied for most of the day over at The Budget Holstein."

I replied, "Funny when my mother and her friend came up to the Oro Valley store, they were there most of the day. Let me find Andy and see if he wants to come with us or not. We do need to stop over at my bank so you can do the wire transfer."

Doyle and returned with my credit card receipt and a purchase order for me to sign. He explained, "Okay the vendor says two to two and half weeks on getting those out there."

I let him know, "That should work well, I hope. This is really going to be interesting as I am trying to base the time line off of the Boots Frisco job. This is half the size, but the facility is two levels. Also though, we'll have four more people working with us. However, with Frisco all the computers were ready to go out of the box."

Doyle laughed, "Getting over-your-head again Ron!?"

I replied, "Never! What happened in Frisco was a momentary lack in judgment. I could have done it all without Andy..."

Andy walked in and added, "...and been there for three months!"

I gave in, "Okay so may be I did *slightly* under estimate the scope of that project, but at least with this project I will have extra help. Anyway, Tess is going to be over at the Budget Holstein most of the day, so Jed I are going to head over to

the Fountain Hills store. I just talked to Max and he says he has the RAM in stock as well."

Andy thought, "Hmm, well I should go over there as well as need pickup a few items for this store. So I'll come with y'all, let me tell Doyle."

I informed Andy, "We need to stop at the AzMu on the way there so Jed can do the wire transfer."

Mentioning the bank jogged Andy's memory, "Ah...yes. I knew there was something else I been meaning to do. Lindsay wanted me to make a 'payment' towards our loan with y'all. This will work well. Be right back."

Jed asked, "Loan?"

I explained, "I did a partial finance on their house and also helped them out when they had some troubles in Tucson."

Andy returned and we headed back over to the Market Place so we could take care of some business at AzMu. As we walked in Jed saw the long line, "A bit busy, we may be a while. We could always come back later."

Andy laughed, "Don't worry Ron is a bit of a VIP around here."

Sure enough without fail Ryan came out his office and greeted us, "Morning Ron and Andy! Come over to my office."

Jed was impressed, "Yep, you're right."

The three of us walked into Ryan's office and I introduced Jed, "Ryan this Jed Rae, Sara and Maya's father. He also a new client of mine."

Ryan introduced himself, "Howdy, Ryan Weston. I'm the branch manager here, what can I help with you today?"

Jed explained, "I need to do a wire transfer from the Last National Bank of Wyoming to Ron's account here."

Ryan laughed, "Last National Bank? Okay, who much?"

Jed commented, "Yep, it was the last bank built in Wyoming by The National Banking Company back in 1985. Anyway, we need to transfer \$40,500."

Ryan confirmed, "\$40,500 from the Last National Bank of Wyoming to Ron's I am assuming business account? Anything else?"

I replied, "Yes do it the business account. Andy needs to make a transfer from his account to my account."

Ryan turned to Andy and asked, "How much are you transferring?"

Andy replied, "\$750."

Ryan asked, "Which account Ron?"

I told Ryan, "Put that in the personal account."

Ryan got all of Jed's account information and informed us, "The wire transfer should be done in a few hours, I'll email you when it is done. Let me do the transfer between Andy's and your account so you can be on your way." Jed handed Andy a withdrawal slip, "Go ahead and fill this out and sign the bottom." Andy filled out and signed the slip handing it back to Ryan. "Okay, you are done."

After we left the bank Jed commented, "Reminds me a lot of our Last National Bank of Wyoming, very personable service."

We left the bank and headed south on the Pima Highway and then over to the Pima Freeway. Traffic was still a bit on the heavy side but not too bad. As we made our way on to Shea Blvd I asked Andy, "It's been a while, where is the store again."

Andy replied, "It's off of Shea and Palisades Blvd. About a mile west of AZ 87."

Short time later we arrived at the store. Andy walked in and was greeted by Zina, "Morning Andy. Max said you might be heading up this way. He's out on a house call but did have the server set aside for you. Come with me." We followed Zina to the back and she showed us the sever, "This thing has been sitting here for the past few weeks. No one ever came in to claim it, I have a feeling the old manager ordered it but haven't a clue as to why."

Andy told her, "Nothing he did made any sense. Of course he was not as bad as the manager before him who literally cleaned out his office. Had the computer not been secured to the floor he would have taken that as well. Now, Max said he had the 2 GB RAM?"

Zina paused for a moment, "Yeah he does, but not sure where he put it. Let me check my office." Zina disappeared to her office and returned a short time later with a box, "Okay, here we go...30 2 GB sticks." Jed and I returned to the front and Zina advised, "Okay that will be \$8990. Do you want me to put that on the Plutonium or Kryptonite card?"

I told Zina, "Let's go ahead and do it on the Kryptonite card."

Zina ran the card and presented me with a receipt, "Okay here you go...." She then noticed Andy wasn't around, "What happened to Andy?"

I informed her, "He went back to get some supplies for the Scottsdale store. Here he comes now."

Andy re-emerged and replied, "Let Max know I did an internal purchase order for these supplies."

Zina replied, "Okay will do."

On our way back to the mansion Andy's phone rang, "Oh hey Lindsay. Ah okay, we should be back in about 20 or so minutes. Okay meet you there."

Andy explained, "Lindsay is coming up to the mansion for lunch and is bringing Wynn, Maya and Tess back. After lunch I'll hitch a ride with her."

I reminded him, "Don't forget we are meeting Gary and the Girls tonight."

Andy laughed, "Has it been a week already? Okay we will head over there after work."

As I came into the driveway I pulled over next to the storage garage and my shop. Andy asked, "Is there anywhere in particular we should put this stuff?"

I admitted, "Not really, haven't really allocated any space yet. Maya and I need to go through and start picking all the parts."

Jed looked around, "Nice setup what is this a 3-car garage?"

I explained, "Yes it is, more of an over-sized 3-car garage. Wynn and Sara keep their motor-scooters over here and I have our mountain bikes along with the Jeep."

Lindsay's Mini Cooper came through the Porte Cochere and parked over by us. Lindsay, Maya, Wynn and Tess got out and came over to us. Tess saw the setup and commented, "So you have a shop in your garage how useful."

Maya looked around and commented, "It has thinned out a bit over the past couple months."

I told her, "Yep with the ACME and both Budget Holstein jobs we have used up quite a bit of the parts. You and I need to get a ticket going for the Boots Chugwater job and get everything picked."

Maya asked, "Why, when are we leaving?"

I explained, "Since a lot of what we needed we already have or has come in, likely Saturday morning."

Maya then asked, "Can we do this tomorrow morning?"

I told her, "Guess we could."

Maya giggled, "Cool. Come on Tess let's head down to the playroom." As Maya and Tess left for the playroom I stood there lost for words.

Lindsay and Andy headed back to their stores just leaving Wynn and I. Wynn asked, "Ron, would you or the other crew members mind if I don't come along?"

Funny I had been thinking there may not be much for Wynn to do once we got there, "Nope. But I really don't want to leave you alone during those two and half weeks."

Wynn explained, "I was thinking of heading down to Tucson for a few days to see my girl-friends. I am sure I could stay over with Bambi, return the favor so to say."

She had a good point with all the times Gary and Bunny had taken off, "Okay, I'll ask him tonight. Actually, it is kinda good if you are around."

Wynn asked, "How so?"

I explained, "Should something go wrong, say I need more parts, we can call you and get them Road Runner over."

Later that evening the six of us met up with Andy, Lindsay along with Gary and his girls at The Unlikely Cowboy. As we walked in the hostess greeted us, "Ah Our Best Customers!"

Andy laughed, "Now where have we heard that before?"

I replied, "Oh you mean Corona de las Estrella's?"

Andy confirmed, "That would be the place."

Gary came over, "Evening Ron! Care to introduce me to your friends?"

Jed introduced himself, "Gary, so nice to meet you in person."

Gary was a bit confused, "Same here...um...who are you?"

Tess introduced themselves, "Don't mind him. Tess Rae-Whitewater and my husband Jed."

Gary slowly caught on, "Rae-Whitewater? Oh wait you are friends of Jason Jason? Nice to meet y'all. Let me introduce my wife and sister-in-law." He introduced Jed and Tess to Bunny and Bambi. Gary asked, "So, what brings you two out here?"

Jed explained, "Well, business and to see my daughters."

Gary asked, "Business? You finally going to open distro a center out your way?"

I explained, "Yep, he hired my crew to do his center. We leave Saturday. Need to ask a favor of you..."

Gary laughed, "Dang, I knew this was bound to happen...what do you need?"

I told him, "Wynn, is not coming with us, so I am hoping she can stay with you and your girls'?"

Gary replied, "Sure, after all those times Bambi has stayed with y'all..."

We were interrupted by Martina making her presences known, "Hey y'all!!!!"

Marc was with her as well, and I called over to them, "Martina! Marc! Over here."

She walked over to us and saw Jed, "Hey I know you....hmm let me think...Jed? Jed Rae? I remember you from the wedding. Who is this lovely lady by your side?"

Jed tipped his hat, "Ah Martina, we meet again. This is Tess, my wife."

Martina was getting antsy, "I need a drink. Hey you've seen Kacie?"

Maya looked around, "I don't believe they arrived yet..."

Martina frowned, "Well poo! If you need me I'll be at the bar." She made her way over to the bar to get a drink and flirt with the bartenders.

Marc laughed, "Finally, she's gone! Y'all had to make me bring her!"

I explained, "It's an inside joke, don't ask."

Tess laughed, "Hadn't planned on it." Turning her attention to Maya, "Come Maya, lets join Martina over at the bar."

As Maya was headed over to join Martina at the bar Kayré and Kacie came in. I waived over to them, "Kacie, Kayré over here please." Tess stuck around to meet them.

Kacie came over and asked, "Is Martina here? I thought I saw the 'Chick Magnet' in the parking lot."

Tess asked, "Chick Magnet?"

Kayré explained, "It's Marc's car, and also his plate 'CHKMGNT'. Allow me to introduce us. I'm Kayré Holstein and this is my partner Kacie."

Tess caught on to the last name, "Holstein? As in Budget Holstein?"

Kayré replied, "Yes. My mother founded The Budget Holstein down in Oro Valley. With the help of Ron and his crew, Kacie and I opened a store in Scottsdale."

We ordered our food and talked amongst ourselves for the next few hours until closing.

Chapter 9: Everything But The Kitchen Sink and The Whitewater Ranch

The next morning Maya and I started getting everything together for the job. We would start loading the Jeep and Hummer the next evening. The following day was another mild January day so I opted to get some more use out of my Big Honkin' Grill. I had Wynn make some phone calls to the Zinfandel's who graciously accept our invitation for dinner. Sara and Lindsay invited Kayré and Kacie over as well. I got on the phone with The Boulders and reached Mindy, "Hey Mindy, Ron here. Everything working out alright for you?" Mindy told me everything was fine and asked if I wanted to speak to Marc or Martina. I informed her, "Either one will do."

I was a bit surprised when Martina answered, "Boulders Concierge Office, Martina."

I replied, "Morning Martina. Have fun the other night at the Unlikely Cowboy?"

Martina giggled, "Sure did. Nice of you to invite us."

I corrected her, "Actually it was Gary who invited you. Anyway, I am inviting you and Marc to dinner at our place tonight."

Martina accepted, "Sounds good, see you after work."

That afternoon everyone returned and I called Jed and Tess along with the crew, less Wynn into my office. I explained, "Okay, we will be having Marc and Martina

over along with Kacie and Kayré as well as The Zinfandel's for dinner tonight. A couple other pieces of business, we will be leaving mid-morning tomorrow morning. Further Wynn will not be coming with us."

Maya was shocked, "Why not?!"

I explained, "Her choice and I think it works out better."

Maya still surprised, "How?"

I joked, "Full of questions as usual. Okay, in the unlikely event something goes wrong. I don't know, we miss some parts, need more, something doesn't work, what have you...I can get a hold of Wynn and have her deal with PC's & Things and get the items Road Runner out to us. She is going to stay with Bambi for a bit. Also she wants to meet up with some of her friends down in Tucson."

Maya seemed satisfied with my answer, "Alright, that makes sense. Anything else we need to do?"

I told her, "Well we need to get the brigade together and start loading the Cruiser and Hummer. Wynn has gone off to the market to gather for our feast tonight." We made our way out to the garages and I explained, "For the most part all the parts, especially all the cable spools are going into the Hummer. I'll have my toolbox, measuring wheel and notebook in the Cruiser along with the server and the extra RAM. Luggage will go in the Hummer as well. Andy is going to be driving the Hummer. Lindsay, Sara and Maya will be with me in the Cruiser"

Maya asked, "Why is Lindsay riding with us?"

Andy beat me to it, "Because otherwise Lindsay would complain the whole trip she wants to be with Sara"

Lindsay and Sara both replied, "Whatever!"

Over the next couple hours we had everything loaded with the exception of our bags. During dinner Maya spent as much time as she could with Bambi. She really wasn't too thrilled of the prospect of being away from Bambi for so long. Bambi could sense Maya's feelings, "Don't despair, I'm only a phone call away."

The next morning we were headed to Santa Fe where we would spend the night. After dinner I noticed Maya seemed a little down that evening. I suggested, "Why don't you give Bambi a call, let her know you made it to Santa Fe alright."

Maya somewhat depressingly replied, "Okay." and went to her room.

Sara came over and asked, "She doing alright?"

I told her, "Well, I think she is a little sad to be away from Bambi. Hopefully she will do better after they talk. I am rather tired so I hope you don't mind if we pass on extra circular actives tonight."

Sara was somewhat upset, but understood, "Yeah okay."

Sunday morning during breakfast Jed explained, "It is still going to take most of the day to get to Chugwater. We should be to the ranch by late afternoon."

Tess added, "Y'all should have a couple hours to get settled in before dinner. I talked to Peaches and she is spending most of the day making a large cowboy dinner so be sure to bring your appetite."

Maya who had been quiet most of the morning asked, "Who's Peaches?"

Jed laughed, "Her name is Anna Adela Cruz but she goes by the nickname Peaches. She is our caretaker, sorta like Wynn is for y'all."

Tess jokingly said, "You two would get a long great." Maya laughed off her step-mother's comments.

After breakfast we hit the road and reached the outskirts of Chugwater by about 3:00 PM. I was amazed to see what a small town Chugwater was and what an impact 'our crew' would have on the population. We finally made it to the Chugwater Ranch. The ranch consisted of several buildings including two houses. Jed explained, "The smaller building down yonder is where Tess and I live along with some of the other ranch staff. This building here is our guest house with ten rooms, 4 full-size suites with Jacuzzi style tubs on the lower level and the upper floor has 5 smaller rooms with showers. Now, Ron and Sara along with Andy and Lindsay you both be in the suites. Maya you will be upstairs. If anyone needs anything Peaches is in the first room off the stairs and her cell number is in your rooms."

Noticing Sara as well as Lindsay were both fairly tired, I suggested, "May be we should wait until morning to survey the site."

Tess agreed, "Good idea. Y'all have a couple hours to rest and freshen up before dinner. Peaches will call you when dinner is served. Anyone have questions?"

Maya raised her hand, "Can I make a long distance phone call back to Arizona?"

Jed told her, "That is fine, just dial 9 then 1 and then the number."

Tess handed us our keys and we headed to our rooms. Sara and I entered the room which reminded me a lot of the room we were in at The Holstein Ranch

during Thanksgiving. Sara declared, "I am going to use the tub now, just as soon as I get out this armor!" and headed into the bathroom.

Meanwhile next door, Lindsay was stripping out of her corset and heels. She too wanted to take a soak and then a nap. Andy called me on my cell, "Hey Ron, Lindsay is going to take a soak and then a nap. How about a game of horseshoes, I promise to go easy on you!"

I laughed, "Well, Sara is doing the same. Hey! I'm the one with the first place competition trophy, of course that was from my college days several years ago. Okay, be out in a few minutes." I informed Sara, "Andy and I are going to be outside and play some horseshoes. I'll see you at dinner."

Sara trying to keep a straight face, "Okay, have fun. Try not to hurt yourself, you're not in college any more."

I walked out with a fake laugh, "Very funny!"

I met up with Andy and Jed in the horseshoe pit. Jed saw us, "Let me guess the ladies are soaking and resting."

Andy laughed, "Yep. Now, \$100 says I can beat Ron here!"

Jed called out, "Peaches!"

A lady about Maya's size appeared with long auburn hair in pigtails walked over to us. She spoke in a thick but yet surprisingly somewhat understandable accent, "Yes, Jed?"

Jed introduced everyone, "Peaches, this is Ron Merlot, Sara's husband and Maya's brother-in-law."

Peaches came over and gave me a giant hug, "Welcome Ron."

Jed turning his attention to Andy, "This is Andy McGrawl. He is part of Ron's 'crew'. His wife is Lindsay and she will usually be wherever Sara is."

Peaches also gave Andy a giant hug. Jed asked, "Sara and Lindsay are taking a soak and may be taking nap shortly. Can you go stop by and see if they need anything. Oh and Maya is up in the room next to yours. May want to check in on her as well."

Chapter 10: A Chance Encounter with Peaches and Dinner

Meanwhile Maya tried to call the Zinfandel's but they we're away at dinner. She didn't bother leaving a message, heck she didn't even know the phone number

there at The Ranch. It had only been a day and a half and she was already missing Bambi. She decided she would remove her belt, give her pussy and clit some much needed attention. After removing her belt she sat on the edge of the bed, lost in thought. A knock at the door nearly made her fall off the bed. She was thinking it might have been myself or Sara checking in on her. After grabbing a robe, she opened the door to notice a lady about her age and height with long auburn hair. The lady spoke in an accent Maya couldn't quite place, "Hello! I'm Peaches, caretaker at The Whitewater Ranch."

Maya was still a bit loss in thought and replied, "Oh hi, I'm Maya."

Peaches could since Maya was missing someone, "Missing boyfriend?"

Maya laughed for a brief second, "Well not exactly. More like my girlfriend."

Peaches smiled, "Oh my! I help." She pushed herself into the room kicking the door closed behind her. Before Maya could say anything or much less blink she was pushed atop of the bed on her back with Peaches on top of her kissing her. Maya's defenses kicked in and she pushed Peaches to the floor. Peaches was in a state of shock and was about to say something when Maya threw off her robe and grabbed Peaches from the floor and tossed her back atop the bed. Peaches let out an evil laugh, "You play rough! I like you!" Now it was Maya who was on top, kissing and groping Peaches. Peaches was trying to get a word in, "Maya...Maya...let me get out of dress!"

Maya rolled over so Peaches could sit up and remove her dress. Maya took a quick survey of Peaches and noticed as she removed the dress exposing a clean shaven pussy sans panties. Maya stuck two fingers in Peaches dripping wet pussy and then with her thumb began rubbing her clit as well. Peaches was moaning loudly but want to make sure she'd give some attention to Maya. She turned Maya on her side and then laid down next to her and began licking Maya's pussy. Skillfully, Peaches placed two fingers into Maya's pussy while rubbing her clit and then with other her hand inserted a finger in Maya's ass. This was all it took to push Maya over the edge into a very intense and powerful screaming orgasm.

As Maya was recovering she was thinking, something different with Peaches. Her and Bambi had gone at it before, but she never has an orgasm of such intensity as she just did with Peaches. Peaches grabbed Maya by the chin and told her, "I finish dinner, but tonight when everyone in bed I come back." With that Peaches slipped back into her dress and exited the room. Maya laid on the bed, still out of breath from the orgasm. She still wondered, what was so different with Peaches than Bambi? She drifted off to sleep.

Meanwhile back at the horseshoe pit, I was leading Andy by a few points. Jed however was a master at horseshoes and was beating us both. Andy just completed his final throw when the dinner bell rang. We made our way to the

dining hall and noticed Sara and Lindsay were already there. However, Maya was missing. I asked, "Anyone seen Maya?"

Tess commented, "I believe Peaches saw her earlier and said Maya was going to take a nap. You may want to go see if she wants to eat"

I knew Maya was missing Bambi and may not want to eat so I headed back to the ranch house and up towards her room. I knocked on the door, "Maya? Dinner is ready. Are you coming?"

Maya replied back trying not to laugh at my 'coming' question, "Yes, I'll be there shortly."

I yelled back, "Okay, we are over in the main house. Go in the door by the horseshoe pit." I returned back to the dining hall and saw a couple large platters of fried chicken, enough mashed potatoes and green beans to feed an army (or at least Andy).

Peaches reminded everyone, "Save room for dessert, apple pie!"

Maya walked in with a smile on her face, the first time she had smiled since we left. I asked, "So did you talk to Bambi?"

Maya was drowning her chicken in gravy and replied, "Ah. No, they weren't home. I didn't know the number here so I didn't leave a message."

Interesting, if she didn't talk to Bambi why was she so happy? Don't get me wrong, I want to see Maya happy, but this didn't make sense. Peaches came over and sat across from Maya and smiled at her. Maya returned the flirt. Ah so, that was it. I didn't want to bring attention to them so I went about eating my meal. As everyone had now finishing the main course Peaches announced, "Let me gather dishes..I bring out dessert."

Maya stood up and asked, "Can I help you out with those dishes?"

Peaches giggled, "Thank you Maya that helpful."

Andy looked at me and I just nodded. Once they left the room Tess commented, "Well I see Maya likes Peaches. What did I tell y'all!"

Jed laughed, "I hope Maya can handle her, Peaches can be quite the handful!"

Sara joked, "Gee, she sure got over Bambi fast."

I reminder her, "True, but they are 'just friends', much like you and Lindsay."

Lindsay hearing her name and not paying attention to the conversation asked, "What did I do now?"

Sara laughed, "Nothing yet. We were talking about Maya and Peaches."

Chapter 11: It Looked So Much Smaller On Paper and Test Failed!

The next morning we headed over to the site which was only a few minutes from the Ranch. While the girls unloaded, Jed took Andy and I on a tour, "As I mentioned in our consultation, this facility is split level. The bulk of the offices are on the upper level and we do have some rough framing done."

Jed led us down a long hallway to glass double doors. Jed opened the doors and we stepped in a foyer of sorts. To the left were stairs down to shipping area while to the right was the receiving entrance. Ahead of us was the production area. I stood there surveying this work area as did Andy. I was about to say something when Andy commented, "Um, it looked so much smaller on paper!"

I didn't even turn to Andy, I just commented, "Oh lord what did we get ourselves into this time!" I turned to Jed, "I thought you said this place was *smaller* than Jason's?"

Jed laughed, "It *is* smaller, just *looks* bigger being split level and open concept."

Andy commented, "Hey at least we have help this time."

I told him, "I know, but kinda wish Wynn has came after all. Oh well, just as well she didn't should something go wrong, not that anything should."

Jed slapped me on the back, "That's the spirit Ron! Now, let's head downstairs to the shipping area."

We followed Jed down the stairs to find the girls still bring in all the spools of cables and crates of parts. The shipping area was a lot smaller, but the retail office and conference room were also on this level. Lindsay walked over and commented, "We've got about three or four more trips."

Andy replied blankly, "Okay...."

Lindsay asked, "What's the matter?"

I answered, "He is just in a state of shock over the size of this place. I think after we get all the supplies brought in we are going to have a huddle and discuss our 'battle plan'."

An hour later we met in the conference room. We discussed just how we were

going to do this install, "Okay the first thing we will need to do is get the server installed and then start running cable from the patch panel to all the outlets. Jed you mentioned y'all already had a UPS?"

Tess answered, "Yes Ron we do, it is over at the house right now we can bring it over after lunch. "

I replied, "Okay simple enough. So then, I guess what we need to do now is determine where the server is going to be placed."

Jed informed us, "We've already had server room built on the upper level near the receiving entrance. There is an access pipe that runs down to an electrical room. The UPS will be located down there as well and will connect to a dedicated line and outlet upstairs."

Lindsay commented, "Since this is going to be dual level why don't we setup a couple switches downstairs in the electrical room. That we don't have to feed a couple dozen cables through the pipe."

Andy added, "That would be lot more logical as there won't be as many terminals down here. I'll get a hold of Zina and see if she can hook us up with some switches. You guys have a credit anyway for the switches so this won't cost you extra. So, Ron how do we want to tackle this monster top-down or bottom-up?"

I thought for a moment, "Well, since the electrical room is down here along with our supplies let's start down here and work our way up."

Tess informed us, "Given the time now, how about we break for lunch and then get back working on this?"

I looked at my watch it was only 10:30 AM but I had to take account the time difference of an hour, "Okay, I am sure Andy can eat."

Andy laughed, "You know me, always hungry. So, what's for lunch?"

Tess replied, "Peaches is grilling burgers for lunch. I believe she is also smoking a few racks of ribs for dinner tonight."

We headed back over to The Ranch House for lunch. While Sara and Lindsay went inside to freshen up Andy and I talked for a bit, "Well, here we are day one and already had a change in plans. I wonder how the rest of the install is going to go?"

Andy just laughed, "Hey it would be too boring if everything went just as planned. Just think of this as Boots...'Part Two'!"

I gave a fake laugh, "Oh very funny!"

Maya walked by in route to the dinner hall, when she saw Peaches over by the smoker. She walked over to Peaches and asked, "What's cooking?"

Peaches laughed, "Is this serious question or you flirting?"

Maya shyly smiled, "Both?"

Peaches replied, "Ah I see. Okay then. Make yourself useful turn ribs." They spent the next couple minutes together turning and rotating the racks of ribs in the smoker. When they were done Peaches told Maya, "Okay, follow me to dining hall, I have dozen burgers on the grill here. Get those on platter and take to picnic tables over yonder. I bring everything else and then ring bell."

A few minutes later Maya and Peaches had all the food out for lunch on the picnic table. Peaches walked over on to the dining hall porch and rang the chow bell. We discussed the job during lunch, commenting how we had already had one major plan change just in the first day. After lunch Jed took me over to the garage to get the UPS. I stood there in shock when he removed the tarp. I asked, "Um just how old is this thing?"

Jed laughed, "Only about 25 years old, but should do the job. Shouldn't it?"

I had my doubts but told him, "We'll see. I will want to test it first, but I ain't connecting my laptop to that thing."

Jed still laughing, "Oh come on, not like it is going to blow up! Okay, I have an old TV we can connect to it to test."

He was not kidding about the old part, this thing weighed a ton and had a dial along with rabbit ear antennas. I looked at the TV and then Jed, "Cripes this thing is likely as old as Lindsay and likely weighs about as much she does too!"

With the help of Maya and Peaches we got both the UPS and the TV loaded in the Cruiser. Back at the site we unloaded the UPS into the electrical room and TV in the future server room. I needed to give the UPS a couple hours to charge before I tried to test it. While the girls were assembling and mounting the outlet boxes, Andy and I started running cable. It was nearly 4:00 PM Wyoming time and we only had managed to run cable to the offices and the conference room. We still had the entire shipping area to do as well. Further, we had gone though a third of the cable we had brought with us. I asked Andy, "Did I measure something wrong, it just seems like we won't have enough cable."

Andy commented, "I know and yet we are using less cable with this method than how we had originally planned. May be we are overlooking something."

I thought for a moment, "I don't think so. I am guessing we really didn't take into account the split levels. Guess we will just have to wait and see how it goes. The UPS should be charged now, lets test that out before we call it a day."

We headed over to the sever room and connected the TV to the dedicated outlet served by the UPS. Jed walked in on us, and joked, "Anything good on?"

Andy turning the dial, "Not really, every channel is the same thing, a polar bear in a snow storm!"

I asked Jed, "I assume the breaker panel is the in the electrical room?"

Jed replied, "No, it is actually over in the retail office."

Downstairs in the retail office Jed showed us the main breaker panel. Clearly marked on the lower left was 'Server Room UPS'. I switched the breaker off and was about to head out the door when the main breaker tripped, "What the hell?" Before I could figure that out a loud alarm started blaring.

We walked in to the shipping area and Tess came in and commented, "Fire alarm works!"

Jed replied, "Yep. But why is it going off?"

I told him, "I suspect may be the result of an overload. Of course I cain't see that TV overloading the UPS." We walked over into the electrical room and saw the UPS smoking, "Shit that cain't be good!" Jed ran over to the shipping area and grabbed an extinguisher off the wall and preceeded to foam down the now smoldering UPS.

We just had put out the UPS fire when Lindsay came running in, "What the hell happened?"

I pointed to the UPS and yelled over the fire alarm, "Test failed!" Turing to Jed, "Can you shut-off that fire alarm?"

Jed replied, "Tess is in the process, should be couple more minutes."

He had just left when Maya came down the stairs, "Hey guys that TV in the server room is on fire!"

I was yelling, "Well, this install is going real well!" I grabbed the extinguisher and made my way to the stairs. Tess had manged to silence the fire alarm, but the smoke detectors were still going strong. At that moment as well, the sound of sirens grew closer. What I didn't know was there was Chugwater fire station only

a couple blocks away. I told Maya, "Let the now we have an electrical fire upstairs." As Maya went to greet the fire department I ran up the stairs to the server room. The TV was fully engulfed in flames. I emptied out the extinguisher from the shipping area but there was another mounted on the wall in the sever room. That too was no match for this ragging TV fire. Luckily Maya came in with a couple fire fighters all with extinguishers and they finally manged to get the fire knocked down. A few minutes later the fire fighters returned with fans to clear the smoke out the room. The other half of the crew were downstairs in the electrical room making sure that fire was out as well.

Once they were sure the fires were out the captain asked, "What in the world happened?"

I explained, "I was testing this UPS we were going to be using for their server with this ancient TV. Something went wrong somewhere. When I shut off the dedicated outlet, the main breakers tripped."

The Captain examined the charred remains of the UPS and informed me, "Looks like this thing explode after sending out quite a surge up the line. Be glad those main breakers tripped, they stopped the overload from taking out the whole building. Let's go take a look at the TV."

In the center of the server room sat the burned out shell of the TV. I told Jed, "Hope you weren't too attached to it..."

Jed just stood there looking at the still smoking TV dumbfounded, "Wow! Here I was giving you a hard time about you not wanting to connect your laptop to our UPS."

I told him, "Yeah I know, I thought I was just being overly cautious. Sorry about your TV."

Jed laughed, "Don't worry about it. Now, what are we going to do about getting a new UPS?"

I replied, "Well, Andy needs to talk to Zina anyways tomorrow. We'll see if we can get one from PC's and Things."

The fire fighters packed up their fans and helped us haul out the charred remains of the UPS and the TV before leaving. I had just finished loading the Cruiser when Jed came over and asked, "Hey, I hope this doesn't set us back too far."

I assured him, "Nah, just a minor set back. We should be fine. I think we are done here for the night, let's head back to the Ranch."

As we drove back to The Ranch, I was trying to figure out where I had gone

wrong in my estimates for the amount of cable we needed. We arrived back at The Ranch and after a quick shower sat down to a large dinner of ribs. Once again Maya was sitting across from Peaches, secretly flirting with her. Like the night before Maya offered to help Peaches with the dishes. After dinner Andy and Lindsay announced they were retiring for the night. I bided them a good night and went outside to the sitting area around the horseshoe pit and meditated for a bit. Sara came over a few minutes later, "You all right Ron? You've been a bit quite this evening."

I told her, "I'm okay, just was bit surprised by what happened this afternoon. I never expected the UPS to blowup, much less the TV as well. I am sure heck glad I had not attached my laptop to that outlet. I can't help but think we bit off more than we can chew with this job. Plus I am still trying to figure out where we went wrong in our estimates of the amount of cable needed. Gosh, I wish Wynn was here."

Sara informed me, "But you had said it was good that she was staying in Arizona so she could take care of things, should something like this should happen."

I laughed, "True. I don't know. May be it is first day jitters. At least Maya is happy."

Sara asked, "Yeah, what's up with her and Peaches?"

I replied, "Not sure, but looks like they are enjoying each others company. Have you talked to her about Peaches?"

Sara responded, "No. I don't feel I should bring it up. If she brings it up then may be. I am going to bed, rather tired from all the work."

I kissed Sara and told her, "I'll be in a bit, going for a walk to clear my head." Sara went off to the bunk house while I took a walk around. I was passing the main house when Jed came out.

He called out, "Hey Ron got a minute?"

I walked over to him, "Sure, what's up?"

Jed apologized, "Hey I am sorry about this afternoon. I should have known better than to use that ancient UPS."

I asked, "When was the last time it has been used?"

Jed laughed, "Haven't a clue, bought it a surplus auction a few years back. Never had tested it, just assumed it would work fine. Anyway, we'll pay for a new one out of our contingency fund "

I told Jed, "That's fine. I am just hoping we don't run into any more issues with this install. Well, I better head back Sara is waiting for me. Good night." I headed back to the bunk house only to find Sara was already asleep. The next morning we had breakfast and headed back over to site. For the first couple hours Andy and I ran cable into shipping area. This used up two of the smaller spools. Around 10:00 AM Andy and I took a break so we could ring up PC's and Things.

"Morning Zina, Andy here. We ran into a couple problems with the Chugwater install. We discovered we should be using switches on each level so we are going to need one of those. More importantly though, the client's UPS was no good so we need to order one of those as well."

Zina placed Andy on hold to check the stock and replied, "We can have those later today."

Andy informed her, "Okay good. Ron is going to make some kind of arrangements to get those items." After he got off the phone with Zina he informed me, "She can have the items in by this afternoon. Best you get a hold of Wynn and see if she can get those shipped out here."

I told him, "Okay, I'll give her a call. Better have her send over some more cable as well." I called the house, but no one answered so I left a message, "Wynn, Ron here give me call when you can going to need y'all's help." Thankfully Day 2 went a lot smoother and we we're nearly done with the lower level. That evening after dinner I tried the house phone again, but no answer. Didn't bother leaving a message this time. I decided I call over to the Zinfandel's and see if I could reach Wynn there. I was expecting to leave a message on their machine when Bunny finally answered. "Hey Bunny, Ron here. Wynn around?"

Bunny informed me, "Nope, she took off this morning for Tucson. She said she was going to spend a few nights down there. How's the install going?"

I had to laugh, "Well, we almost burned down the client's building on Monday, but other than that minor mishap it is going smoothly."

Bunny was laughing, "How did you almost burn their building down?"

I explained, "Oh Jed has this UPS unit that was ancient. Apparently he bought it at a surplus auction and never tested it. Luckily I wise enough not to use my computer to test it. Plus they had a TV as old as Lindsay that we tried to use to test the UPS. Well, the UPS blew up along with the TV when we went to test it. So we had a visit from The Chugwater Fire Department that afternoon. Was hoping to get a hold of Wynn so she could pickup the new UPS along with our hub server from PC's & Things. I did leave a message on the home phone earlier."

Bunny told me, "Well, if I hear from her, I'll have her give you a call."

Wednesday afternoon we finally finished the lower level. Everything was wired and ready for the computers which would be arriving sometime the following week. While the girls took off at the end of the day, Andy and I along with Jed stayed behind a bit to review the progress. I told them, "Okay we have the complete lower level done now. I know the upper level is going to take a bit longer but I think we can get that knocked out by late next week. I am thinking we can do a pre-install on the computers the end of next week. The follow week we should be able to get them all fully installed and then call out for Laura."

Andy asked, "Have you heard back from Wynn yet?"

I told him, "No. I talked to Bunny yesterday and she told me Wynn left for Tucson so I am not certain when I am going to hear from her."

Andy then informed me, "I don't believe we are going to have enough cable to finish the upper level. Should I have Doyle send us some or what do you want to do?"

I explained, "I know we still have a ton back at the house. If I can get a hold of Wynn, I'll have her send over a few spools with the UPS and hub station."

Chapter 12: With a Little Help From Arizona

Thursday morning we started working on the upper level. Sara and Lindsay worked on getting the ports assembled while Maya, Andy and I worked on getting wiring to the ports. A little before lunch my cell phone rang with a 520 area number. I was able to answer the call before it went to voice mail, "Hey Ron, Wynn here. Sorry, been away and haven't checked the house phone. You said you needed help?"

I explained, "The install hasn't quite gone as planned. The UPS the Whitewater's had was defective and almost burned the building down. Before that fiasco we figured out that switches at each level would work better for this layout. Finally, somehow we badly under estimated how much cable we needed for this job."

Wynn replied trying hard not to laugh, "Ah I see. So what can I do to help?"

I told her, "Well, Zina has a new UPS waiting along with the hub station at the Fountain Hills store. So all you need to do is go pick them up and have them shipped out here along with a few more spools of cable."

Wynn told me, "Okay well I will be leaving Tucson tomorrow. I found out one of my girl friends has relocate up to Pine, so I was going to head that way tomorrow. Tell you what, I am sure everything will fit into the Jeep, I'll pickup

everything you need and then pay her a visit and stay the night. I should be able to reach Santa Fe on Saturday and get out there sometime in the afternoon on Sunday to help you guys out in Chugwater."

I was thrilled, "Yes, that would work very well. We could use your help, especially when the computers arrive next week. Give me a call when you go to leave Santa Fe." I found Andy and Jed informing them of the good news, "Wynn will be out with supplies on Sunday. She's headed to Pine tomorrow then stay in Santa Fe on Saturday."

Andy told me, "I'll give Zina a call and let her know to expect Wynn tomorrow." We broke for lunch and Andy rang Zina on the way back to the Ranch House, "Heya Zina, Wynn will be by tomorrow to pickup the switches and the UPS."

We arrived back at the Ranch House and much to everyone's surprise Maya didn't take off to see Peaches right away. She headed up to her room in the guest house to freshen up for lunch. About 10-minutes after we arrived Peaches rang the chow bell. Today's lunch was hot dogs, baked beans and coleslaw. After lunch we headed back to the site and continued working on the production area.

Friday morning couldn't have arrived soon enough for all of us. Sara and I hadn't done anything since we had left. I know her and Lindsay hadn't done anything together other than the install work. By Friday afternoon we had finally finished both getting the ports and wiring installed in the production area. We still had the conference room, several offices and the retail area to do. It was only 2:00 PM but decided this would be a good breaking point. I went to locate Jed and found him in his office. I walked in and discovered Tess was with him, "Hey guys!"

Tess looked up from her work, "Oh hey Ron, how goes it?"

I told them, "We've finished the ports and wiring for the production area. We are at a good point to stop for this week so I am sending everyone home. Plus we are nearly out of cable too."

Jed asked, "So what's left?"

I explained, "Well, we still have the conference room, several offices and the retail area to get done. The computers should be arriving sometime next week. Wynn will be here sometime Sunday with the extra supplies along with the UPS and the switches."

Tess wondered, "Do you think you guys will be done next week?"

I was hesitant to answer, "Well, that is kinda dependent on a couple of things. Mainly getting the computers here. The nice thing is the majority of those are ready to go out of the box. The other 30 Lindsay and Andy will need to install the

extra RAM. Once the computers arrive it will take about two days to get them all unpacked and setup..." My cell phone started ringing. I looked at the caller ID, "Why is Lindsay calling me?"

I answered the phone and Lindsay informed me, "Hey Ron. Max informed me the computers shipped today and should arrive late Tuesday."

I replied, "Great, that is a major piece of the puzzle. Thanks for the info." After getting off the phone with Lindsay I explained, "Okay, Lindsay has informed me the computers should be coming in on late Tuesday. So...I need to call Laura and get her out here on Thursday afternoon. *If* all goes well we *should* be nearly done by this time next Friday."

Jed was thrilled, "Great this is going better than we expected."

I reminded him, "Well, we still have a lot to do before then including getting the new UPS and the switches connected and running. Not to mention the remaining ports and wiring. However, I do think it is doable especially having Wynn with us. I need to get a hold of Laura and make sure she can still make it out here next week." I packed up our gear and we headed back to the Ranch House for much overdue rest and relaxation. As soon as we arrived back Sara was all over me wanting to have some fun. I told her, "May be after dinner, I still need to call Laura."

Sara stared to whine, "But we haven't done anything in like a week. Heck I haven't even be able to do anything other than work with Lindsay..."

I jokingly scolded her, "Keep that up young lady and I will put you in your belt and not let you out until we get home!"

Sara's behaviour turned around real quick, "Oh...okay. Say, why don't I take a bath and get freshened up before dinner? You can go ahead and make your phone calls."

Trying hard not to laugh, "That's a good girl!" Sara headed into the bathroom to take a long soak before dinner. I head out towards the seating area around the horseshoe pit. Sure enough Andy and Jed were already in a fierce game of horseshoes. I noticed Maya and Peaches were working on the smoker.

I whipped out my cell and rang Laura's cell. She answered on the first ring, "HOWDIEEEEE! Bro!"

After taking my cell of speaker I replied, "Good day Laura. How you holding up?"

Laura replied, "Not too bad. The convention business looks like it will be picking up again in the few weeks. How goes the install?"

I laughed, "Well, on Day One we had a change in plans when we decided we should do switches between the levels. Then there was that little disaster with Jed's ancient UPS and equally ancient TV that almost burned the building down. As if that weren't enough we under estimated the amount of wiring we needed for the project."

Laura was laugh at my expense and asked, "So how far behind are you?"

I explained, "Oddly enough we are not that bad. Guess I didn't tell you Wynn had opted not to come as we didn't think we would need here. In a way we did, but this worked out as she picked up the switches, a replacement UPS and extra cable today. She should be out here on Sunday. We do have a good chunk of the wiring and port work done."

Laura was impressed, "Sounds like y'all got a lot done still. When are you going to want me out?"

I replied, "Well the computers should be arriving late Tuesday and we should have them unpacked, setup and installed by Thursday night. So I am hoping we can get you out on Thursday and you get the install done on Friday."

Laura checked her calendar, "Hmm, next week. Looks like I have something...oh wait it is that fucking Network Admins of the West Conference up in Reno." I was thinking this was going to put a major kink in our plans. However Laura continued, "Which I have been looking for a valid excuse to get myself out of presenting at this retched thing for the past few months. So this works very well. When I am due to arrive?"

I told her, "I'll have to check with Jed and Tess and have them get back to you on that."

Laura replied, "Okay let me know."

I joked, "Are you sure you really want to back out of presenting at the Network Admins of the West Conference? I mean we can delay the final install until after the conference."

Laura gave a fake laugh, "Very funny Ron!"

After I got off the phone with her I headed over to the horseshoe pit. I asked who was wining and was a bit shocked when Andy answer, "I am!"

I laughed, "Wow! Anyway I got off the phone with Laura. She has a Network Admins of the West Conference she is suppose to present at next week. However she has been looking for an excuse to get out that conference since

Thanksgiving."

Andy recalled, "Oh yeah, she was kinda hoping The Budget Holstein Oro Valley install was going to be around that time frame."

Jed laughed, "Glad we were able to accommodate her. I'll have Tess book her flight here with Great Wyoming Charters. Is she going to fly back or ride back with y'all?"

I hadn't thought about it, "Well, seeing as she isn't one for flying and we have the extra car with Wynn here I think she can ride back with us."

Jed walked into the main house and found Tess in their home office, "Laura is fine for next Thursday, see what we can do to get her out here."

Tess checked, "Hmm well Great Wyoming doesn't appear to go into Vegas. Looks like she would have to make a connection in Albuquerque. Looks like she catch an Econo Air from Vegas to Albuquerque..."

I informed Tess, "There is no way in frozen hell Laura is going to set foot on an Econo Air 'tin can'. See if Desert West flies into Albuquerque."

Tess laughed, "Ah yes, I do recall the 'no tin cans clause' in her contract. Well, lets see here...ah yes Desert West does fly into Albuquerque. Do you have her number?"

I gave Tess Laura's number and warned her, "Beware of her Minnie Pearle greeting..."

Tess wisely put the phone on speaker and called Laura, "HOWDIEEE!"

Tess took the phone of speaker, "Hey Laura. Tess here!"

Laura responded, "Ah Miss I have a Masters in Computer and Information Systems!"

Tess laughed, "Hey your Bachelors is nothing to sneeze at. Anyway, here's the deal...you will fly on Desert West from Vegas to Albuquerque then from there you will connect with Great Wyoming Charters for the 2-hour flight into Cheyenne."

Laura was not too thrilled, "Ugh...I have to connect in Albuquerque. Don't get me wrong, Albuquerque is a nice place, just wish I didn't have to connect."

I told her, "Well, you don't have to fly back."

Laura asked, "What do you mean?"

I explained, "Since Wynn is coming over the weekend we will have The Jeep beside the Cruiser and Maya's Hummer. So you can ride back with us when we return that Tuesday. You can spend the night at our place on Wednesday. In fact I am sure we will have some kinda of a shin-dig on Wednesday. You can fly out on Desert West Thursday or Friday."

Laura was fine with this arrangement but wondered, "Okay, but why will we be leaving that Tuesday?"

I told her, "That Monday we may have some minor follow-up work we need to take care of before we leave."

Laura laughed, "Well, that covers the whole the time frame of that fucking Network Admins of the West Conference."

Tess informed her, "I'll have Peaches pick you up at the Cheyenne Airport."

Laura replied, "Peaches? Okay, well see you on Thursday."

Meanwhile earlier in the day Wynn stopped over at PC's and Things. Now, Zina had never met Wynn before so she had no idea what to expect. Wynn showed up dressed as she was at the Far North Scottsdale grand opening, a purple satin corset and long black skirt with fishnet stockings and ankle boots. Knowing this is how Lindsay and Sara have dressed many of the times, Zina was pretty sure it was safe to assume this was Wynn. She greeted Wynn, "Hello, I'm Zina. I presume you are Wynn?"

Wynn asked, "Gee, whatever gave me away?"

Zina giggled, "Well, your wardrobe is a bit similar to that of Lindsay and her sister Sara."

Wynn laughed and informed Zina, "Um, Sara and Lindsay are not sisters, but everyone sure thinks they are."

Zina stood corrected, "Ah I see. Any way I have the UPS and switches ready for you. The UPS is a bit heavy so I would suggest the two of us carry it out."

Wynn agreed, "Okay. Sounds like plan." The two of them made there way out of the store to the Jeep. They were able to fit the UPS in the back amongst the extra spools of cable. Wynn asked Zina, "Think the switches will fit behind the rear seats?"

Zina acknowledged, "Yes, there should be enough room back there." 30-minutes later Wynn was heading north on Arizona 87 towards Pine where she would spend

that afternoon and evening with a dear friend of hers. After staying the night, she would then leave for Santa Fe in the morning and make it into Chugwater on Sunday.

Late Sunday morning I got a call from Wynn, "Hey Ron! I'm leaving Fort Collins and should be in Cheyenne in the next couple hours."

I gave her directions, "Once you hit Cheyenne keep going north on I-25 to Bluffs Road. Go east on WY 313 a couple miles to Happy Hollow Road. Go south. The turn off for the Ranch is to the right, just before the river."

A couple hours later Jed came by and asked, "Any idea when Wynn is suppose to here?"

I replied, "Talked to her a couple hours ago she was leaving Fort Collins."

Jed guessed, "Okay, well then she should be here shortly before dinner. I'll let Peaches know."

An hour or so before dinner everyone had gathered outside around the horseshoe pits. Lindsay, Sara and Tess were playing against each others as were Andy, Jed and myself. Maya and Peaches were sitting over on a picnic table talking amongst themselves with an occasional light kiss here and there. We just finished the current round when Wynn came up in the Jeep. She stepped out dressed in a tan corset and fishnets along with a brown skirt and 5-inch knee high boots. Peaches looked at Wynn and commented to Maya, "Wow! She gorgeous. She isn't...um..."

Maya without missing a beat, "Into girls?"

Peaches blushed, "Um yes."

Maya giggle, "Oh yes she is. The three of us could have some fun tonight." Peaches could hardly contain herself, especially when Maya called over, "Hey Wynn! Come here a second." Wynn walked over and Peaches was practically drooling at the site of her, "Wynn, this is Anna Adela. She is the caretaker here at the Whitewater Ranch. She will take of care of *all* your needs." With that she gave a wink to Wynn.

Peaches shyly extended out her hand, "Peaches, call me Peaches."

Wynn winked back at Maya while grabbing Peaches arm, "Pleasure to meet you Peaches." She pulled Peaches towards her and kissed her deeply.

Peaches was intoxicated (as were most girls) by Wynn's kiss and fell backwards a bit back on to the table. Jed laughed, "Looks like Peaches has met her match!"

Tess giggled, "Yep, those three oughta have fun together."

Time for me to step in as a chaperon, "Okay kids, enough of that...for now! How was the drive over Wynn?"

Wynn told me, "Not too bad. Did run into one heck of a rain storm in Albuquerque. Ended up staying there last night instead of Santa Fe. But all in all made good timing. What do you want me to do with the supplies?"

I told her, "Just leave them we will unload at the site tomorrow." Turning my attention to Peaches, "Peaches, could you show Wynn to her room?"

Peaches came back to reality hearing her name, "Huh...Oh okay Ron. Come Wynn."

Jed gave a stern but friendly reminder to Peaches, "Don't forget about dinner."

Much to everyone's surprise, Peaches returned a couple minutes later and with the help of Maya started getting dinner served. During dinner I filled Wynn in on the schedule, "At this point we have most of the upper level done. The production area is completely wired and all the outlets are done. We still need to finish the conference room, several offices and the retail area. The computers are coming on Tuesday night so we should be done with all the ports and wiring on Tuesday. On top of that, we still need to install the switches. Plus we need to test and install this new UPS. The computers are going to take nearly a day just to get unpacked and setup. Then Andy and Lindsay have to install RAM in 30 of the machines in the production area before they can even be installed. We should be done with all the computer setup/install by Friday mid-morning. Laura is coming in later on Thursday and will do prepare the network for install first thing Friday morning. She should have it up and running by Friday afternoon. We'll let the install run its course and check on it Saturday. Monday we will spend most of the day cleaning up and fixing any minor problems that may have come up. We will head out first thing Tuesday morning, staying the night in Santa Fe. We will be home Wednesday afternoon. I know Gary will be itching to get back to *The Unlikely Cowboy*."

Chapter 13: The Second Test & Late Night

Monday morning we returned back to the site. Maya and Wynn carried the UPS into the electrical room on the lower level. Andy and I worked on getting the switches setup between each of the levels as well as getting everything connected. Much like we did on The Boot's job, we made notes on the blue print as to where each port was located. Before lunch Andy and I check on the UPS and confirmed it was fully charged. We would test this after lunch. We returned to The Ranch for a fried chicken lunch. During lunch I advised Jed and Tess, "May be should have the fire department on standby as we test this new UPS!"

Tess joked, "I'll make sure we have marshmallows!"

Jed laughed, "Hopefully we won't need the fire department this time. I've got an old ghetto blaster that use to belong to Maya you can use that to test the UPS with this time around."

Maya objected, "Hey! I forgotten all about my Boom Box. I don't want Ron blowing it up!"

I told Maya, "I always wondered why they call them 'Boom Boxes'...I doubt that is going to happen. If it does blow up, I'll buy you a new one..." then I wondered, "...if they still make them."

We returned back to the site and connected Maya's ghetto blaster to the dedicated line. Maya walked in and inserted a cassette tape, pressed play and proceeded to turn the volume way up. The cassette was The Bee Gees, *Staying Alive!* I laughed at her music selection, "Appropriate choice!" Maya stood by in the server room with a fire extinguisher just in case while Tess was down in the electrical room also armed with a fire extinguisher. Jed and I headed over to the retail office I asked Jed, "You ready?"

Jed was a little nervous, "Let's hope this goes better than last week!"

As I flipped the server room breaker, "I hear you." I waited a few seconds, this time around the main breakers didn't trip, "So far so good."

Jed added, "No fire alarm, also a good sign." As we walked back the server room, we could hear Maya's ghetto blaster still going strong. Upon entering the server room we observed Maya boogieing to *The Bee Gees*. Jed laughed, "Looks like she is having fun. Also looks like everything is working." Tess came up stairs to report the UPS was beeping as expected and showed 1-hour capacity remaining. I returned back to the retail office and flipped back on the server room breaker.

By the time I returned the song had finished had Maya was leaving to go help out her sister, Lindsay and Wynn with the rest of the outlets. I told Jed, "Well, that went a lot better than last time. Now, Andy and I will be in here the rest of the afternoon getting this thing assembled and connected the hub station below." I was wrong about it taking the rest of the afternoon, turned out we were still working on the server at 6:00 PM. The girls' along with Tess returned back to The Ranch in Maya's Hummer while Andy and I stayed behind with Jed getting the server finished. Jed picked us up some food from Miss Kitty's Grill. Finally after 10:00 PM we had the server fully connected. While I was dead tired, I did want to see what the girls' had accomplished today. They had gotten the wiring into the conference room but had yet to start on the Wi-Fi system, but this was a last minute addition in lieu of having to wire a dozen or so ports. They hadn't even

gotten to the retail office yet, but did have all the executive offices completed.

Around 11:00 PM the three of us made it back to The Ranch. I walked into the room to find Sara and Lindsay asleep together in each other's arms on the king bed. Jed was still outside talking to Andy. I informed them, "Sara and Lindsay are asleep together in there."

Jed informed me, "Well, I'll have Peaches fetch you a room." I followed Jed upstairs and he knocked on Peaches' door, "Sorry to wake you Peaches, Ron needs a room. My eldest daughter and her adopted sister are asleep together."

Peaches was still awake, "What adopted sister?"

I laughed, "Lindsay is Sara's adopted sister."

Peaches chuckled, "Oh okay. I put you in Peacock Room." She went back into her room momentarily and grabbed a key, "Follow me."

I was wondering why it was called the Peacock Room, I soon discovered why as I walked in and saw a room decorated in a Peacock theme. I commented, "Hmm, not too sure I like the *looks* of this room."

Peaches was rather tired and commented, "Very funny! Here's your key, good night." With that she returned to her room and closed the door rather loudly.

The next morning I joined the girls' over in the Chow Hall and noticed Andy hadn't arrived yet. Sara saw me and asked, "What time did you three get in last night?"

I told her, "We left the site a little after 11:00 PM. I ended up sleeping in the Peacock Room since you and Lindsay opted to spend the night together."

Lindsay blushed, "Sorry Ron. We didn't know when you and Andy were going to be back. I was just going to keep her company until you two came back. I guess we fell asleep waiting."

I assured Lindsay, "That's okay. Glad you could keep Sara company. Anyone seen Andy?"

Peaches informed me, "I just checked him, he'll be over in a few minutes."

Sara asked, "So what's left to do for today?"

Andy arrived and grabbed a plate full of food. Once he sat down I went over that day's agenda. "Okay, Andy and I finally got the server completed and working last night."

Andy asked, "Let's not have another late night like last night please!"

I commented, "Well, I think last night was a bit of an oddity. Anyway, the sever and switches are done. The upper conference room still needs to have the Wi-Fi system installed. The retail office still needs to be wired and the ports installed. This one is going to be a bit different because we will need a port for the the TV's mini-computer in there."

Wynn asked, "What mini-computer?"

Tess explained, "It is a shuttle system that is going to feed a photo gallery sideshow of our products. We added this the end of last week when we found out we wouldn't have to pay for Laura's flight back."

I added, "Doyle was going to have it Road Runner over, should be here sometime today."

Tess continued, "Peaches and I are going to go pickup the Plasma TV over at Wagner Electronics in Wheaton."

I reminded everyone, "The computers are arriving some time this afternoon so let's get as much knocked out as we can before lunch. Speaking of lunch, we will be ordering in from Miss Kitty's Grill since Tess and Peaches are going to be out that way this morning."

After breakfast we headed back to the site. When we arrived there was a Road Runner van parked at the receiving entrance. The driver got out of the van and announced, "I'm looking for a Tess Rae-Whitewater."

Jed walked up and informed her, "I'm her husband, I'll sign for this." While Jed was signing his life away the driver went to the rear of her van and removed a box about the size of a compact microwave oven.

Handing the package over to Jed, "Here you go, have a pleasant day."

Jed handed the package over to Maya who took it into the retail office. Maya and Wynn started up on the ports in the retail office while I unpacked and prepared the min-server for installation. I discovered I hadn't brought in my toolbox yet so I went back outside to get it. As I walked out I noticed a light dusting of snow was starting to form. Having grown up in the lower deserts of Nevada and spending a lot of my time out there and in Arizona, I had not really seen snow. I stood outside for a couple minutes but then headed back in as I was getting rather cold. The retail office already had wallboard up but not on both sides of the walls. I went to work on the shelf for the mini-sever and then the mounting kit for the Plasma TV. It was shortly before noon and Andy just got the wiring into the

retail office when Tess and Peaches arrived with the Plasma TV along with lunch from Miss Kitty's Grill.

After lunch I worked with Maya and Peaches in getting the Plasma TV mounted and connected up to the mini server. The girls had just wrapped up the Wi-Fi system when Tess announced, "Ron, Andy! There are two Roadrunner Trucks in receiving." I headed upstairs met up with Andy. One Roadrunner truck had all the computers while the other contained the flat screen monitors. The plan was to have the computer distributed before we left that night. However since it took over 2-hours just to get them all unloaded and we were still rather tired from the late night before we opted to get this done first thing in the morning.

Chapter 14: The Race is On and a Favour

Wednesday morning we got right to work on distributing and unpacking the computers. Andy and Lindsay had managed to get all the deluxe systems set aside in their own pile so they could get to installing the extra ram. We took a very short lunch and started the process of unpacking and installing the rest of the computers. As night approached Andy, Jed and I evaluated what we had done. To our best guess it appeared about 2/3 of the computers were done and ready to install. Jed asked us, "Do you want us to stay late and knock some more out?"

I looked over to Andy who was barely awake and told Jed, "I think we should call it a night. Laura won't be here until tomorrow afternoon so we should have enough time." I called out to everyone else, "Finish up on the computers you are on and lets call it a night."

The sun had just set when we had finished and there was a light snowfall. Andy observed the snow and commented, "Hope this doesn't delay Laura's flight."

Jed replied, "Should be okay, the bulk of the storm is not suppose to hit until this weekend."

Thursday morning we awoke to a few inches of fresh snow on the ground. During breakfast Tess confirmed, "I talked to Great Wyoming Charters and they said Laura's flight is currently on schedule."

I breathed a sigh of relief, "Good, I don't want her stuck in Albuquerque or any further delays on this here project. Plus I really don't want a repeat of Bullhead City last December." Before anyone could ask I added, "Long story and don't really have time for that now."

Lindsay asked, "So what do we need to do today?"

I ran through the list, "For starters, the deluxe computers still the need the extra

RAM added. Those are the remaining 1/3 that need to be unpacked and setup. Then it is matter of making sure all the switches are cabled up correctly."

After breakfast we made it over to the site and got right to work on the computers. It took Andy and Lindsay a bit longer than they had guessed to get the extra 2 GB of RAM added to the Deluxe systems. They had finally finished that task at lunch time. During lunch Tess informed me, "Great Wyoming is a little backed up right now. Your sister's flight has been pushed back about an hour. I'm going to have Peaches meet her at Cheyenne Airport and then bring her back directly to the Ranch."

I was concerned, "Well, I kinda wanted her to be able to get the software install going tonight."

Tess explained, "With the delay of her flight she won't be here until almost 5:00 PM."

I replied, "Okay then. Given how much work we still have to get done this delay would help."

Later that afternoon Peaches headed over to the Cheyenne airport to get Laura. I gave her a picture I had printed from the e-Christmas card Laura and Miss Kitty had sent the past year. To make things even simpler, the flight only had a couple dozen people aboard. It did not take long for Peaches to spot Laura, "Laura Merlot! Over here."

Laura walked over to Peaches and replied, "Actually it is Meyers...you must be Peaches." Peaches replied with a giant bear hug nearly smothering Laura, "Geez, you are as bad as Maya."

Peaches replied, "Sorry, need be careful."

Laura was trying to place Peach's accent, "You Hungarian?"

Peaches was impressed, "Yes. Few people pick the accent."

Laura explained, "My wife's family is from Hungary."

Peaches asked, "You ready?"

Laura informed her, "No, need to wait for my companion."

Peaches was confused, "Companion? No one told me of companion!"

Laura apologized, "Sorry kinda last minute. Ah here she comes now."

Peaches looked over and commented, "Funny hair cut." Laura's companion had most of her head shaved except for the top third which was still full length with pigtails. The two of them grabbed their bags and followed Peaches to her Bronco. Upon stepping outside to the falling snow Peaches commented, "Aye, more snow...traffic going to be worse." Because of the snow they didn't get back to The Ranch until nearly 6:00 PM. Peaches unloaded their bags and brought them into the guest house. "Okay, do you want separate rooms or together?"

Laura replied, "Two rooms would be good if it is not too much trouble."

Peaches mumbled, "No trouble...they should've told me...but no trouble." She went up to her room retrieved two keys and instructed them, "Follow me." Laura ended up in the Peacock Room while her companion was in a buffalo themed room. She then told them, "Dinner will be served in chow hall. I ring bell, you come." She hastily exited to get dinner served.

We were already in the chow hall waiting when Peaches walked in. I asked, "Laura doing alright?"

Peaches replied, "Yes. She and companion freshening up in rooms."

I asked, "Companion?"

Peaches was getting annoyed, "Yes, girl funny haircut. I need to get dinner. Please."

I told her, "Sorry. Thanks for picking them up." Peaches had left before I could express my gratitude.

Jed told me, "Don't let her get to you. She feels bad that dinner is late. Who's this companion she speaks of?"

I replied, "Haven't a clue. Don't know who 'girl funny hair cut' is, suppose we will find out soon enough."

Maya came out with Peaches with the rest of the food for dinner and set the platters upon the dining tables. Peaches went outside and rang the dinner bell. Most of us were already in the chow hall when she rang the bell. A couple minutes later I walked my sister and her companion. I commented, "Glad to see you survived the flight Laura." I was still trying to figure out who her companion was, although she did look somewhat familiar.

Laura replied, "Wasn't too bad. The Great Wyoming plane was nice. Wouldn't you agree Sophie?"

Sophie! Wow, she sure looked different with most of her hair shaved off. Of

course if Laura hadn't dropped her name, her reply, "Yes mistress." In her Scottish accent would have given her away.

Laura informed Sophie, "No need to call me mistress while we're here. Okay?"

Sophie replied, "Yes ma'am."

Laura laughed, "Or ma'am. You may call me by my given name"

Sophie certainly did call Laura by her given name, "Okay. Abigail."

Laura let out a shriek, "Ack! Not *that* given name. Call me Laura, okay."

Meanwhile I was laughing and told her, "You got be careful what you tell her."

Laura was laughing too, "Tell me about it Francis! Now, how did she know my real name? I have certainly never used it around her."

I was trying to recall, "I think when you were out during Christmas, when you missed Mel's install. I yelled out your *full* name out of frustration. So, why did you bring her and um whats with the um..."

Laura answered, "...haircut? It was Miss Kitty's idea. I came home from work one night and thought we had a new slave. It wasn't until she spoke that I realized it was my Sophie."

I commented, "Same here, but why bring her? I mean that is fine, but you didn't say anything."

Laura apologized, "Sorry I guess I should have. Miss Kitty is up in Reno for 'training' and I was suppose to be up there too for that fucking Network Admins of the West Conference. Sophie was going to be staying with us up there, on my tab since I could get a room for two. Since I ended up not going to the conference, I had to bring her with me. She will be useful though, a project of this size a helper is always good."

I couldn't agree more, "I know what you mean. Having Wynn here made a huge difference. Even having Andy for the couple weeks for the Boots project helped. There is a lot of work that still needs to be done."

Tess walked in and saw Laura and Sophie, "Which one of you is Laura?"

Laura stood and introduced, "That would be me. This is my assistant, Sophie."

Sophie walked over and gave Tess a hug, "Pleasure to meet you."

Laura continued, "Sorry about the delays. I had kinda hope to have started tonight but..."

Tess assured her, "Don't worry about it. I think we are ahead of schedule from the original time line. Even if you brother tried to sabotage the project..."

I reminded them, "Hey, who's idea was it to try and use a UPS as old as Maya?"

Jed raised his hand, "Guilty!"

I added, "At least Wynn here came to save the day."

Peaches brought out the dinner, "Sorry this late...."

Jed told her, "Don't worry about it, we are not in any hurry. Your cooking is worth waiting for!"

After dinner 'the crew' had a pow-wow with Tess and Jed. I brought Laura up to speed on the project, "We are about 90% done with the computer installs. The production systems have slowed us down a bit, but I do believe we should have those knocked out by tomorrow afternoon."

Laura commented, "That's fine it is still going to take me sometime just to get the software loaded up on to the sever. Sorry to cut this short, but I am rather tired."

The next morning the snow had let up enough for us to get over to the job site. Laura walked in followed by Sophie. Laura looked at the site and then turned to me and commented, "Hey, I thought you said this place was smaller than Jason's?"

Tess overheard the comment, "It is. Must be the dual-levels and the openness that makes everyone think it looks bigger. So where do you need to start?"

Laura replied, "Server room."

Tess led Laura to the server room where she stayed most of the morning. Meanwhile, we enlisted the help of Sophie in getting the remaining systems installed. We returned back to the Ranch for lunch. After lunch Laura had the network software installed and was running diagnostics. I was in the office with Ted and Jess when Sophie came looking for me, "Sir? Mistresses...Abi...I mean Laura says three of the systems in the production area are not responding. I won't repeat exactly what she said, but I think you get the general idea."

I laughed, "Yes, I do and you don't need to call me sir. Did she tell you which ones?"

Sophie replied, "Yes sir...err...Ron, terminals 13, 21 and 22."

I still had my walkie with me, "Andy you there?"

Lindsay replied, "He stepped out for a bit. Need something?"

I relayed the info, "Yep. Laura says 13, 21 and 22 are not responding."

Lindsay replied back, "13, 21 and 22. Okay let me look." A couple minutes later Lindsay came back, "Okay 21 and 22 were not on. 13 appears to be working and is connected have her check again."

Sophie went back to the sever room to find Laura. While we were waiting Tess asked, "Hey, I am wondering if you could do us a favour?"

I asked, "I suppose..."

Tess explained, "Seeing as Jed and I have not had much of a honeymoon we plan on heading down to the Caribbean as soon as we wrap up here."

I was puzzled, "Um...okay..."

Jed continued, "Well, as you don't like leaving Maya or Wynn alone, we kinda feel the same way about Peaches. Furthermore, she is really not too thrilled with the snow."

I laughed, "Cain't say I am either. But what does this have to do with me..."

Sophie came back with a report, "Laura told me to tell you that fucking terminal 13 is not fucking working. She had more to say, but I am sure you know what that entailed..."

Trying to contain myself, "Okay, Laura's mood is now officially 'sailor'. Let me see if I can get Andy or Lindsay on walkie. Andy?...Lindsay?"

Andy came over the walkie, "Yeah Ron?"

I warned him, "Beware Laura's mood has moved from 'trucker' to 'sailor' and she has informed us as only as she can, terminal 13 is not responding."

Andy laughed, "Thanks for the warning. Let me try rebooting it again."

Sophie asked, "What should I tell her?"

I handed her the walkie, "Here, give this to her and let her deal with it along with the McGrawl's."

Sophie smiled, "Thank you." She left to give Laura the walkie.

Turning my attention back to the Rae's, "Okay, now that is taken care of..."

Tess asked, "Would y'all mind having Peaches stay with you for a couple weeks?"

I thought for a moment, "Well....hmm....where to put here. I suppose I could put her with Maya."

Sophie came back to the office, "Ron...sorry to bother you. Laura wants to see you along with The Whitewater's in the server room ASAP." I walked with Sophie back to the server room and was I prepared for Laura to be throwing a fit. Much to my surprise Andy, Lindsay along with Wynn we're in the server room with Laura.

Laura informed us, "Looks like terminal 13 has some issues. Wynn and Lindsay seem to think it may be a bad NIC card. What do y'all want to do?"

I asked the obvious, "Okay, so does anybody had a spare NIC card on them?"

Andy laughed, "We didn't bring our box of spare parts. What about you Ron?"

I thought for a moment, "Might have one in my repair kit, but that is over at the Ranch House."

Tess asked, "Is it critical that terminal 13 be up and running before you do the install?"

Laura replied, "Well, not really. I can always come back and do a manual install on that terminal. Going to be a bit of a pain and time consuming since it is a production system but I guess it can be done. Sophie, go grab my Red Hat CDs from my bag. This is going to take a few hours..."

Chapter 15: The Story of Sophie & Let it Snow! Let it Snow!

Late that evening Laura had the bulk of the install done. There were still a few minor fixes we had to take care of on Monday including terminal 13. As we went to leave we noticed the snow had started falling again and was getting a bit thick. We headed to the chow hall after getting freshened up. Peaches had made a giant pot of stew, perfect for such a cold night. After dinner Maya and Wynn helped Peaches get everything cleaned up before they had their fun. Peaches had been in the kitchen most of the day and had not realized it had been snowing so hard. She walked outside and saw the snowfall and felt the bitter cold, "Aye...I am so tired of snow and cold!"

Her comment reminded me of the discussion The Rae's and I were having earlier in the day. I told her, "You only have to put up with for a few more days."

Peaches looked at me puzzled and asked, "What you mean Ron?"

I just laughed, "You'll find out...in due time..."

Peaches just shrugged, "Okay then." She turned her attention to Wynn and Maya, "You two with me tonight!"

Sara remarked, "I suppose she needs a couple of girls to keep her warm."

I concurred, "Yep. She doesn't seem to be too thrilled with the cold. Sorta like Laura. Speaking of which, I am going to check on her before we retire for the night. In the meantime if you want to get yourself prepped..."

I left the Chow Hall and headed over to the guest house while Sara went to get ready for bed. As I headed upstairs I noticed Sophie leaving Laura's room. She saw me and instructed, "Ron, lets go downstairs your sister is a bit exhausted." We headed back downstairs in a small gathering area where Sophie explained, "I think the cold is taking its toll on her."

There were a couple things Laura did not like, flying and cold and especially cold accompanied by snow. I commented, "Cain't say it would have been much better for her in Reno."

Sophie replied, "True, but she would have not had to leave the hotel for the presentation, to shop, dine or to get fucked."

I laughed, "True that. I suppose living in the desert all those years thins one's blood. I'll take the heat provided it is not humid over the cold."

Sophie agreed, "Having lived in New England for couple summers I can understand that."

I was a bit puzzled by her response, "Um, okay. I didn't know you had lived in New England, with your accent and all."

Sophie explained, "Well, I was born and raised in Scotland and lived there until I was 16. I immigrated to the states with my folks. I ended up in Boston for couple years doing modeling and when I turned 18 went to 'adult' modeling and some films. Your sister had placed an ad on a S&M site I was part of seeking a maid/caretaker. I was tired of Boston and wanted to see other parts of the country so I replied with a link to my 'portfolio'. I wasn't even sure what to expect. She called me the next morning offering to fly me out to Vegas."

I laughed, "Wow, talk about taking a risk."

Sophie laughed, "I know. But somehow I trusted her, she sound sincere and genuine..."

I interrupted her, "Wait, this is Laura were talking about here, right?"

Sophie continued, "Yep I know. Anyway, she took me to the house and then up to the play loft where Miss Kitty was waiting. I just thought Miss Kitty was a friend of hers. We talked a bit and told me to come back the next morning if I wanted to start. Looking back, what happened that next day really changed things..."

Sara walked into the sitting area and heard the last part of the conversation, "Changed what?"

I quickly filled Sara in on Sophie's story, "Sophie here was explaining how she met and eventually became employed by my sister."

Sara sat down, "Interesting, kinda wondered how you got involved. You've seemed so sweet and innocent to be involved with her."

Sophie laughed, "Hardly! If you knew what I was doing before I found his sister."

Sara asked, "What was that?"

I explained, "She did modeling while she was living in Boston."

Sara was surprised, "Boston? Would have never thought. Anyway I did modeling too, in fact that is how Ron and I met. He would have me model clothing, devices, what have ya, for his clients. I guess I was looking for something a little more steady. I mean the money was nice when I could get gigs but those were far and few between. I did have one big gig in Los Angeles for a couple months before I came to Arizona with Ron. They really wanted me to stay and the money was nice too, but I could not bring myself to doing porn movies full time."

Sophie agreed, "Yes. The same here, that was the reason I was looking at the classifieds on that site. I figured even if I were someone's 'slave' or 'pet' at least it would be a better environment. Anyway, as I was saying...what happened that next day really changed things. I came in that morning and Laura had me change into a school girl outfit, tight white blouse, short skirt with the white knee high stockings sans panties. She then led me into her bathroom to the bondage platform she has hanging in there..."

I was bit confused, "...wait she has a bondage platform in her bathroom?" Looking back, I don't ever recall even seeing Laura's master bath.

Sophie explained, "Yes, it is a huge bathroom and she has a platform that is large enough for one person to lay on. Anyway Miss Kitty came in and restrained my wrists behind my head while Laura propped my ankles so my legs were up in the air and I was completely exposed."

Sara asked, "Wow, so how did you react?"

Sophie thought for a second, "You know, part of me wanted to scream and yet another part of me was getting quite turned on. Laura then told Miss Kitty to leave the room. I was starting to get a little worried...I think Laura sensed my fear. She assured me in a calm matter that I would enjoy what she was about to do to me. Further she told me if it gets too rough to let her know. Anyway, she put on pair of latex exam gloves and then started applying tons of lube to my pussy. She started with a couple fingers slowly inserting more. Before I knew it she had her entire fist in my pussy. I was in a state of shock. I had never orgasmed so hard in my life. This continued for what seemed like an eternity, but in reality only a few minutes. She released me and allow me to clean myself up in her garden tub."

Sara laughed, "That has to be the most unusual 'orientation' I have ever heard."

I added, "Well, Laura is a bit unusual herself. So what happened after that?"

Sophie continued, "Okay, so after I got cleaned up and dressed back in my own clothes Laura told me to come down to the living room. She introduced Miss Kitty as her partner and asked if I had any troubles with that arrangement. I told her it did not bother me one bit. If anything I found it erotic. Anyway, she then goes on to explain that she wanted to show me that the 'job' would not be all work and no play. She explained in more details the responsibilities and my 'uniform'..."

I wondered out loud, "I wonder if she got the idea for the 'uniform' from Martina?"

Sara looked at me puzzled, "What is that suppose to mean?"

I hadn't realized Sara didn't know that her 'uniform' had been Martina's idea all along, "You mean to tell me you didn't know that your old uniform was Martina's idea?"

Sara was even more confused, "Martina's idea? I thought it was your perverted idea!"

I laughed, "Oh my! I really wish I could take credit for that. Nope, that was Martina's condition on having you live with us. I really thought you knew. She was with me when I called to make you the offer."

Sara confirmed, "When you told me about the uniform over the phone I didn't not know you were relaying from Martina."

I added, "Still wonder how those two met up."

Much to my surprise Sophie filled in a major blank, "Um...I do believe she told me once she met Martina at a convention in Henderson. They met at a club whilst at the convention something about Martina was there as a connoisseur. Anyway, after I agreed about the uniform along with everything else she asked if I still wanted the job and if there was any obligations I needed to have taken care of. I told her I still had the studio in Boston, but not much else. She asked if she were to 'take care of' the lease on the studio and advance me some money if I would be willing. She told me I could leave after 30-days if I didn't like it and there would be 'no hard feelings'. Well, that was nearly 2-years ago and here I am."

Sara asked, "Did you have any hesitations about staying after the 30-days?"

Sophie laughed, "You know the first week I thought to myself, this is nuts and what had I gotten myself into. But Laura had promised me if it didn't work out I could go back to Boston. By the end of the first week I knew I wanted to stay and this was where I belonged. Laura is so nice as is Miss Kitty, they are like family to me. Besides now, Laura would be lost without me. Anyway, nice talking to you two I want to get some sleep so good night."

Chapter 16: That's a Wrap! and Don't I Know You?

Late Sunday evening the snow had finally stopped falling. By Monday morning the roads for the most part were passable but was still slow going. I had made sure to bring a couple of NIC cards with me so we could get terminal 13 online. While Andy and I worked on terminal 13 Laura was working with the Rae's showing them how to use the photo software for the front office slide show. Later that morning Sophie came by and informed me, "Laura wants to know when the fucking terminal is going to be working."

I relayed, "You can let her know it is done...I think."

Sophie laughed, "You think?...oh she is going to *love* that!"

I headed over to the server room to discover everyone had crammed inside to see if our fix would work. Laura joked, "Geez if I wanted an audience I would have gone to that fucking Network Admins of the West Conference."

I told her, "Just see if it is working and then we will be out of your hair."

Laura replied, "Ya know, with the way this install is going, there won't be much of that left...Okay, okay. Well here goes..." She restarted the server and we waited,

"10...11...12...13! Yes! We are in business. Okay Sophie grab me the Chugwater DVD so we can get this done."

I asked, "How long is this going to take?"

Laura informed me, "The re-imaging is going to take several hours. However, in about 30-minutes I should be to the point were I won't need to babysit it anymore."

The rest of the morning was spent cleaning up. We had all the boxes from the computers and monitors to deal with. Plus there were empty cable spools littering both levels along with plastic bags from the patch cables. By lunch time we had most of the lower level cleaned up. There was still the upper level to take care of as well. At least having Wynn and Sophie with us made this process a little quicker. After lunch Laura checked the status of the install and informed us it should be done by mid-afternoon.

Tess called Laura, Maya and I into her office. She told us, "Looks like y'all are about done. I have to say this was quite impressive given the size of this project."

I added, "Not to mention some of the 'challenges' we faced."

Tess laughed, "Well, we sure didn't expect the issues with the UPS. But other than that, this wasn't too bad?"

Laura commented, "I still say this place is bigger than Jason's. But, my install went a lot better than I was expecting. Only having one computer not working was a nice change."

Maya informed us, "I never saw inside of Jason's place so wouldn't know. I was more concerned about getting myself out of Frisco before Dirk found me again."

I told Laura, "You bringing Sophie along really helped things too."

Laura laughed, "Good. I was so nervous about bringing her. I was really hoping she would be of use and not be in the way."

Jed handed me a check, "Here you go Ron, the remaining \$13,500 as we agreed upon."

Tess turned her attention to Laura, "Here is your payment."

Laura open the envelope containing her check and upon inspection objected, "There must be some mistake, we agreed upon \$725. This check is for \$1015."

Jed explained, "Like we said in the beginning if you went over the 10-hours we

allotted it was our discretion to cover the time. Given the extra 4-hours you had to spend on Terminal 13 was due to circumstances beyond your control, we gave you the time. We ran into a lot of obstacles on this project, but y'all still a great job."

Laura added, "Well, I suppose I should give a little something to Sophie."

Maya commented, "We still need to get our gear packed."

As Laura, Maya and I were leaving Tess called out, "Ron, can you stay for a bit."

I told Laura and Maya, "I'll catch up with you two in a bit." Turning my attention to Tess, "What's up?"

Tess asked, "Remember our conversation earlier?" I looked at her puzzled. She continued, "About Peaches?"

Now I remembered, "Ah yes. I haven't mentioned anything to anyone else about this."

Tess inquired, "You still want to take her along?"

Jed added, "She can be quite the handful you know!"

I laughed, "I am sure Maya and Wynn can keep her line."

Tess confirmed, "Great she will spend two weeks with y'all out in Arizona."

That evening as we're riding back to the ranch I informed Sara, "Hey, Peaches is coming back with us and will be staying for a couple weeks."

Sara replied, "Ah, that's right my folks haven't had much of a honeymoon yet. Does Maya know?"

I told her, "Nope. Peaches doesn't even know yet."

We arrived back at The Ranch. Peaches was working on dinner along with Maya. Andy and I were going to challenge Jed to a game of horseshoes but it was so cold outside we passed. We ended up by the fireplace in the mess hall. Jed and Tess walked into sitting area along with a tall slender bearded fellow. Lindsay was the first to notice the 'visitor'. She didn't really pay much attention to him at first. However, something about him bothered her, but not in a bad way. Somehow she thought she had seen him before, but couldn't quite place it. She whispered to Andy, "Hey, does that guy look familiar to you?"

Before Andy had a chance to answer the 'visitor' came up and greeted them, "Hey

Andy, Lindsay good to see y'all again! Tess let me know you were still in town so I thought I come over and pay you a visit. Plus Tess insisted I stay for dinner." Both Andy and Lindsay looked at him blankly. He laughed, "Don't recognize me do ya? Well, I am not surprised when I saw y'all last I didn't have this here beard."

Andy was still at a loss but Lindsay finally figured out who it was, "Wait, Dunn Brooks?"

Dunn laughed, "Correct, give the lovely lady a pony."

Andy stood up and shook hands with Dunn, "Good to see you. How are things for you in Wyoming?"

Dunn explained, "Not so great. You know I came out here a couple months prior to you offering me that position at your Fountain Hills store. At the time a friend of mine was running his own shop out near Caspar and had hired me to help out. Well, I quickly learned that he had gotten himself into quite a mess with the business. While I did my best to try to clean up his messes and get the business afloat again, he just kept digging himself into a deeper hole so to say. The last thing he wanted me to do was front him \$10K to cover the mortgage on the shop so the bank wouldn't foreclose. It was that point I finally told him he was on his own and I walked away. This was right after Thanksgiving."

Andy was in shock, "I am so sorry."

Dunn laughed, "Hey, it worked out. He got what he deserved plus I got an early 'Christmas Present'. Seems one his premier clients contacted me personally to do an install for one of their friends. He had sent me over to do a home office network install that he was 'too busy to do'. They were so impressed with my work as well as how fast I was able to resolve a couple minor issues of theirs. They had been waiting for weeks to get the job done prior."

Lindsay laughed, "Your gain, his loss."

Tess added, "Our gain, the 'premier client's friend' was us. He did the network for the Ranch House and Andy's name happened to come up in conversation one night. Jed had commented that Andy was sub-contracted for the Boots job you did last summer with Jason. So between Jason and Dunn here we knew we had to do whatever it took to get the AZOutback Crew to do our business."

Jed laughed, "Even if it meant facing my angry daughters. Though I sure was not expecting Sara to be so harsh with me. Oh well, I suppose I did deserve that."

Andy was in shock, "Small world. So, are you doing independent work out here now?"

Dunn replied, "Not really, this was more of a one time gig. I was kinda wondering if I could come work for y'all at the Fountain Hills store or even one of the Tucson locations."

Andy was thrilled but explained, "Well, we found a great manager for the Fountain Hills store and she is doing well there. As for Tucson, Pima County shut down our Tucson stores last summer."

Dunn was stunned, "Dang, you got shut down by the county! What the heck did you do?"

Andy replied, "Long and complicate story to that, but it wasn't totally our fault. Choose the wrong person to buy a store from. Anyway, I rather not get into this as it was an especially hard time for us."

I noticed Lindsay was starting to get a little shaky as the memories of the past summer came back to haunt her. I turned to Sara and whispered to her, "Hey, why don't you go over and sit with Lindsay a bit."

Dunn apologized, "Sorry to hear that. Sounds like 2007 wasn't to good for y'all either."

Sara had moved over next to Lindsay and her put her arm around her. Lindsay did seem to become a little calmer and added, "True, but we too did get an 'early Christmas Present' as well with our new North Scottsdale store."

Dunn asked, "North Scottsdale?"

Andy explained, "Yep, out near The Boulders. Wasn't exactly something I was expecting to do, but the timing was perfect and being we've been banned from Pima County the location is good too. Partnered up with a couple of friends of Ron's who lost their store due to a corporate restructuring. They wanted to operate their own independent store, but knew nothing about running a store. One's a tech and the other is salesman so we are well staffed at that location as well."

Dunn was a little disappointed, "I see..."

Andy continued, "However, around April we may be getting ready to open a new store out in Rio Verde. Now, we really could use a good and experienced manager to get that store up and running. We've been hesitant to really move forward with the Rio Verde project because we've wanted to make sure everything continued to move smoothly with the Fountain Hills and North Scottsdale stores." Andy then confirmed a suspension of mine with a laugh, "But...truth be told, we've been putting it off because we really don't have the time or the desire to try to recruit a new manager."

Lindsay added, "Of course we still need to get the store, but we do have a couple possible locations."

Andy offered, "If you can hold out until April and we can secure a store in Rio Verde, it will be yours to run."

Dunn was ecstatic, "Wow that would be great. Can't say that I care much for the winters here in Wyoming."

I joked, "You are not the only one."

Ironically, Peaches having just wrapped up dinner came out of the kitchen and was heading outside to ring the bell. She opened the door and was greeted with a blast of cold air, "Argh. I so hate winter! Wish I was a place warmer."

I casually told her, "That could be arranged."

Peaches looked back and noticed that everyone was already in the sitting area and asked, "Oh so you all here then?"

I don't think my comment had sunk in, "Yes, we are. Aren't you the least bit curious about 'the arrangement'?"

Peaches was very confused, "What? I not understand Francis."

I didn't even pay attention to the fact that she had called me Francis but Tess did and asked, "Who's Francis?"

I replied, "That's my real name. Just like Laura's is..."

I hadn't realized Laura was in the room, but before I could even finish my sentence she warned me, "If you say my real name, you won't be making it back to Arizona!"

I laughed, "Then I will make sure my dying wish is for you to fly back to Vegas on Econ Airlines via Chicago."

Laura challenged me, "You wouldn't? Would you?"

I ignored her and turned my attention to the Hungarian girl, "Anyway, Peaches you get take a vacation."

Peaches still had no idea what was going on and looked to her employers, "What he talking about Tess?"

Chapter 17: A Visit To The Merlot Mansion Hotel!

Tess explained, "Peaches, we know you've been working very hard these last couple weeks accommodating Ron and his crew. We've seen you been a bit stressed out and we know you don't like the cold. Jed and I are leaving this weekend for the Caribbean where we are going to spend a couple weeks. In the meantime, you get to go back to Arizona with Ron and our daughters."

Peaches was still a bit shocked, "Wow. Two weeks not freezing." She turned to me, "Do Maya and Wynn know?"

I replied, "I don't think so, unless Sara told them."

Peaches made a hasty exit, "Must get packed." She returned shortly, "You have pool?"

I laughed, "Yes we do, Martina had a huge pool installed. Don't worry we are not leaving until Tuesday."

The weekend was rather cold as the front of the storm passed through. The short distance from the guest house to the main ranch house seemed like a 10-mile hike. We did manage to keep ourselves occupied by watching movies in the Ranch House and other activities. Sunday afternoon the storm had finally passed but it was not until mid-morning Monday the roads had been cleared enough for us to travel. Andy, Laura and I along with Jed and Tess headed over to the site to do a final walk through. Maya stayed at the Ranch House as Tess wanted to talk to her in private. We performed the final walk through at the site and everything seemed to be in working order. Before we left, I snapped several photos to have a reference. The Rae's could move on with getting the rest of the construction completed upon return from their honeymoon. Monday night, since Peaches was rather occupied we had pizza for dinner and finished packing.

The next morning we loaded up The Cruiser with all our luggage which Andy would drive. I still had my toolkit and measuring wheel in the Jeep which Peaches rode in with me, Lindsay and Sara. Maya took Wynn, Laura and Sophie in her Hummer. We made it into Santa Fe by mid-afternoon. After getting checked in, Maya called Bunny and they talked for a very long time. Upon returning later she informed me Gary wanted to talk to me.

Gary asked, "So, you guys are back in town tomorrow?"

I told him, "Yes. I suppose you want to go to *The Unlikely Cowboy*?"

Gary laughed, "How did you ever guess? So, any way you have your sister with you so y'all will have seven correct?"

I did a quick count and corrected him, "Actually we have nine."

Gary was confused, "Nine?"

I informed him, "Yes, Laura brought Sophie with her and we are bringing Anna back with us."

Gary was even more confused, "Anna?"

I explained, "Yes, she is the Rae's caretaker."

Gary understood, "Oh I see. Okay, so nine for you. I know Marc *and* Martina are coming, although if Marc has his way..."

I laughed, "Yep. Have no idea why those two got married. Hell, I have no idea why I got married to her. Not like she was that interested in me. She only flung herself on to me as soon as the real estate agent stepped outside."

Gary laughed, "Well, I set such a fine example with Bridgett. Oh by the way Kayré called to say Linda is in town and will be joining us tomorrow. She said something about wanting to find out when y'all were going to finish her store."

I kinda forgotten about Linda, "Hmm....we go from having no work to being over booked...again."

Gary confirmed, "Anyway say around 6:00 PM tomorrow night. Going to be one heck of a shindig! I should bring Lulu too. Well gotta run."

I just got off the phone with Gary when Sara walked over with my cell phone, "Your mother is calling. Says her and Blanche are going to be in town tomorrow."

I was wondering what the heck my mother was going to be doing in town, "Hey Mom, what's up?"

Lorena informed me, "Not much Blanche and I are going to be heading to Vegas. Bit of a long trip from Tucson so we thought we come see you, stay the night."

Her timing was something else, "Okay, well we are on our way back from Chugwater so we are suppose to be home tomorrow afternoon. Gary has big Shindig planned at the *Unlikely Cowboy*. Now, as for you two staying...geez the hotel...err mansion is full. Wonder if Gary can accommodate you two? I need to call him anyway to let him know we are going to have two more people."

My mother commented, "Gary seems like a nice guy, we wouldn't mind staying with him and Bambi. Well, we will see you tomorrow."

I called Gary, "Hey sorry to bother you, but I need another favour."

Gary joked, "Two in one month! Okay, what do you need?"

I ask him, "Would you and Bambi be able to accommodate my mother and Blanche?"

Gary replied, "Sure. Why can't you?"

I told him, "Let's see Andy, Lindsay, Laura, Sophie and let's not forget Anna, the mansion is full."

Gary told me, "No problem, we hardly get any use out of our guest rooms."

After I wrapped up with Gary, again I found Sara and explained things, "Okay, seems my mom and Blanche are going to be coming up tomorrow on their way to Vegas. They are going to be staying with Gary as our mansion is full."

Sara asked, "Are they going to be taking Laura and Sophie with them?"

I had no idea, "Good question. I sure Laura would rather get a ride back to Vegas than fly. Let me see if I can go find her."

I knocked on the door of her suite and Sophie answered, "Oh hey Ron come on in."

Laura came out the kitchen and joked, "Checking up on me?"

I laughed, "Not really. Hey mom and Blanche are going to be in town tomorrow. They are heading out to Vegas. So, I was wondering if you and Sophie would rather ride back with them instead of flying back."

Laura jumped up and hugged me, "Yes! Yes! I would so much rather get a ride than fly."

I was a little taken aback at Laura's enthusiasm, "Wow, you almost hurt me there!"

Laura apologized, "Sorry got a bit carried away."

I explained, "Okay that is fine. Anyway, we will have to ask them tomorrow but I don't see why not."

That evening we had dinner at in-town restaurant then went to bed early. I wanted to get an early start in the morning so we could have some before the Shindig.

Chapter 18: Big News.

An early start indeed we did get, as soon as the little diner opened we had breakfast then headed back to the hotel to check out. This time around Sara and Lindsay rode with Andy in the Jeep while Peaches along with Laura and Sophie rode with me. We made fairly good timing and got back home in the early afternoon. Everyone lent a hand in unloading the left over supplies, which really weren't that much. After getting Peaches settled in, Maya came over and asked if she had enough time to go over to Vinnie's she needed to talk to Drew and Diane. I informed her we still had a couple hours before dinner so that would be fine.

I headed into my office to sort out the mess of mail Gary had piled upon my desk while I was gone and also wanted to try to get myself caught up on the Budget Holstein Oro Valley job before we met with Linda tonight. I had just sat down when Sara walked into my office and announced, "Something bothering Lindsay..." I was about to dismiss her when she continued, "...and Andy."

Now I was getting concerned if Sara was worried about *both* Andy and Lindsay then something was wrong, "What makes you say that?"

Sara told me, "They were both fairly quiet on the way home. They talked about Dunn Brooks a bit and the Rio Verde store. But that didn't seem to bother them. Their behavior reminded me of last summer before they broke the news about the mess with the Catalina Foothills store."

I asked, "There is no way they would be in trouble with Maricopa County. Especially since they extended an offer for Dunn to be manager of the new store. Any idea where they are now?"

Sara shrugged, "Nope."

On a hunch I paged Wynn, "Wynn my office please." Wynn came in and I asked, "Would you have happened to know where Andy and Lindsay disappeared to?"

Wynn replied, "Oddly enough, yes. Andy mentioned they were heading over to the Adobe Homes sales office. Don't know much else."

I dismissed both of them, "Hmm as the photographer said , 'we will see what develops'. Anyway, I really need to review Budget Holstein Oro Valley project before we meet with Linda tonight."

As Sara walked out she asked, "Hey, you've seen Maya?"

I told her, "She left for Vinnie's about half hour ago, said she needed to talk to Drew and Dianne."

Sara was confused, "That's really weird. Okay."

I had just gone through all my snail mail and pulled up the Budget Holstein Oro Valley file when Maya walked..or more like marched into my office, "Ron, I really need to talk to you."

I asked, "Can't you discuss this with your sister?"

Maya replied, "No, not yet. I haven't told her yet. Not sure how to."

Now I was confused, "Wait, tell her what?"

Maya informed me, "I want to go back home."

I asked, "To Frisco?"

Maya laughed, "No, Chugwater. My father and Tess asked me to come back to The Ranch and help out. They want to turn the Ranch into a lesbian themed bed and breakfast. I would return with Peaches at the end of next week."

I couldn't help thinking how empty the house was going to be once The McGrawl's moved out as well, "Wow. Well, I knew you being here was never going to be a long term. However, you sure you want to do this and it is not just about Peaches?"

Maya told me, "The last couple weeks have been incredible and not just because of Peaches. There were so many years I shut my father out my life and now I have a chance to make up for that. Tess and I work well with each other too. I just don't know how to break the news to Sara."

I reminded her, "Well, up until a few months ago, Sara didn't even acknowledge you existed. It wasn't until you left that frantic message after yet another incident with Dirk that I even knew she had a sister.." I happened to notice Andy was peering into my office.."I'd take it you've already discussed this with Bambi and this what you needed to talk to Drew and Diane about?"

Maya replied, "Yes. Well, I'll try my best with Sara."

I wished her luck, "Okay. Go ahead and send Andy in behind you."

Maya made a hasty exit while Andy entered and asked, "Can you talk for a bit?"

I explained, "I was trying to get caught up on the Budget Holstein Oro Valley project but it seems everyone wants to talk to me this afternoon instead."

Andy apologized, "Sorry Ron. Lindsay and I are so grateful for everything you done for us. The house, letting us stay here and even the new store. We've been thinking and we feel we've made a bad choice on the house."

I wondered where this was going, it was *my* idea to get them the house, "Hmm....well I did kinda push you into that..."

Andy replied, "Yes you did. We're not mad at you or blaming you. But the trip to Chugwater gave us a chance to get away from everything out here. An opportunity to step back and really evaluate what our priorities are at this time." I got to thinking I was trying to do them a favour and I may have inadvertently ended up hurting them instead. Andy continued, "We've never had a house and this would a major step for us. A major step that I just don't think we are ready for now. Plus, I don't like where the economy is heading either. I saw this before 9-11 but this seems much worse. We'd rather take the money we put into the house and pay off the Fountain Hills store. We talked to Adobe Homes earlier to find out how we can buy out of our contract..."

We were interrupted by Lindsay walking into my office all frantic, "Why is Sara crying? Why won't she talk to me? What did I do to her?"

I guess Maya had let the cat out the bag with her sister. I wasn't sure if I should tell them but seeing the state Lindsay was in, I would deal with *The Wrath of Maya* later. I explained, "Lindsay dear, you didn't do anything wrong. I am guessing Maya told her sister of her intentions to go back home at the end of next week."

Lindsay replied, "Back to Frisco?"

Andy suggested, "Or perhaps Chugwater?"

I continued, "Yes, Chugwater. She is going back to The Ranch to help out her folks. Guess they are going to turn the Ranch into a Lesbian themed Bed & Breakfast." Trying to get back to the subject of them I asked, "So if you do buy out what do you two going to do?"

Lindsay a little calmer now replied, "If it is okay with y'all we would like to stay here. May be we will get a condo in the future."

I told them, "Well, I have no problem with you two staying here. In fact I am kinda glad you two will be."

Andy asked, "You are?"

I told them, "Well given Maya is leaving, you could imagine once you two left the house would be rather empty. It would just be Sara, Wynn and I. In that case I

don't really see a need to keep Wynn. It would pain me to let her go as she is like family now."

Andy explained an issue they were having, "The only problem is it a bit cramped trying to work out of the King Suite and the kitchen isn't exactly easy either. There are times we need to work from home. That was why we're thinking of going to the condo route."

I thought for a moment, "You know, Maya's room was my old office, heck my old wall safe is still in there too. Tell you what, once she moves out I'll get Dundee back out here and have him work with you guys in getting that room set up as an office. This way too, I can keep Wynn."

Lindsay commented, "Not going to keep Maya's room as guest room?"

I explained, "No. In fact I've been thinking of turning the Presentation Room into a guest room."

Andy asked, "So, where you going to do the presentations then?"

I explained, "Well, in the library. My whole intention of getting my office down here besides providing a room for Maya was to keep the upstairs private. But having the Presentation Room upstairs kinda defeats the purpose. I'll take Maya's bed and put it in there. Of course I am going to need to remove the sleeper sofa and the double bed in there. Not sure what to do with the sleeper sofa. All I know is going to be a pain to move it downstairs. I'll get Maya to help me before she leaves." I noticed Sara and Maya were now peering in on us. I motioned from them to enter, "Speaking of Maya."

Maya asked, "Are we interrupting anything?"

I joked, "Besides the slightest chance of me getting any work done this afternoon? No. Did you need to speak to me in private?"

Sara replied, "No, Lindsay and Andy may stay. I know you know as she told you before she told me."

I confirmed, "Well, that was rather cryptic, but yes I am aware of Maya's decision."

Maya told us, "I'll be leaving with Peaches the end of next week."

Andy joked, "Running off to Wyoming to get married?"

Before Maya could answer Lindsay jumped in, "Dibs on your room!"

Maya laughed at Andy's joke and then turned to Lindsay, "Very funny! What you two are sick of sleeping in the same room together? I suppose you two are going to have separate rooms in your new house!"

Andy broke the news, "We won't be having a new house."

Sara looked at Lindsay confused, "Dear, what does he mean you won't be having a new house? What happened?"

Lindsay replied, "Just as he said. We decided we should back-out of the contract with Adobe Homes."

Andy explained, "We're not ready right for a house now. We really appreciate that you two wanted to give us a house, but this is not the time. Things are way too uncertain and we'd rather invest that money into the business. If we knew we were going to be here long term than may be that would be a risk we would be willing to take. We are taking a big gamble with the stores right now. So far so good and I think we are going to be okay. Especially once we get the Fort McDowell store going with Dunn."

I didn't catch it but Sara did, "Fort McDowell?"

Lindsay explained, "Yea, Rio Verde/Fort McDowell same area. Anyway since Maya is going to be leaving Ron is going to let us turn her room into our home office. Kinda ironic considering it use to be his old office."

Sara was excited, "So you two are going to stay here?"

Lindsay hugged and lightly kissed Sara, "Yes dear. For a while."

Andy confirmed, "At least couple years until things start improving. But could be longer from what Marc is saying."

I looked at the clock on my computer and noticed I still about an hour before the meeting tonight, "I am sorry to boot y'all out, but I really need to go over the Budget Holstein Oro Valley project before we meet up with Linda tonight." Everyone left and I finally had chance to review the job. We had gotten everything wired when we were out after Christmas a couple weeks prior to the Boots Chugwater job. Now I needed to sit down with Linda and confirm what kind of systems she wanted to have installed and get those ordered. Then there would be the matter of getting the installation scheduled and working with Laura.

I paged Wynn to my office. She appeared a moment later, "Yes Ron?"

I told her, "I am guessing Sara has filled you in on the news?"

Wynn asked, "In regards to your sister-in-law and the McGrawl's? Yes."

I informed her, "You know with the McGrawl's staying you are going to be able to stay as well. I am going to need your help along with Maya's and Andy to get the sleeper sofa out of the Presentation Room."

Wynn asked, "Why are you taking the sofa out of there?" I was about to explain when she asked, "And what did you plan on doing with it?"

I explained, "Maya's bed is going into the old Presentation Room, which is why I need to get the sleeper sofa out of there. I guess I'll put into storage along with the bed."

Wynn informed me, "Well, I have plenty of space in my suite, especially in my retreat. So if you don't mind I would like to have it. Be useful for when my girlfriends come out from Pine or Tucson. "

I kept forgetting Wynn had friends, "Okay, that would work. We will need to have you as well as Andy and Maya help me get it down the stairs. Anyway, could you kindly send my sister over here please?"

Wynn left my office and a few minutes later Laura appeared nervously, "Hey Ron. Am I in trouble again?"

I asked, "Well, I didn't page you as Abigail. No, just wanted to go over a couple things in regards to the Budget Holstein Oro Valley project. I'll be talking with Linda tonight and should have a more finite time line. Though I don't think we'll be doing anything until after Maya leaves."

Apparently no one had told Laura the news, "Where's Maya going, back to Frisco?"

I was surprised, "Hmm, okay so no one bothered to tell you. Sorry about that. No, she is going back with Peaches to Chugwater."

Laura laughed, "Couldn't bear to be away from each other!"

"Somewhat. I guess Jed and Tess offered her an elusive position at their soon to be Lesbian themed Bed and Breakfast. I don't suppose anyone told you about Andy and Lindsay either?"

Laura asked, "What about them?"

I laughed, "Geez, why is my family treating you like the evil sibling!? Anyway, Andy and Lindsay are going to be staying with Sara and I here for couple more years. They are going to back out their contract with Adobe Homes."

Laura understood, "Yea, not the best time to be trying to get a house. Did seem like that house would have been way too much for them too. Who's idea was it anyways?"

I raised my hand, "Mine. I thought it would be good for them. I didn't know they we're going to go nuts on upgrades. Of course at the same time most of those they paid for themselves with the money they got from the sale of the club and the Pima County stores. But I don't think any of us saw the housing market crash coming. They rather put that money into the business."

Laura asked, "Okay, so you sold them the land how does backing out the contract work then?"

I explained, "From what they told me, since there is already a dwelling on the land, they well sell it back to Adobe Homes. So they will get back the payments they have made thus far less their application fee. Then Adobe Homes is suppose to make them a written offer for the land which they can either accept or counter." Trying to get back on to the subject of Budget Holstein Oro Valley, "Anyway, what's your schedule like next month?"

Laura thought, "Well in April....Conventions really start picking up in the later half of the month. Sophie knows my schedule better than I do. I'd tell ya Ron, I'd be so lost without her."

I couldn't help but recall the other night back in Chugwater, "Yep, she mentioned that to me the other night along with her 'initiation'."

Laura blushed, which was a first, "Oh my! Well, she did seem to enjoy it. Sadly, I couldn't say the same for when your ex-wife and I 'initiated' Sara couple years back...." Laura was trying to contain herself from crying.

Thinking fast I added, "However, she did seem to enjoy it when you and Miss Kitty did it to her a couple months ago. Laura please don't feel bad. You were under the influence of wine and Martina at the time, a dangerous combination. Oh well, there are no hard feelings."

Wynn paged me, "Ron, Blanche is holding on the house line for you."

I thanked Wynn and picked up the house line, "Howdy Blanche! What's up?"

Blanche informed me, "Traffic is a bit heavy through Phoenix, don't think we are going to make it before y'all leave."

I told her, "Okay, that is fine, let's just go ahead and meet at *The Unlikely Cowboy*. It is a couple miles north of the Pima Freeway along the Pima Highway.

Hang a right at Thompson Peak Parkway then a another right at 90th Street then another right at Market Street, over the bridge then past the 4-way stop. It is in the middle of the cluster of restaurants."

Blanche replied, "Okay, I think we got it. See you there then."

Laura left my office to get freshened up for this evening. Marc and Martina arrived shortly thereafter. They rode with Maya in her hummer along with Laura, Sophie, Peaches and Andy. Lindsay, Sara, Wynn and I took the Jeep over to The Unlikely Cowboy. When we arrive we notice Gary and the girls' Harley's along with Kayré's car.

Chapter 19: The Shindig to out dig all Shindigs

Upon walking in the hostess greeted us, "Your party is out on the patio." We headed out to the patio and noticed that Gary indeed brought Lulu who coincidentally just happened to be dressed just like Martina and had dyed her hair black.

Martina giggled upon the site of Lulu, "Ah my twin is here! Let's go to the bar."

Sara joked, "Oh great, as if one Martina weren't bad enough!"

I added, "Yeah, I hear Lulu is just as wild as Martina when drunk. This should be an interesting night."

Gary walked over and greeted us, "Hey Ron, Sara! So, how was Chugwater?"

I gave him a witty answer, "Cold."

Gary laughed, "Well then you must be glad to be back here."

Peaches walked over and commented, "This like summer in Wyoming!"

Gary commented, "Well, you don't want to know what summer is like here. You must be Anna?"

Peaches reached over and hugged Gary and corrected him, "I prefer Peaches."

Gary corrected himself, "Peaches it is then. Pleasure to meet you."

Peaches excused herself, "I am going to bar with pink twins."

I warned her, "One of those twins is my ex-wife..."

Gary added, "...the other is my assistant."

Peaches jokes, "Mean I can't fuck them?"

Gary nearly choked on his drink, "Dang. Her and Martina would get along great."

I added, "Or her and Laura!"

I had been looking around to see if my mother and Blanche had arrived but so far hadn't seen them. Linda did stop over and asked, "Looking for me?"

I replied, "Not exactly. Was looking for my mother and Blanche. Last I heard they were stuck in traffic and were going to meet us here. But yes, I was looking for you as well."

Linda explained, "Well, let's just enjoy the evening. I am in town the next couple days, so we can meet tomorrow. How long is your sister in town for?"

I told Linda, "Laura is suppose to leave sometime tomorrow with my mother and Blanche."

She then noticed Sophie, "Who is that?"

I looked over, "Oh, that is Laura's housekeeper/assistant Sophie, you met her at Christmas?"

Linda laughed, "Ah okay. Didn't recognize her with that hair cut."

Couldn't help but think about the night they had arrived in Chugwater, "Neither did I when they arrived in Chugwater." Out of the corner of my I saw my mother and Blanche wandering on to the patio. My mother looked rather confused, "Mom, Blanche...over here."

My mother walked over and asked, "Am I seeing things or are there two Martina's?"

Gary laughed at my mother's comment, "No, you're not seeing things Ms Merlot." He called out, "Lulu, can you step over here for a moment?" Lulu came over and Gary introduced her, "This is Lulu, my Arizona office manager. She does have a striking resemblance to Martina with the dark hair."

I added, "Especially when dressed in pink."

Gary continued, "Lulu, this is Ron's mother, Lorena Merlot and her partner, Blanche. They live out in Green Valley outside of Tucson. Anyway, you can get back with Martina now if you like."

Lulu excused herself, "Pleasure meeting both of you."

I turned my attention to my mother and Blanche, "Before I forget, how long are you in town for? Also, if it would not be too much trouble, could you take Laura and Sophie back with you?"

Apparently, even my mother didn't recognize Sophie, "You mean to tell me the girl over there with the partially shaved head is Sophie?"

I concurred, "Yeah, the first night her and Laura were in Chugwater I was a bit surprised."

Lorena continued, "Back to your questions, no problem taking them back. The drive up here is what quite an ordeal so I think we are going to rest a day before we leave. "

This would work well, "Okay, good. Laura and I need to meet with Linda tomorrow about finishing up the Budget Holstein expansion, so this will work well. If you like, I can have Wynn take you out to Old Town Scottsdale tomorrow." I knew my mother always loved to shop there whenever she visited the Phoenix area.

She commented, "That would be wonderful. Blanche has never been so it will be a treat for her. Well, I am going to go have some drinks with the pink twins."

Linda also excused herself just leaving Gary and I. Gary asked, "So what's going on with Maya? Bambi mentioned something about her leaving?"

I explained to Gary, "Yes. In about two weeks she is going back to the Ranch in Chugwater with Peaches. She is moving out there to help her folks out with their new lesbian themed Bed and Breakfast."

Gary was impressed, "Sure made up with her parents pretty quick. Going to be strange not having her around. Your house sure going to be empty once Andy and Lindsay move out. When are they moving out anyway?"

I informed Gary, "Maya's announcement was only half of the excitement this afternoon. In regards to Andy and Lindsay, they are not moving out. They decided to back-out of the contract with Adobe Homes and stay with Sara and I."

Gary asked, "I suppose it has a lot to do with the mess the economy is in now?"

"Somewhat. That and they don't feel they are ready for a house. They are looking at opening a new store this spring over in Rio Verde/Fort McDowell area. They already have a manager lined up too." I explained about Dunn Brooks.

Gary informed me, "Let them know, Bunny and I are still willing to help them out as well. Now, lets go grab some food, I am famished."

We headed over towards the buffet and mingled with the rest of our party. The night got very interesting when Martina and Lulu started doing Karaoke. I have to say that I will think of this night anytime I hear *Midnight Train to Georgia*. However, Sophie amazed me when she sang *Angel of the Morning*. I looked over to Laura who appeared to be in as much shock as I was, "Wow, I had no idea she could sing."

Laura didn't even look at me, "Neither did I. Miss Kitty mentioned something to me one time, but still I had no idea..."

By this time pretty much everyone had come over to see who was singing. Gary was amazed, "Holly shit. Who knew that little Scottish girl had that much talent."

Towards the second half of the song, Peaches jumped up on the stage grabbing a mic and doing the background vocals with Sophie. Once they finished their song, everyone applauded. It was around that time everyone started to leave. I caught Linda before she left with her daughter, "Linda. What time did you want to meet tomorrow?"

Linda looked at her watch, "Well, it is already tomorrow. Let's say around 11:00?"

I informed her, "Works for me. Wynn is suppose to take my mother and Blanche shopping. I'll let Laura know..."

Had no idea Laura was right behind me, "Let me know what?"

I turned around to see Laura with an odd grin on her face, "Um...Linda wants to meet us around 11:00. Work for you?"

Laura was somewhat drunk, but still coherent, "Sure!"

Upon returning to the house everyone headed upstairs. Laura was in the Queen Suite while Sophie was in the Presentation Room. Peaches was going to sleep with Maya the next couple nights until Laura and Sophie left. I met Wynn in the hall and she asked, "I know you told your mother and Blanche I would take them to Old Town Scottsdale in the morning, but shouldn't I be part of your meeting with Laura and Linda?"

Without thinking I replied, "Not really, Maya is the one who is managing this project..." It was then I realized that Maya would no longer be part of this project, "...and she will be leaving prior to us continuing the project."

Neither one of us were aware Maya was coming up the spiral stairs returning from

the kitchen. She offered some assistance, "You know, I could take your mother and Blanche along with Peaches and Sophie out shopping in the morning."

I grabbed Maya and gave her a hug, "Thanks. That makes things so much easier. Now, I need to get some sleep." I headed back to the Master Suite and discovered Sara was asleep and back in her armor.

The next morning we were awoken by the Rooster and Ty Pennington greeting. Then Peaches came on over the PA, "Breakfast 10 minutes. Don't be late!" I wondered what kind of breakfast Peaches would be cooking up for us. Upon getting dress and entering into the kitchen, we were instructed by Peaches, "Eggs Benedict on counter. Grab plate and go to dining room." I noticed Sophie and Wynn were helping her out.

Sara and I obeyed and each grabbed a plate of Eggs Benedict and joined everyone else around the monster we called a dining room table. My mother and Blanche had just arrived and each also grabbed a plate of Eggs Benedict and found a seat. Once everyone else had arrived Sophie, Wynn and Peaches all came in and sat down. All was quiet for the first couple minutes as we enjoyed this marvelous breakfast. Sara joked, "I don't think Ron should let Maya takes Peaches with her. This is by far one of the best Eggs Benedict I've ever had."

Peaches replied, "Thanks. I'll give recipe to Wynn."

It was then I recalled the change of plans, "Speaking of Wynn, she is going to be staying this morning to attend the Budget Holstein Project meeting. Maya, will be taking my mother, Blanche as well as Peaches and Sophie to Old Town Scottsdale."

After everyone finished breakfast Peaches and Maya took care of the dishes so Wynn would be free to meet with Linda Laura and myself. Once they were both seated I started out the meeting, "Okay, so we got the wiring done before the Chugwater Project. Reviewing your plans you are doing more an upgrade than anything else."

Linda commented, "But we also moved a lot around. For example my old office area will be the new dressing rooms. My office is going to be in the other half of the building now."

Wynn asked, "So is the server staying where it was?"

I informed her, "No, we moved the sever over by Linda's new office. Andy and I did not do a complete rewire though. It was just easier to take everything that was still being used and running into the old sever and just plug it all into a switch. The wiring was not so bad."

Wynn joked, "Well compared to Boots Chugwater I suppose."

I reminded her, "Chugwater wasn't so bad. Boots Frisco was a major ordeal. It took Andy and I a good week to get that place wired. So anyway, I need to know what type of systems you are wanting to use so we can get them ordered"

Linda replied, "The one's in my office are fine. I would like to replace the POS terminal, the order terminals and the stock room terminal. Plus, I really want to replace the laser printer in my office with something a little more energy efficient."

Wynn made notes, "Okay, so we need two POS system, 3 economy systems and a laser printer. Anything else?"

Linda hesitated for a moment, "Well...if it is not too much trouble I was thinking of adding a couple Plasmas both behind the new POS area and in the dressing room area. I would like to be able to show off my products. Not too sure how that would work."

Laura had been quiet for most of the meeting, I wasn't even sure she had recovered from last night, "Ron, show her what we did at the Boots Chugwater lobby."

I had forgotten about the photos, "Umm...I need to upload those photos." In a few minutes I had the photos uploaded and then found one of the lobby. I asked Linda, "Is this what you had in mind?"

Linda looked at the setup, "Yes. But I am not sure how you are going to display my 'creations'?"

Laura fired up her laptop and called Linda over, "Linda, this is what we did for Boots. Basically, we created a photo slide-show on their website. So, the plasma just runs the slide show in a continuous loop. The software is very easy to work with, just upload the photos to the server and drag the photos. You should be able to update it yourself."

I told Wynn, "Add two shuttle boxes to that order. Linda, are you going to provide the Plasmas or do you want us?"

Linda thought for a moment, "I still have a couple Plasmas sitting in storage that we had over at The Ranch. Would we be able to use those?"

Wynn replied, "Should be able to, just need to make sure the Shuttle's have a video card with an HDMI out."

I was looking over the plans and realized we were going to be running to a little

bit of an issue, "Crap, there is no easy access to wiring in that area."

Linda commented, "But I already had my electrician put in a dedicated outlet for each of those locations."

Wynn explained, "I think he means for network access."

Linda stood corrected, "Oh, I see. Is this going to be a problem."

Trying not sound like I was scolding her, "Well, it would have been useful to know this whilst I was out there last month. This is going to be a problem."

I could tell Linda felt bad and I really didn't want to disappoint her. Nor did she want to trouble me, "Well, I suppose I can do without. I really should've brought this up whilst y'all were out there. I just kinda came up with the idea a couple weeks ago. Let's just scrap it."

Laura objected, "Not so fast Linda! The Shuttles just need to connect to the web server to display the slide show."

I wasn't sure where Laura was headed with this, but Wynn was one step ahead of her, "Of course! We can put Wi-Fi cards in the Shuttles."

I was impressed, "Very good, both of you. Okay, so we are going to have to order a couple custom Shuttle boxes. I'll discuss that with Andy tonight. Any other surprises you would like to throw out Miss Holstein?"

Linda smiled and laughed, "If I told you now, they wouldn't be surprises. No, that is all."

I looked over at the list Wynn had made, "Okay, so the parts are not too bad. I'll get with Andy tonight and see how soon we can get everything. Laura what does your schedule look like in the next 2-3 weeks?"

Laura switched over to Mozilla Lightning and replied, "Hmm...Sophie must have updated my schedule. Wow I am booked solid with conventions. Wait...why are these days in March marked as 'other'? Very odd...March 21st through 23rd?"

I looked at my calendar, "Easter weekend. Didn't see you as the religious type Laura!"

Laura gave me a dirty look follow by a snide remark, "As if you are. Oh fuck! Miss Kitty is going to kill me if she finds out!"

Wynn asked rather confused, "If she found out that you and Ron are not the religious type?"

Laura laughed, "Oh hell no! She wouldn't give a care if we didn't go to church. Not that I can say the same about Ron's and my father. No, that was our first date since we got re-united."

Wynn let out a whistle, "Wow three-days! Impressive."

Laura blushed (again), "Well, no. It was more like 3-nights and 2-days. It was quite a process, I had to get past her manager, which was quite a task in of itself. I mean really, I had no idea she was so fucking..."

I interrupted, "Okay, okay we get the picture. Anyway back to your schedule..."

Laura took the clue and changed the subject, "Okay, well Miss Kitty and I will be away that weekend." Suddenly an evil smile crossed her face, "However, may be we can get a suite or casita over at Loews down in Tucson. The install should only take a few hours. She keeps says she wants to see The Budget Holstein in person..."

Linda laughed, "Whatever works!"

I wrapped up, "Okay so looks like we will do the install on Easter Weekend. That should give Andy enough time to get all the parts in order. Unfortunately, it also gives Linda time to think of new ways to challenge me."

Linda replied, "I'll keep you posted."

Chapter 20: Maya's Farewell and Life Goes On?

The next week just seem to fly by and before we knew it that faithful Friday had arrived. Maya had everything she was going to take back with her to Wyoming packed. Gary, Bunny and Bambi came over for dinner and to see her off. Earlier in the day though, her and Bambi helped us move the sleeper sofa out of the presentation room down into Wynn's suite. Andy, Gary and I took care of the old bed in the presentation room moving it into one of the storage garages. It was then I noticed I was also storing the McGrawl's furniture which included the bedroom set that Linda had given them from our visit during Thanksgiving along with the swing that would've been their housewarming gift. At least I had plenty of space to store all their stuff. Back inside the four us moved the bedroom furniture out of Maya's old room into what would now just be a guest room.

Now, I hadn't given much thought about the contents of the closet in the presentation room until Wynn asked. Some of the items included my camera equipment which I could easily store in my office. However, there was still quite a bit of BDSM equipment and clothing. Certainly didn't, want to keep all that stored in the closet. Sure, I could have kept it all in the playroom, but I rather have it

readily accessible. Perhaps Dundee would be able to come up with a solution for me on this as well. I would have to make sure I brought that up with him when he came out next week.

Whilst we usually had our farewell dinners at the *Unlikely Cowboy*, tonight was different. We invited Drew and Dianne over, having Vinnie's Pizza cater this sad event. It just seemed like the most fitting way to commemorate Maya's short time with us. As we sat down for dinner Maya was doing her best to keep herself calm. She spoke, "You know it only seems like yesterday that I first step foot into this house. This after making one of the toughest decisions of my life, to reach out to Sara for help. Sara...you don't know how many times...how long I tried to get the nerve up to call you. If anything just to have someone to talk to. Someone to help me, give me a reason to leave Dirk when he hurt me...again and again. It is funny, I am so glad you two were away that night so I could leave a message. I wasn't even sure if you would return my call, but I am so glad you did."

Sara came over and hugged her sister while trying her best not to get emotional. Maya turned her attention to Bambi with a laugh, "Bambi dear, we've had interesting relationship. We've sure kept them guessing, drove them nuts and dang near drove Ron and Gary to early graves or at the very least some premature grey hairs. But Ron was right the other night in Chugwater during dinner...we were never more than good friends. Sure we may have made it look like more, but that was all for show. Just like Sara and Lindsay, we are good friends."

I commented, "Didn't think you had heard our discussion that night during dinner. You seemed a bit distracted by Peaches."

Peaches replied, "As if!"

I commented, "Great she spends one evening with Martina..."

Maya smiled, "I didn't fully, but I knew what you were talking about." She turned her attention to Lindsay who was at the far end of the room, "Lindsay I need you do me a big favor after I leave. Please, please keep an eye on my sister. I know this is going to be tough on her, but you two have such a strong bond. She was there for you when you needed her and now she needs you to be there for her."

Lindsay was in state of shock, especially when she looked over at Sara and saw the fragile state she was in. Reality sunk in as she had never really seen Sara like this before. Sara was doing her best to hide her tears, but Lindsay knew Sara had been crying again. Up until the past month, she had seen Sara as strong, never once showing emotion. Lindsay looked at Maya and told her, "Don't worry I'll take good care of her, I promise you that." She walked over and put her arm around Sara.

Maya closed her speech with, "Come on cheer up, this is not the end of the world. I'll be back in a couple months for Sara and Lindsay's birthdays in May and I'll likely be back out for Thanksgiving and Christmas as well. Now, lets eat this fine pizza! Besides we are not leaving until the morning."

Sara spent the night with her sister on Friday night. Saturday morning we did breakfast at the Good Egg. Upon returning Maya and Peaches loaded their bags into the Pink Monster. As Maya started the Hummer, I couldn't help but think how I was going to miss the familiar rumble. I remember when Martina brought it home a couple years back and the night she returned back to the 'scene of the crime' with her affair with Laura. Maya yelled out to Sara, "I'll call you tonight when we get to Santa Fe." Sara smiled and waved, but really she wanted to cry. After they left Lindsay came over and grabbed Sara's hand and they walked back into the house together.

Andy and I stood outside with Gary and talked for a bit. Gary commented, "Wow, amazing how things changed. Heck I remember when you first brought her home. How she wanted to have a belt just like her sister did."

I laughed, "Yep. Then Sara wanted to get a clit hood piercing just like Maya. That was when you introduced me to Louise out by your office. Going to be so odd not having her around here any longer."

Andy trying to liven the mood joked, "Who's going to deliver pizzas to us now?! Better yet, who's going to be working with you on the jobs?"

I explained, "I know Drew and Diane are going to be so lost without her. Well, I guess Wynn is going to be helping me out on the jobs now. She did come in handy for the Boots Chugwater job."

Gary announced, "I need to be heading to the office soon, but first I need to check on Bambi."

I replied, "Yep. I suppose Andy and I should go check on our wives."

We headed back into the house. Wynn was coming down the spiral staircase and informed us, "Lindsay and Sara are 'relaxing' in the king suite. They asked to not be disturbed. Almost reminds me of that night last summer."

Andy asked, "What night..." then he recalled, "Oh *that* night. The Glenn Campbell Night."

Wynn laughed, "You know all these years I've known Lindsay I still can't picture her kneeling the guy in the groin. Anyway, as I said they asked not to be disturbed for the rest of the evening. So..."

Andy and I looked at each other and both stated, "Sacred Ground?"

Wynn asked, "May I join you two again?"

I told her, "Of course! Just go ahead and leave a note on the door, in case they happen to come out looking for us."

Wynn scribbled a brief note, "Gone to Sacred Ground, we'll be back late. Have fun!!!" As she did last time Wynn drove us down to Sacred Ground Cafe in McDowell Mountain Ranch.

On the way Andy asked, "How long do you think it is going to take for Sara to get over her sister?"

I explained, "Well, not sure. Up until the Boots Frisco project Sara had pretty much shut Maya out of her life. So on one hand she is use to her sister not being around, but then once they were reunited their relationship healed. So I think it is going to be a difficult time for her. All I have to say though is thank God Lindsay is still around."

Andy laughed, "Who knew those two would develop such a strong bond. Can't help but recall that morning when they walked into the hotel room together."

I just about died laughing, "Oh my, I was in state of shock. That was the first time I had seen Sara open up like that. I wonder who's idea it was anyway."

Wynn had no idea what we were talking about, "If I may ask, what did they do?"

Andy trying to contain himself, "Well. Ron and I were working on Linda's network server after breakfast. The girls had been down in the hotel lounge talking. Now, up until that point we really knew nothing about Ron's lifestyle or his other line of work. I just thought he was a traveling computer repairman. Of course they didn't know about the Pussy Cat Lounge either. So anyway, Sara and Lindsay walked into the room while we were working. Ron and I were fairly engrossed in Linda's server but Lindsay made a comment..." Andy was laughing so hard now he couldn't even talk.

Wynn was really wanting to know, "What? What did she do?"

Trying to contain myself too, "I guess it wasn't just the comment but their actions. So Lindsay walked in with Sara and announced, 'Hey they are just as kinky as we are'.

Wynn was puzzled, "Um okay..."

Andy explained, "But as Ron said, it was not just the comment. Oh no! You had to be there to get the full impact of the comment. So after Lindsay made the comment Ron and I looked up to see both Sara and Lindsay had lifted their skirts to reveal their belted crotches. I say it had to be Lindsay's idea, Sara was too shy to instigate something like that."

Wynn was surprised, "Sara shy? She also seemed like a wild one to me."

Andy laughed, "Well, you didn't know her before she became so influenced by Lindsay. Trust me Sara was shy before Lindsay got a hold of her."

As we had sandwiches and wine and chit chatted through the night. Back at the house both Sara and Lindsay were taking a deep soak together in the Anozira Tub. They also had been drinking glass after glass of wine. They were all over each other in the tub and that quickly carried over into the bedroom as they hastily dried each others off. Atop of the King bed Lindsay had Sara on her back and feverishly licking and massaging Sara's clit and left tit. Sara had a massive orgasm and pulled Lindsay up to her. For the next couple hours the two of them kissed and masturbated each other to orgasm after orgasm. Lindsay wanted to get a snack before they retired for the night. Lindsay got up and was heading towards the door when Sara asked, "Where you going honey?"

She told Sara, "I'm going to get us some ice cream. Be back shortly."

After we finished our sandwiches I ask Andy, "So do y'all have a site pinned down yet?"

Andy explained, "Well when Lindsay spent that weekend with her girl friend they did find a couple good locations. The Rio Verde location is off of Dynamite a few miles west of AZ87. The Fort McDowell location is just south of the casino in a new strip center that completed last summer."

Wynn asked, "Any preferences?"

Andy thought, "Well, the Fort McDowell location is not too far away from the Fountain Hills store. Not sure if that is a good thing or bad thing. It is right off AZ87 though so we could get a lot of business for parts and minor repairs. The Rio Verde location is more isolated as is more of a community shopping center."

Back at the house, Lindsay opened and closed the King Suite's door but didn't see the note. Down in the kitchen she grabbed a carton of ice cream and a couple spoons as well as a couple bottles of water. When she came back to the King Suite she saw the note upon the door, "Odd I don't recall seeing that when I left." She read the note, "Ah okay, so that is why it is so quiet in here." Lindsay returned and noticed Sara had turned on the TV. The two of them sat on the bed

and ate ice cream as they watched a 'chick flick' on TV. They had finished the ice cream and became very engrossed in the movie. Lindsay looked over and saw Sara was falling asleep. She set the now empty ice cream carton and spoons on the nearby table. Upon coming back to the bed, Lindsay leaned over and kissed Sara and told her, "Let's get some sleep. You should stay with me I am sure Ron and Andy will understand."

Sara didn't want to intrude or seem selfish, "You sure dear? I can go back to my room with Ron."

Lindsay told her, "If you want to you can, but they did leave us alone for the night."

Wynn bought us a bottle of wine to have with our desert. Andy continued, "So chances are we are going to with the Fort McDowell location. I am waiting though to see just how much money we are going to get back from Adobe Homes."

I asked, "When are they suppose to get back to you about the land?"

Andy informed me, "They already made us an offer and we accepted it. There just some admin and application fees that we won't be getting refunded. Should be getting a wire-transfer sometime next week. Once we buy-out the Fountain Hills building we will see how much money we have left and take it from there."

Whilst the girl's had the entire house to themselves, Sara was really too tired anyway to go anywhere. She turned to Lindsay and smiled, "Okay. Thank you." She switched off her light and waited for Lindsay to do the same before snuggling up next to her under the covers. She was still tearful but was trying to hide it from Lindsay.

Lindsay could sense Sara was still trying to be strong for her, "Sara please don't hold back your feelings. It is not healthy and you will feel better once you do let it all out." She rolled over and started rubbing Sara's back and running her fingers through Sara's long black hair. Sara did let it all out and ended up falling asleep in Lindsay's arms shortly there after.

A couple hours later Andy, Wynn and I made it back to the house. When we pulled into the garage and noticed the Hummer wasn't there my first thought was, 'Oh Maya must be working late tonight.'" But then I came to the realization that she was not going to be back later that evening. Up in the kitchen I noticed there was one message on the machine. I played the message, "Hey Maya...and Peaches here. We've made it to Santa Fe. Sorry we missed you. I'll try to call tomorrow night once we get to The Ranch. "

I told Andy, "Well, if Sara missed Maya's call she is likely up in the King Suite with Lindsay. You get to break-in the new Guest Room."

Wynn commented, "That is going to take some getting use to."

I asked, "What is that? Maya not being here or the 'new' guest room?"

Wynn laughed, "Yes. Anyway, I'll get the guest room prepped."

Andy yawned, "Geez just like the Glenn Campbell night. Oh well, I am glad Lindsay could return the favor for Sara."

Wynn returned a few minutes later, "Okay Andy your room is ready."

After Andy bided us a good night and went upstairs I talked to Wynn a bit, "Let's take an easy this weekend. I don't really have anything planned that is going to require Sara. Let's have waffles tomorrow morning and since Andy I need to talk some business in the morning, you could let Sara and Lindsay enjoy their breakfast with each other in bed."

Wynn commented, "Sure. Suppose that would be nice treat for them."

We went to our bedrooms. Whilst I was alone, again for the second night in a row it was actually a nice change. I was able to get a decent night's sleep. I got up around 7:30 and headed down to the kitchen and found Wynn already making waffles. I noticed Wynn was in a slightly different 'uniform' than usual. She was wearing more of traditional French Maid's outfit complete with black fishnet stockings. Coming up from the garage was Andy with the Sunday Paper. I turned to Andy and asked, "When did Fi Fi arrive?"

Wynn walked over and set down a plate of waffles in the center of the table for the three of us to pick from. She asked, "Do you think this is too much?"

I asked her, "The outfit or the waffles. If it is the waffles, not too much." I turned to Andy and joked, "Those are for all three of us, not just you! As for the outfit, nice choice!"

Andy laughed, "Sure Ron, whatever you say. Hey, what about the girls?"

Wynn walked over with two trays each with a plate of waffles along with a glass of Orange Juice and a vase containing a single yellow rose, "Sending it up right now." She headed into the great room and up the spiral staircase to the King Suite. But first she stopped at the hall closet and pulled out a 'room service cart'. She placed the trays on the cart and wheeled it to the King Suite. Wynn knocked on the door and announced, "Room Service!"

Lindsay was already awake and had been reading a magazine, waiting for Sara to wake up. She got up, put on a robe and headed to the door. Upon opening the

door she saw Wynn in the French Maid's outfit and commented, "Wow Wynn you look hot!"

Wynn giggled, "Call me Fi Fi! Is Sara up?" She came in wheeling the Room Service Cart.

Lindsay trying hard to contain herself and played along, "She will be shortly." She walked over to the bed and announced, "Sara! Fi Fi is here with breakfast!"

Sara sat up confused and asked, "Who's Fi Fi? Where are we?"

Wynn walked over and placed the tray on the bed over Sara and in French accent, "Here you go Mrs. Merlot."

Sara smiled at the sight of 'Fi Fi', "Thanks."

Wynn turned her attention to Lindsay, "Mrs. McGrawl, kindly return to bed so I can serve you breakfast as well." Lindsay quickly removed her robe revealing she was in a white corset and stocking and jumped back into bed. Wynn placed her tray on the bed. Fi Fi...err Wynn announced, "If you need anything else, kindly ring the kitchen. Enjoy!"

Chapter 21: The Return of Dundee and New Projects

As difficult as it was for Lindsay and Sara, they went back to work at the Budget Holstein North on Monday. Sara figured it would be best to try to get back into the swing of things. She missed Maya, but then again they really didn't see that much of each other when she was living with us. Between school and Vinnie's they saw each other a couple times a week and briefly on the weekends. After some searching I found Dundee's business card and gave him a ring. I was rather surprised he answered right away. I explained, "Hey Dundee, Ron Merlot here. I've got another project for you, when you able to come out in the evenings?"

Dundee replied, "Well, not much happening right now. I could come out tonight if you like. What ya got?"

I explained, "Sara's sister moved out and some friend's of our moved in. I want to turn my old office into an office."

Dundee laughed, "Okay, that sort of makes sense. I can be by around 7:00 PM if that is good?"

I confirmed, "That should work. The McGrawl's should be home by then."

After I got off the horn with Dundee I called Andy on his cell, "Howdy Andy. Dundee can come by tonight. Have you two thought about what you want for an

office area?"

Andy replied, "Not really. We will need at least a couple work areas. The area is kind of small for a reception area. Kind of hoping we could use your library for reception. Our office will be for us to work out of, not to meet with clients."

I told Andy, "Yea. That is what I planned on doing with that area anyway. The whole reason I did away with the presentation room was to keep the upstairs more private. Heck, if you need to actually sit a client down in an office, you can use mine. I can have Dundee add a desk on the east side."

Andy was pleased, "Okay that should work well. What time is he suppose to be there?"

"He says he should be up around 7:00 PM," was my reply.

Andy confirmed, "7:00 PM, okay that will work. We'll try to leave early tonight so we can get back and have dinner before then."

Around 4:00 PM that afternoon Lindsay called the house, "Hey Ron. Andy, Sara and I will be leaving soon we should be there around 5:00 PM so you can let Wynn know."

After getting of the phone with Lindsay I headed to the kitchen to find Wynn doing an inventory. She saw me enter and asked, "What did Lindsay want?"

I explained, "She was letting me know that she, Andy and Sara should be home around 5:00 PM and you could get dinner started."

Wynn was confused, "Why so early?"

Apparently I had forgot to tell her about Dundee, "Hmm, could've sworn I told you Dundee is coming by tonight to go over the McGrawl's new office as well some modifications to my office and the library."

Wynn understood, "Ah, I see. Okay, well then how Chicken Parmesan tonight?"

I replied, "That will work."

A little before 5:00 PM the McGrawl's and Sara came in. I grabbed Lindsay by the arm as she walked by, "Hey wait up." Andy and Sara went upstairs and I asked her, "How's Sara holding up?"

Lindsay told me, "Surprisingly well. I think it did her good to get back into the regular routine. But then again, I don't think they really saw much of each other as it was."

I confirmed, "Yep, between her schooling and Vinnie's she was barley around." I added in a joking manner, "Now should you and Andy ever return to Tucson, I think I am going to have a much bigger problem on my hands."

Lindsay laughed, "True. But I don't see that happening since we can not do business in Pima county. Besides if Andy and I do move out, we will likely go down to the Foothills Condos."

I was surprised, "So you two still considering moving out?"

Lindsay explained, "Not for a long while. As Andy explained, we want to pay off the Fountain Hills store and then hopefully we can buy the location in Fort McDowell, or at the very least put a large chunk down and make very small monthly payments. So it would be a couple years at least. Even if it is sooner we will give fair warning."

Not wanting to lecture Lindsay I did warn her, "Good. Cause, you really didn't give much warning about backing out of the house. But in the end that was not a big deal as you opted to stay here. I am not trying to threaten you here, but should either of you ever do anything to hurt Sara, I will be very angry."

Lindsay was startled but understood where I was coming from, "Yes Ron. I understand full well. I didn't realize how much Sara looked up to me for support until these past two weeks. Don't worry Andy and I would never doing anything to sacrifice our relationship with you two, especially Sara."

Andy came down the stairs and caught the last part of the conversation, "Sorry Ron. We really didn't know what we were going to do. We were so grateful you were giving us the house. But at the same time, we weren't really sure how things were going to work out. Boots Chugwater gave us a chance to re-evaluate things. Then when Dunn Brooks showed up that night, everything started falling into place."

Lindsay added, "Yeah it did. We were really excited when he asked *us* for a job. We've known him for a long time and always wanted him to work for us. I was a bit disappointed when Andy had told me a few months ago that he declined our offer for the Fountain Hills store. Thankfully we found Zina and she has worked out so well."

Andy assured me, "Don't worry Ron should Lindsay and I decide to leave here we will let you know well in advance. Even if we do, we will stay close. Foothills Condos, Desert Ridge or may be the new City North project, although that is a bit far from our stores."

Sara came down the stairs and we sat down for dinner. We chatted over dinner. Wynn and Sara were doing the dishes when Dundee arrived. Wynn quickly dried off and answered the door. Dundee greeted her, "Evening Wynn."

Wynn replied, "Evening Dundee. Please come in. The McGrawl's should be down shortly. In the mean time, Ron wants to discuss a couple things with you in his office."

Dundee followed Wynn into my office. "Thanks Wynn." Turning my attention to Dundee, "Okay, besides turning my old office into an office I need a couple other things done. In the past I had my 'presentation room' upstairs, which made sense when my office was upstairs as well. Now, the main reason I wanted to have my office downstairs, besides to provide a room for Sara's sister, who decided to leave us now, was to keep the upstairs private. Well, having the Presentation Room upstairs just didn't make sense. So that is why I am going to be using the library as the new presentation room. The issue I am running into is the closet in that room has a lot of my equipment and I don't want to leave it in there being that is going to be used a guest room."

Dundee asked, "If I may, can I see how much stuff you have so I can get a better idea as to what to do?"

I told him, "That is fine. One of other thing though. Again, in trying to keep the upstairs private when the McGrawl's do have clients over they will be using the library as well, but when they need to sit down with a client they would be using my office. So I was thinking of adding a desk on the east side next to the doors. They would use the office upstairs for doing work from home, but not for seeing clients."

Dundee understood, "Makes sense. Gives me a better idea what they need upstairs. I should be able to add a modest desk over in that corner of the office."

I took Dundee upstairs to the old Presentation Room. I explained, "The suspension equipment I am going to have Gary mount down in the library. However, here is the issue I am having." I opened the closet.

Dundee looked at the contents, mostly small bondage equipment and my camera gear. There were also some outfits as well. Dundee explained, "The simplest solution for this would be to add an armoire down in the library. One side would be wardrobe style whilst the other half would have multiple shelves for all your equipment. I can have it done in the same pine finish as the rest of your library/office. Give me a couple weeks to get that produced."

I was thrilled, "Okay, that was easier than expected. Now on to the main reason I called you here." We walked over to what was Maya's room. "Remember this room?"

Dundee laughed, "Sure do. Looks about the same as I left it, with the exception of the carpet craters where the bedroom furniture was."

Andy and Lindsay walked in and Lindsay let out a giggle, "Carpet craters, I like that!"

Dundee turned around and introduced himself, "Nick Dundee, you must be Lindsay and Andy?"

Andy replied, "Pleasure. Loved what you did with Ron's office and the library so hoping you can do the same for us."

Dundee explained, "Well, Ron has given me an idea as to what you are wanting to do with the space. I understand this is going to be work and not entrainment?"

Andy confirmed, "Yes. So a couple work areas and may be a little seating area."

Dundee was confused, "Seating area? If you are not entertaining."

I knew what Andy meant, "I think they want a sofa or something so that Sara can sit and chat with her 'adopted sister' or if I want to come in and chat with Andy."

Dundee laughed, "Adopted sister eh? Okay, got it we should be able to do that. Put a sofa and may be with a chaise lounge by the French Door to the deck?"

Sara liked that idea, "Neat idea."

Dundee drew up some rough sketches and informed the McGrawl's he would email them plans in a couple days. The rest of the evening we spent out on the Cabana. A couple days later Andy got the PDF format plans from Dundee and I got a mock-up of the armoire. The Andy and Lindsay decided on a plan which would given them a large desk which wrapped along two sides of the room. Over between the doors to the balcony and the walk in closet was a section sofa with chaise lounge. The remaining empty walls would have shelving. Dundee even offered to replace the carpeting in that room as well with hardwood flooring. Dundee returned on the following Friday to start demo which in this case was removing the old carpeting. He showed us the flooring that they were going to be putting in the McGrawl's new office. A simple but yet high quality tongue-n-groove floating design, much like what I had down in my office. The reason we opted to do the floating design was it would make it easier in the future if we wanted to re-carpet that room.

Andy arrived home that evening and asked to see me in his office. I let Dundee know I was going to down in my office and met with Andy. I was informed, "Okay, so the shuttle systems are going to be a bit of pain because of all the upgrades,

but I've been told they will be ready before we do the install around Easter." I was fine with this news, but wondered why he had to tell me this in my office. Then he continued, "How's your schedule next week?"

I opened up Mozilla Lightning and reviewed my schedule, "Looks fairly open, why you ask?"

Andy surprised me with the news, "We closed on the Fort McDowell store!"

I was really surprised as it had seemed like Adobe Homes had been dragging their feet in refunding the McGrawl's, "Congratulations. So, what do you need to have done?"

Andy laughed, "Oh your favorite part, wiring! Don't worry this will be much easier than the Boots stores."

I contained my fake enthusiasm, "Well, gee that makes it all that much better. How long do you suppose this will take?"

Andy was silent and thought, "Hmm....you know I haven't a clue. We will have our main work area in the back. In the front and center I want to have a large display area. There is a support column we can build around and I am assuming we should be able to run wiring through it."

While I was in no way a structural engineer I did know that was not a good idea, "Nope, you shouldn't do that. You don't want to mess with structure. Instead what you want to do is run everything on the outside from the ceiling. Then when we are done running everything we will frame around the column and finish it. Depending on the size of the column it should only mean adding a couple inches in each direction."

Andy was unsure, "I think I understand what you are saying, I do want this to look nice."

I took a pad of paper and drew a rough sketch, "Okay let's say this column is 12" inches on each side. What we will do on the edge is attach 2x4's flat against the existing column creating studs for mounting the boxes and to attach the sheet-rock. This will create a 4-inch wide 'channel' that we can run electrical and data cables through. The NEC regulations says the outlet boxes need to be at least an inch and half deep so we will be fine there. I can get Dundee and his crew out there to do that for us, shouldn't take more than a couple hours to build. We will have to wait a day or two before it can be painted though. We will have to run the data wiring as Dundee only does electrical."

Andy had a better idea now of what I was talking about. Unbeknownst to us Lindsay had walked in mid-way through my explanation and commented, "Gee

Ron I didn't know you were a carpenter."

I turned around and informed her, "Well now, but I've seen enough home improvement shows to know the correct way to accomplish what your husband wants to do without compromising structure."

Lindsay then asked, "So I take it, we bought Fort McDowell then?"

Andy explained, "Yep, checked the account this morning and saw the money from Adobe Home was in there. I was going to wait until later this week, but our agent called and informed me someone else was getting ready to put in a financed offer. Since we were doing cash we had the advantage and would not end up in a bidding war."

Lindsay was excited, "Great so when do we move in?"

Andy turned to me, "Well, as soon as I can get Ron out there do the wiring and the other modifications."

I reminded them, "The wiring is the easy part, but the modifications I'll have to run by Dundee...", I just happened to look-up and saw Dundee coming in to the library, "...who just happens to be coming in right now."

Dundee knocked and I motioned from him to come in, "Okay, we got the old carpeting and padding removed. The crew is wrapping up getting the runners out of there and all the tacks. On Monday we should be able to lay the floor. The desk should be ready to install by Wednesday. I'm going to get that fabricated over the weekend and hopefully by Tuesday have it stained. Your armoire should be done by the end of the week. I was able to start that up earlier this week."

I replied, "Groovy. Andy and I have another project for you. Come have a seat and take a look at this." I handed Dundee the sketch and explained, "They are opening a new store up in Fort McDowell area. Now they want to have a large display area from their computers in the center here around this support column. I already explained to Andy here why it is not a good idea to try to run wiring through it."

Dundee looked at the sketch, "That would work. There is a chance the column is actually hollow, but it is a pain to fish wiring through those things and having to cut out all the boxes. Now, are you using standalone displays or you looking to have something custom built?"

Lindsay and Andy looked at each other and Andy replied, "Didn't really think about that. Fountain Hills had existing fixtures we adapted for our use. The far North Scottsdale was the fixtures we brought from the *original* Catalina Foothills store. We had used them in the new store up on Swan."

I was confused, "Odd, I don't recall seeing any fixtures in there when we moved you out."

Lindsay explained, "Our tech manager had removed all the fixtures over the weekend before the move. We were willing to take a gamble and risk losing the merchandise if Gerald had come back early. However, since we paid a fortune for those fixtures we had them removed ASAP. He stored them at a place he had over in Casa Adobes and then hauled them up to our new store in Scottsdale."

Andy concluded, "Well, since this is a brand new store and we have nothing, I suppose we could see about having you design the fixtures for this store. We've seen your work so we know you are good." He handed Dundee a roll of blueprints, "This is the layout as it is now. Besides having a repair area in the rear there will be a couple offices in that area as well that will need furniture for."

Lindsay added, "Now, since we think this location is going to be big for simple repairs and upgrades we would like to add a small 'bar area if you would' off to the side that we can do quick stuff such as simple repairs and upgrades."

Dundee was impressed, "You two have really thought this through. Let me draw up some plans and get back to you on this. What is your time line on this?"

Andy explained, "We really not in a hurry, but on the other-hand the longer it sits empty that is money we are not making. I would like to open by the beginning of April."

Dundee explained, "Shouldn't be a problem, should have the custom work done by late March. Gives you some time to get everything setup. I'll have your plans for you when I come back on Monday."

After Dundee left I reminded them, "Um...guys not that I am trying to delay the opening here, but there is still the matter of Budget Holstein Oro Valley during Easter week."

Lindsay explained, "Andy can go with you, Sara and Wynn. I'll stay with Krysta out in Rio Verde and supervise the Fort McDowell store. I am sure Kayré and Kacie can manage without me and Sara for a week."

The weekend was quiet and gave me a chance to take care of a few little projects that had piled up. That was until Sunday afternoon, Wynn paged me, "Gary is holding on the business line."

I picked up the business line, "What can I do for you this Sunday afternoon?"

Gary explained, "I've got a vendor here that wants ACME to carry their products."

Was wondering if you could over for a bit and bring Sara, Lindsay and Wynn along with your camera equipment."

I was intrigued and informed him, "I suppose we could, let me grab everyone and be over in about 15 minutes." After I got off the phone I paged everyone to my office. I explained, "Okay, Gary wants us all over at this place he has vendor with products he wants us to try out."

About 15-minutes later we arrived over at the Zinfandel's and Bambi answered the door. However, this was no easy task as she had her wrists restrained about two feet from each side her neck with a ridged spreader. It looked very similar to the fiddles Laura had given us a few months back. She led us out to the reception area. Gary saw us, "Ah y'all have arrived. Ron this is Master Lee Chan with Master Dungeon Restraints. Master Lee this is Ron Merlot, his wife Sara and their friends Andy and Lindsay McGrawl." Wynn walked in a short moment later, "and this their maid Wynn."

We shook hands and Master Chan commented, "Merlot? I think I worked with your sister?"

I asked, "Red head, looks like Grace Adler and lives on the outskirts of Vegas?"

Master Chan thought for a moment, "I think so. She has a Scottish housekeeper and her partner is named after a character from *Gunsmoke*?"

I replied, "Miss Kitty?"

Master Chan laughed, "Yep, that's it. It was there a few months ago. Gave her a case of our fiddles to try out."

I explained pointing to Bambi, "I knew the style looked familiar. We have a couple single person and one two person fiddles in our playroom. Laura gave them to us the last time we were out that way. They've gotten a lot of use..." grabbing Sara by the arm, "Especially when this one has been a bad girl!"

Bambi commented, "Sara a bad girl? Always thought Maya was the naughty one!"

I couldn't help but remember to earlier this year, "When their parents were here back in January, I came down into the playroom one evening to find both of them sitting in the jail cells in fiddles. Quite the site."

Gary explained, "So here's the deal, as you can see I already put Bambi in one of these stocks. I would've put Bunny in one as well, but she is not here right now. So I thought since Sara and Lindsay regularly model, why not have them try these out. If they pass their inspection we can get photos and see about adding these to the ACME product line."

Master Chan walked over to Lindsay and Sara and told them to stand in front of each other, "You can get creative with these with two people. Let me show you." He proceeded to put a regular fiddle around Sara's neck, but instead of putting her wrists in the front he secured Lindsay's. He then took a stock similar to the one Bambi had one and put it around Lindsay's neck while securing Sara's wrists. "So, they are secured to each other and have limited use of their hands." I snapped a few photos of Bambi as well as of Sara and Lindsay. Meanwhile Master Chan placed Wynn in a single person fiddle, but this one was a little different as the wrists were secured side by side instead of front-to-back as the fiddles I had. He commented, "This should add an extra 'challenge' to her duties!"

Forty-five minutes and a couple dozen photos later Master Chan had released everyone. I picked up one the stocks and notice it was a lot lighter than those that Laura had given me, "Odd these look just as secure and solid as the ones my sister gave me but not as heavy."

Master Chan explained, "Those Laura had were the first prototype and were made out of a steel alloy. These are made out an aluminum alloy, which is actually stronger but lighter weight."

I commented, "Yeah, I remember when I released the fiddle on Maya from the hanging chain, she slumped forward from the weight."

Master Chan added, "Being these are lighter weight they should be able to wear for longer periods too."

Gary picked up and dropped the two person fiddle which landed on the floor with a loud thud, "Very solid indeed. I am impressed, what do you girls think?"

Sara and Wynn both commented that these were more comfortable. Lindsay asked, "Could you put Sara and I into the two person model like you did a while back?"

I didn't recall ever having both Sara and Lindsay in a two person then I recalled, "Oh when I had Maya and Wynn caning you two. Okay, sure."

After I got them secured Lindsay asked, "Okay Sara, you think this is lighter?"

Sara thought for a moment, "Honestly, dear I don't recall I had a bit of a pain in my ass that night. Of course Maya did do a number on you too...Yeah, I suppose this is lighter. Still secure, no way I am getting out of this without help."

Gary suggested, "Okay, why don't we head over to my office and discuss the details. Come Ron."

As I walked back towards Gary's office Sara started to protest, "Hey what about us?"

I laughed, "Your welcome to join us, if you can get in there." As I was nearing the hall, I turned to Andy, "I suppose we should release them?"

Andy remarked, "Oh I don't know, at least they can't run off somewhere."

Lindsay was not amused, "Andy James McGrawl..."

I laughed, "Oh, boy you are in trouble now, she used your middle name!"

Andy laughing, "Well, she can't do anything to me in her present condition...even if she tried she likely end up on the floor..."

I turned to Wynn, "...And take poor Sara down with her. Okay, before Lindsay hurts either Andy or Sara and herself, you should release them."

Wynn undid the restraints and Lindsay quickly followed Andy into the office and gave him a swift kick in the behind before he sat down. While Gary worked out the details with Master Chan, I uploaded the photos to my laptop and had the girls select the ones they thought would work for the ACME catalog. After we wrapped up at Gary's we returned with some new toys for our playroom.

Chapter 22: Work in Progress and This is Going To Be A Problem

As promised, Dundee and his crew returned on Monday to get the flooring laid for the McGrawl's office. By lunch they had the sub flooring down and by the end of the day the wood floor was laid. Dundee explained, "I would let the glue set overnight and should be fine to walk on by morning. The desk went into staining this afternoon so should be ready by Wednesday. I will be back tomorrow to get the shelving installed. The furniture is ready, but rather wait until Thursday as I am going to need as much room as possible to get the desk installed. I did email Andy the plans for his new store, have him contact me if he did not get those."

Indeed Andy did get the plans and wanted to get my input. I reminded him it was their store and he really should be consulting with Lindsay. But, overall I was impressed with the layout and did think it was going to really create a more professional appearance for this store, "This is going to look more fluid, not like you threw some miss-matched fixtures together."

On Tuesday Dundee installed the shelving which only took a couple hours. He did inform us, "The desks are out of staining and will be ready to be installed tomorrow. Since I have some extra time today, I should be able to get your armoire finished and into staining. Now, because of the size of this thing, it is going to take a couple days for staining."

I was a bit confused, "I thought we were going to do the pine like we did for everything else?"

Dundee explained, "Yes, we are. Sorry, by staining I meant sealing."

That made sense, "Okay that works. How about the McGraw's desk for my office?"

Dundee checked his phone, "That is supposed to be delivered on Friday, have no idea when. I should be able to get that in place on Monday as well."

After Dundee left that evening I gave Gary a ring, "Hey Gary. I've been meaning to have you come by and setup the suspension system in the library."

Gary informed me, "I'll try to remember to bring the parts home with me tomorrow. The one in your old presentation room wouldn't be able to accommodate the thicker spreader bars."

Wednesday morning Dundee arrived with his crew and the desk. They attempted to bring the desk up the side stairs but were having some issues just getting it through the door. He found me in my office, "This is going to be a problem. The desks are too big to get through the door to the stairs. Suggestions?"

I recalled when we had the Anozira tubs installed last year, "Well, when we had the tubs installed they had to bring in a truck with a crane."

Dundee laughed, "Don't have one of those, but I think I can get this to work with a couple scissor-lifts. I'll have to get some extra help as it going to take a person on each lift plus two people on the balcony. I'll be back in a couple hours."

Meanwhile much to my surprise Gary knocked on my office door, "Hey Ron, here to install your suspension system."

I looked up and commented, "Wasn't expecting you until tonight, but okay."

Gary laughed, "Well, I was coming home for lunch anyway and decided I'd do this while I still remembered. So for the floor, I have this here raised vase that we will put over the floor clamp. I know you said you didn't mind having it exposed, but this way people won't trip over it. The ceiling is simple a hook that you can run a lead chain from to the spreader bar, fiddle, cuffs or whatever." In a couple hours Gary had finished the installation and Dundee returned with extra crew and a couple scissor-lifts. Gary commented, "I take it the desks were too big to get up the stairs?"

I laughed, "They couldn't even get the desk through the door much less up the stairs." I headed out towards the garages and saw desks in Dundee's truck. Coming in slowly under the Porte-cochère were a couple scissor lifts. On the ground were four people and on the balcony two more of Dundee's crew. It took almost an hour to get everything setup, but once they did all the sections of the desk were up in the McGrawl's office in about 30 minutes.

Dundee met up with me outside and commented, "Well, the hard part is done now. I am going to head up to get this monster put together." Gary headed back to his Deer Valley office and I headed inside to supervise the construction of the desk. Another hour and they had the desk fully assembled and moved on to the wall. Next they brought up the furniture which include a couple desk chairs along with the sectional and chaise lounge. Dundee informed me, "Okay, done for today. Be back on Monday with the Armorer and the other desk for the library. Any ideas as to when the McGrawl's might be back in?"

Checking my phone I noticed it was already past 5:00 PM, "They should be here shortly if you want to wait."

Dundee replied, "I've got a lot to clean up outside so yeah just come find me when they arrive." He headed down the stairs out to the back.

A few moments later Lindsay came in and was shocked, "Wow, that desk is a whole lot bigger than I was expecting. Of course by the time we get all our computers, scanner/copier/printer and FAX machine on there."

I joked, "Doesn't Andy have like a 30" monitor?"

Lindsay replied, "I think he wants to use dual 24" in here. He uses the 30" for games. So yes the desk should be big enough."

Sara hearing her 'adopted sister' came into the office, "Wow, now that is a desk!" She then noticed the sectional, "Oh, that looks nice."

I joined Sara and Lindsay on the sectional. Lindsay stretched out on to the chaise lounge, "Oh this is nice. I can sit here and talk on the phone."

Andy came into his office along with Dundee and upon seeing the giant desk, "Geez, Dundee I am surprised you were able to get this monster in here."

Dundee laughed, "Not an easy task as Ron can tell you. I should've measured the outside door not the double doors into here. Luckily I had a buddy who was able to lend me a couple of his scissor lifts and his crew for a few hours. At least your desk for Ron's office and his Armorer we will be able to bring in through the front door on Monday. Any way, since you and Lindsay are both in here wanted to let you know I should be ready to go on your Fort McDowell store next Wednesday. I expect we should have the majority done by Friday. Be completely finished the following Monday or Tuesday. Well, see you folks on Monday have a good weekend."

After dinner Andy and I discussed how we wanted to handle his Fort McDowell store. I explained, "We should mark on the column where you are going to want your data and electrical outlets as that is not going to be so obvious. The markings will be hidden once Dundee finishes the column with dry wall. How many computers did you plan on having displayed?"

Andy replied, "Just the three classes: Economy, Deluxe and Ultimate. I thinking those will take up about half of the area. The other half is going to be products such as mice, keyboards and a demo computer or two that customers can try out the mice and/or keyboards."

I was making notes and asked, "Do the demo computers need to be connected to the network?" Andy was uncertain. I replied, "Never mind, it won't be that much trouble to have a couple outlets on that side."

Lindsay asked, "When do y'all need to leave for the Budget Holstein Oro Valley project."

I explained, "I need to work around Laura. There is not much we need to do other than get equipment setup. Just waiting on those shuttle boxes to come. I suppose I should call Laura and find out which day of Easter weekend she wants to do this."

Wynn announced on the intercom, "Dinner!"

After dinner Andy and Lindsay spent most of the evening getting their new office setup. Meanwhile I phoned over to Henderson, "Howdy Ron!"

Picking up the receiver, "Evening Laura. What day of the Easter weekend did you want to do the Budget Holstein Oro Valley install?"

Laura asked, "Do you or Linda have a preference?"

I told her, "Doesn't matter to me, not sure about Linda. Suppose I should call her."

Laura told me, "Gotta run, any day will work for me just email what will work best for you two."

Lindsay walked in to my office, "Hey Ron, is there a dedicated phone line in that room?"

I was not sure by what she meant by dedicated, "Both the house lines as well as my business line are in there. Not sure what you are asking."

Lindsay explained, "We need a dedicated phone line for the FAX machine."

I replied, "Well, that is going to be an issue. I've used an eFax service so have not had a need for a phone line. I'll call our communications provider on Monday and see if we can get you guys another phone line in there." It was too late in the evening to call Linda so I headed upstairs to see how the McGrawl's were coming along with their new office. I walked in to see both Sara and Lindsay on the sectional and Andy under the desk fishing wires. I asked Andy, "Need a hand?"

He replied, "Actually yes since Lindsay ran off with Sara somewhere." I walked over and he fished up a couple sets of cables for his monitors.

I told him, "Well, they are both over there on the sectional."

Andy looked over, "Lindsay Marie Sauvignon-McGrawl! I suppose this is revenge for last weekend."

Lindsay just looked at Andy innocently, but gave Sara an angry look, "Bad Sara!"

I was not sure what to make of that, but before I could say anything Andy told Lindsay, "Well, if you want to get your system connected you should come here and help me." Lindsay did as she was told and helped Andy get the cables for her monitors fished up through the desk. After they connected their monitors Andy announced, "Okay, the moment of truth here." He turned on the power supply and fired up his computer. He was able to boot in to Windows and was able to

connect on the Internet. "Okay, that went well. Let's see if Lindsay's works." Lindsay turned on her power supply and fired up her computer. She too was able to boot, but could not get on to the Internet. "Well crap, I knew this was going to be too easy."

I walked over and crawled under the desk to get to her computer. Sure enough the Ethernet cable was not connected. After plugging it in I asked, "Can you get on now?"

Lindsay tried Thunderbird and Firefox again and this time was able to connect, "Cool Ron! What was the problem?"

After re-emerging from under the desk I explained, "The Ethernet cable was not plugged into your computer." I noticed the clock on the wall as showing nearly 11:00 PM, "Wow, it is getting late. I'm going to be heading to bed soon." As I was leaving the room I was thinking about their project and the Budget Holstein. I knew they wanted to open as soon as possible but I wondered, "Hey, um have either of you talked to Dunn since Chugwater?"

Lindsay replied, "Um no we haven't."

I explained, "Well, you better soon. I would assume to open the store you are going to need him. Seeing as he would have to move here from Chugwater, he may need some time."

Andy agreed, "True. We'll give him a call tomorrow."

I headed to take a shower before bed. Upon returning to the bedroom Sara was already in bed, wearing nothing but her armor. I thought just as well as was rather tired from all the events of that day. Saturday morning I woke up to Sara giving me a blow job. I told her, "I could return the favor if you get out of your armor."

Sara replied, "Sorry, I can't do that. I screwed up earlier this week and pissed Lindsay off. She demanded the key to my armor and told me she would release me when the weekend is over, *if* I am good."

I was trying hard not to laugh, "Okay. Here I thought you were the dominate one. Must be rubbing off on Lindsay."

Sara told me, "I have a feeling my release is going to be delayed after that little mishap last night. But you could always release me."

I gave her an Al Borland, "I don't think so Sara." and walked out of the room. Down in the kitchen Wynn was trying her hand at the Eggs Benedict recipe that

Peaches had left her. "Morning Wynn. How's breakfast coming?"

Wynn replied, "Slow. Peaches made this look easy. Can you give me a hand if you don't mind?" I helped her with the eggs as she was trying to cook up some sausage at the same time. "You know, sometimes I wished Peaches was still here it made things a lot easier. Oh well, I managed before without her."

After breakfast while Andy and Lindsay talked to Dunn Brooks, I decided I'd give Linda a call. She was thrilled to hear from me, "Ron, thought you had forgotten about me, as it seems my daughter has. Anyway what do I owe this call to?"

I explained, "Well, I need to know what day over the Easter weekend you want to have Laura do the final install. She says the day does not matter to her and I am wanting to work around your schedule."

Linda asked, "Isn't that suppose to be their anniversary?"

I confirmed, "Yes, but she has been wanting to bring Miss Kitty to your store. So she planned on being down in Tucson that weekend. On my end I would likely come out with Andy, Wynn and Sara the day before to get everything we need to do, done."

Linda advised, "Hmm, that is the weekend we are re-opening Corona de la Estrella's. So may be good idea for you to be out in case there are any issues. Would you mind coming in that Friday afternoon and doing a walk through with me before we re-open that evening?"

I thought I'd better get a hold of Laura, "Let me call Laura." I rang Laura and got Sophie, "Morning Sophie. Laura there?"

Sophie replied, "Yes. Hey Miss Kitty wants to talk to you."

I was a little confused as to why Miss Kitty wanted to speak to me but I didn't have much of a choice, "Hey Ron. Since Laura won't tell me, when is your mother's birthday?"

I was even more confused now as I had no idea why Miss Kitty would be interested and for that matter why Laura wouldn't tell her, "March 23rd, why?"

Miss Kitty replied, "Thanks, oh her's Laura."

I filled in Laura, "Okay, so I am talking to Linda...you know what let me conference her in." I added Linda to the line, "Linda, Laura you both there?" Both confirmed and I explained, "Okay, so Linda has decided she wants to give me more gray hairs by also doing the reopening of Corona de la Estrella's that weekend. So it looks like I will be out that entire weekend."

Laura informed me, "So Miss Kitty and I will be down at Loews that weekend. I am thinking may be doing an Easter Brunch with Miss Kitty then I can bring her up to the store."

Linda replied, "I can treat y'all to dinner that evening, just need to know how many."

I told her, "Well, it will be Sara, Andy, Wynn and myself. Of course Laura and Miss Kitty. Hey, Laura you do know Easter Sunday is our mother's birthday?"

Laura replied, "Oh fuck! I should've remembered that!"

I laughed, "Seems, you cain't even remember your 'anniversary' with Miss Kitty."

Linda laughed, "Touche! Well, you two could invite her and um what's her partner's name again?"

Laura replied, "Blanche as in Blanche Devereaux from *The Golden Girls*, that is the only way I can remember her name."

Linda continues, "Yes, Blanche. So eight of you. Wait that doesn't add up who we missing?"

I explained, "Well, besides Maya...Lindsay she is going to be supervising the construction at their new Fort McDowell store. However, may be I can get her down here since we will be doing this over the weekend. I can still come out with Sara on that Friday and get things going over at Corona de la Estrella's. I am sure Sara could help out Olivia. Then on Saturday Andy, Lindsay and Wynn can come down."

Linda was excited and told us, "Great and you will be able to stay at the Ranch."

I was about to say something when Laura replied, "I thought you sold the Ranch."

Linda replied, "Well, nope. The real estate market is so crappy right now. So, I decided that I would get some rental furniture and lease out as a time share. So far, I am making enough money to cover the furniture rental and utilities when even some left over. So, will this work for y'all?"

I told her, "Works for me. How about you Laura?" Laura didn't answer, "Hmm, must have lost her. I'll try calling her again..."

Laura replied, "...Sorry I'm still here. I was talking to Miss Kitty who already called Mom and Blanche and invited them up for Easter. So, yes that will work for me."

I explained, "Okay, well still need to talk to Andy, Lindsay, Sara and Wynn, but this should work out." As I was wrapping up with Linda and Laura I noticed Andy was peering into the office. I motioned for him to come in, "Well, gotta go looks like Andy needs me."

Chapter 23: This Didn't Work Out as We Expected & She Did What?

Before I had a chance to ask Andy about Easter weekend he asked me, "Hey do you know if the condos are still selling?"

I wondered what this was all about, "Thought you two were going to stick around here for a while, especially after we just got you this office."

Andy explained, "No, no not for us. Dunn Brooks and his girlfriend."

Okay that made more sense, "Not sure I suppose we can head down there and talk to Jess and see what is still available. Now, before I forget I talked to Linda and Laura. Seems Linda and Olivia are doing the re-opening of Corona de la Estrella's on that Good Friday. Sara and I are going to head out there that afternoon to help Linda and make sure everything works. I figured since this going to be done over the weekend that you, Lindsay and Wynn can come down Saturday we should be able to get everything done at Linda's before Laura and Miss Kitty arrive Sunday afternoon. Then that evening we will all have dinner. Also, Miss Kitty invited my mother and Blanche to dinner too."

Andy asked, "So what hotel are we staying at?"

I told him, "Um, were not. Linda pulled the Ranch off the market and is using it as a time share now. We will be staying there."

Andy replied, "If you can get Sara and Lindsay in here, I'll run it by them."

I got on the intercom, "Lindsay, Sara and Wynn to my office."

All three walked in and Lindsay declared, "Sara did it! She's been a bad girl!"

Andy looked at me rather confused but also a little guilty, "What the?"

I laughed, "I'll explain it to you later. Okay, so as I was explaining to Andy in regards to Budget Holstein Oro Valley...We will finish the install on that Saturday and Sunday. However, Sara you and I will be coming down on Friday as Linda and Olivia want to re-open Corona de la Estrella's that evening. Laura and Miss Kitty are doing a Sunday brunch and then will come out to the Budget Holstein. That evening Linda is going to treat us all, including my mother and Blanche to dinner that evening."

Sara asked, "Why your mother?"

I explained, "Miss Kitty's idea as Easter Sunday is also my mother's birthday this year."

Sara understood, "Ah okay. Where we staying?"

I told her, "Holstein Ranch?"

Lindsay was confused, "What you bought Linda's Ranch?"

"No, Linda pulled it off the market and is using it as a time share now." I asked, "So is this going to work for y'all?"

Everyone was in agreement although I sensed some resistance from Lindsay. I told Andy and Lindsay, "Let me call Linda back and then we can go down to the condos." Sara had a look of panic on her face and seeing as how Lindsay was ignoring her, I explained, "The condo is going to be for Dunn Brooks and his girlfriend." Sara seemed relieved. It was then I noticed she seemed to be unusually far from Lindsay. Since I had more phone calls to make I demanded, "Everybody out." Once everyone was out of my office I contacted Linda and confirmed that weekend would work. She did relay to me that Sara should bring her black widow corset along with a black long skirt with side slits as she was going to be a hostess on opening nights along with Olivia. I got off the phone with Linda and went to find the McGrawl's. We headed down to the condo's and found Jess.

She was surprised to see us, "Ron haven't seen you in a while. Got some new leads for me?"

Although she was joking I replied, "Why yes. Let me introduce Andy and Lindsay McGrawl. They need a condo for the manager of their new store." I left Andy and Lindsay discuss matters with Jess. Since Lindsay knew what Dunn wanted she went with Jess to look at the models. This gave me a chance to explain a couple things to Andy, "I think Lindsay and Sara are going through that phase that Maya and Bambi went through earlier."

Andy cringed, "Oh great! Oh well, Lindsay is a relatively harmless mistress."

I had to ask, "What do you mean by relatively? She has taken possession of the key to Sara's armor and is apparently punishing Sara for something that happened last week."

Andy informed me, "Yea, I know about that. I am not sure what got into Sara but I have am forced to agree with Lindsay on this."

I decided it was best for me not to pursue this matter any further, although his statement did not make any sense. Still I wonder what Sara would do that would get Lindsay so enraged at her, "Okay, well I let them work it out."

Jess and Lindsay returned and we headed back to the house. The rest of the weekend was uneventful. I would later learn that Lindsay and Andy purchased the condo for Dunn Brooks and he would pay them back once he got here. On Sunday Andy took Wynn and I to the Fort McDowell store. I was shocked by the size of the location, it made their Far North Scottsdale location look like a kiosk. On Monday Dundee came by with the Armorer and desk for the library and the office. He reminded us he would be starting on PC's and Things store on Wednesday. That evening Zina called the house line. She needed to attend to some family business and needed to be gone most of the week. Lindsay filled in for her the rest of the week. Thursday Kayré called, "Hey Ron. I need to get a hold of Lindsay, do you have her cell number?"

While I was hunting it down I asked, "Yeah, let me find that. You sound frazzled, how's it going without her?"

Kayré replied, "Not well. Kacie is out visiting vendors so Sara and I are very busy. I am wondering what is going to happen when they open the Fort McDowell store."

I did find her number but I was wondering about Kayré's comment, "What do you mean?"

Kayré explained, "Um she says she is likely going to be going to be doing management stuff between the three stores as Andy does. Business is booming up here and I am not sure I am going to be able to keep up with the demand. Oh well." I gave her Lindsay's cell number. After I got off the phone I was wondering why Lindsay was suddenly getting more involved with the stores. She seemed to enjoy working with Sara at The Budget Holstein North. Although I am thinking it may be taking a bit of strain on their friendship given the way they seemed to be treating each other lately.

I was lost in thought when Wynn paged me, "Ron?"

I replied, "Yeah?"

She told me, "Maya holding on the house line."

Wow, Maya hadn't talked to her since she left. I picked up the house line, "Howdy Maya, What's up?"

Maya was a bit nervous, "Um, hey Ron. Um, well...hmm." I was wondering what

going on now, "Okay...let me gets this out now. Is it possible for me to come back?"

I wondered what happened, "Have a falling out with your parents?"

Maya laughed, "Kinda. Things just didn't goes as we expected with the Bed and Breakfast. They thought they would devote most of their time to the Bed and Breakfast while running Boots on the side. Soon as Jason announced the new Chugwater location and offered shipping incentives they got flooded with orders. They ended up devoting their full time to Boots and the Bed & Breakfast was put on the back burner. Now they have ended up selling the Bed and Breakfast."

I was shocked, "They sold it? How?"

Maya replied, "My feelings exactly. They were approached by an investor who offered them a good deal. So good of a deal, they ran off and bought themselves a condo out in Wheatland. I don't really care for it out here anyway."

I asked, "Okay, so if you come back what are going to do? Vinnie's?"

Maya explained, "Yea, Diane told me if I ever came back she would re-hire me no questions asked. I want to go back to school as well, I miss Sara, my friends and Bambi."

I told her, "Well, you do know though that the McGrawl's transformed your old room into their office?"

Maya was a little disappointed, "Crap, forgot about that."

I assured her, "Still have the Queen Suite as well as the guest room."

Maya asked, "Guest room?"

I reminded her, "Former Presentation Room. When would you come back here, if I do let you?"

Maya was concerned, "If? Peaches and I need to be out by the end of the weekend."

I confirmed, "*This* weekend?"

Maya told me, "Yes, the investors want us out ASAP. I hate to be a pest, but what about Peaches?"

I asked the same thing, "What *about* Peaches?"

Maya was almost in tears, "My folks pretty much abandoned us once they got the money. I suppose Peaches could help around the house."

I recalled the conversation I had just had with Kayré, "I might be able to work something out for her. Seems Kayré is experiencing growing pains and sounds like Lindsay is going to be devoting more of her time towards the family business. I am not sure if it is because of their growth or she wants to get away from Sara."

Maya was puzzled, "Wait you said Lindsay wants to get *away* from Sara?"

I explained, "I am not sure. The McGrawl's just bought a store out in Fort McDowell and Kayré says that Lindsay is going to be like Andy and going to be going between stores during the week. I am still trying to put together what happened last week. Sara did something that really pissed Lindsay."

Maya reminded me, "But, but those two are practically inseparable. Remember when Sara, Wynn and I ran off to Oro Valley to get away from Dirk?"

I could not forget that day, I thought Lindsay was going to die when I told her I didn't know where Sara was, "Yes. That was on the initial install for ACME Las Vegas with Cristina. I know it doesn't make much sense to me either. Oh well, I am sure they will work it out. In the mean time, I can talk to Kayré in a bit about Peaches." It was then I realized that I would have no more guestrooms, "Geez Maya I am going to be out of rooms now."

Maya was trying her best to be calm, "Well if it makes a difference, at the Ranch House, Peaches and I shared a bed."

I thought for a second, "Okay, I suppose you two could have the queen suite, that would leave me the guest room. So when should we expect you?"

Maya explained, "Well, we are pretty much ready to leave. I am going up to Wheatland to try to have a 'talk' with my folks and then we'll head out."

I informed her, "Um, we are not going to be home this weekend. I've got the Budget Holstein Oro Valley project and the grand re-opening of Corona de la Estrella's. We will all be having dinner there on Sunday night..." a thought crossed my mind, "...hmm let me call Linda real quick."

Maya was confused, "Okay...do you want me to hold or you calling me back?"

I told her, "No, just hold for a few minutes." I got a hold of Linda, "Hey, can I add two more for next Sunday?"

Linda was fine, "Sure who?"

I told her, "Maya and Peaches. Seems to have been a bit of a falling out between Maya and her parents in regards to Boots and the Bed and Breakfast. Not sure of all the details but apparently they got an offer they couldn't refuse on the B&B and ended up leaving Chugwater along with Maya and Peaches. The investors told them they need to be out this weekend. So she is coming back and I guess she is going to do Vinnie's and also go to ASU like she was doing last year. Anyway I need to get back to here. This is going to be a surprise so don't mention to anyone."

Linda assured me that there would be no issues and she would keep quiet. I got Maya back on the line, "Okay, if you two can meet at Corona de la Estrella's on Easter Sunday around 4:00 PM this will work. Oh and Linda didn't sell the Holstein Ranch after all. She is using it as a time share and we will be staying there while down in Oro Valley."

Maya was excited, "Cool, be nice to see everyone again."

I added, "Oh yeah, my mother's birthday is next Sunday so her and Blanche will be joining us for dinner."

Maya did ask, "Can you do me favor, I would do it myself, but I am not in the mood right now given the mess with my folks. Could you talk to Diane for me?"

How is it I am always end up being a mediator, "Okay." Maya told me she had to go and would see us on Sunday. I made sure my office doors were closed and I got on the line with Vinnie's Pizza.

Fortunately, Diane answered, "Vinnie's Pizza, We'll Make You an Offer You Can't Refuse!"

I replied, "Hey Diane, Ron Merlot. Got a few minutes?"

Diane was surprised, "Sure Ron. What can I do for you?"

I explained, "Well, this is more what can you do for Maya."

Diane was wondering, "Is she coming back?"

I told her, "Yeah, this weekend. Not sure when she will want to start again."

Diane was thrilled, "Drew will be so happy to have her back. Let her know when she is ready to come see me."

I told Diane, "Shall do. I won't see her again until Sunday and that is going to be in Tucson. Not sure when we are going to be coming back to Scottsdale as I have business I am needing to take care of down there."

Diane assured me this would be fine, "Well, we are going to be moving in the next week."

My heart sank, Vinnie's has been our favorite, "Moving?"

Diane explained, "Yep, we are moving into the restaurant portion of the Desert Oasis Market. The first place in there did not last long. Plus this will allow us to have a much bigger eat-in and expanded menu."

I was somewhat confused, "Desert Oasis Market?"

Diane told me, "Yes on the north side, it is part of the gas station."

It finally made sense, "Ah okay, don't think I ever gone in there. Alright, I'll have her call you when she gets settled in."

I just got the phone with her when Wynn announced, "Sophie, is holding on the business line."

I answered, "AZ Outback, Ron."

Sophie announced, "Laura want me to remind you the three of us will be down in Tucson this weekend. Laura will do the Budget Holstein project that afternoon and then we will join you for dinner."

Somehow I did not take into account Sophie, "Oh, so you are coming with them?"

Sophie laughed, "What? You thought Laura and Miss Kitty were going to drive themselves out to Tucson?"

I joked, "Well, no I thought she was going to fly out with Miss Kitty. Oh shoot, I forgot about Laura and her irrational fear of tin cans with wings. Geez, she is as bad a Martina, cain't do anything for herself. Okay, see you on Sunday then."

Once again, I called Linda, "Hey Linda one more for dinner. I somehow didn't take into account Sophie coming with Laura and Miss Kitty."

Linda assured me, "No problem, you can have as many people as you want, just need to know big of an area to reserve for y'all."

Lindsay stumbled into my office and declared, "I won't be going with you this weekend. I had already told Krysta I was staying the weekend and Andy does not need me."

I was starting to ask, "What about Sara?" but Lindsay turned around and stormed

out my office. If I didn't know any better I'd say she was drunk, but that would be very uncharacteristic for Lindsay.

Wynn paged me, "Kacie on the business line."

I really wanted to find out what was eating at Lindsay, but I had business to take care of, "AZOutback, Ron."

Kacie asked, "Hey Ron, what time are you picking us up tomorrow?"

Well, this was news to me, "Um...I was not aware I was."

Kacie explained, "Odd that Linda didn't say anything. She wants to have Kayré there for the grand-reopening of Corona de la Estrella's. Friday is going to a special night as Linda has invited a select group of people."

I remembered back to Thanksgiving, "Okay, that would make sense. It was Kayré that convinced Linda to continue with the Budget Holstein after Hal's death. Um, we should be leaving mid morning say around 10:00. I need to go, I have some business I need to take care of." I paged Wynn to my office and asked, "Have you noticed anything odd about Lindsay and Sara recently?"

Wynn remarked, "Well, now that you mention it. It almost seems as if they are avoiding each other. More so Lindsay towards Sara."

I asked, "Did you know Lindsay doesn't want to come down to Tucson with us?"

Wynn replied, "No. What is she going to do?"

I told her, "She told me she had promised to stay the weekend with her girlfriend out in Fort McDowell. She said Andy wouldn't need her in Tucson and when I asked her about Sara she ignored me and left. I need to get this mess sorted out before we leave. Can you please bring Lindsay and Sara in here." Wynn left and returned a few minutes later with Sara and Lindsay. The two of them walked in and sat at opposite ends of the room, while Wynn "stood guard" at the door as if she thought one of them might try to make a run for it. I let them sit for a couple minutes, just to see if either one of them might offer up an explanation. When neither one of them did, I asked, "Either of you have anything to say about this situation?"

Lindsay replied with bitter anger that I have never seen her express towards anyone, "It's Sara's fault. She should have known better."

I looked at Sara, "What do you have to say?"

Sara replied in tears towards Lindsay, "I know, but I keep telling you it not as you

think!"

Lindsay got up and screamed at Sara, "What I am suppose to think? I saw you...you were sleeping with my husband!"

Chapter 24: This Can't Be Happening!

I was in a state of shock, never have I heard Lindsay scream at anyone, especially Sara. Lindsay made a run for the door and Wynn tried to stop her. Given Wynn's size one would have thought she would have been able to stop Lindsay. However, Wynn badly under estimated the strength and sheer force of Lindsay. Wynn was no match for Lindsay who ended up knocking her through the french door. Wynn let out of a loud scream as she was knocked through the door. Both ended up in the library in a pile of glass and splintered wood. Both were cut up pretty bad and Wynn was out cold. Lindsay got up, shook herself off and ran off leaving a trail of blood behind her. Sara sat there in shock and didn't move. Andy heard the commotion and had come down the stairs in time to see someone running by. He didn't see though it was Lindsay nor that she was cut up. He was walking into the library, "Ron? What..." He saw Wynn laying on the floor unconscious in the pile of debris. He was panicked, "What happened in here?"

I was concerned about Wynn as well as Lindsay as I did not know how badly she was hurt. I told him, "I'll explain in a moment I need to call 9-1-1. Grab some towels from the kitchen and tend to Wynn" I informed the dispatcher of the situation and was advised EMS would be there shortly. About this time Wynn was coming to, but still very dazed. I walked over and told her, "Just lay still EMS will be here shortly." Andy returned and commented about the trail of blood, I told him "That's from Lindsay, I think she ran off to the hall bath." The doorbell rang, "That's EMS, Sara go let them in."

Sara got up still shaking and carefully made her way to the front door. She opened the door and was surprised to see two Scottsdale police offers instead of EMS. She yelled out, "Um...Ron, Andy, police are here."

I was still attending to Wynn with Andy, "I'm in the library with Wynn trying to keep her calm and control the bleeding." The officers walked in with Sara. I explained, "Someone needs to check on Lindsay. I don't even know where she is. I am assuming she ran off to the hall bath. Wherever she went she left a trail of blood behind her."

Sara shocked me, "I am not going after her, look what she did to Wynn."

I was not really in the mood to deal with this and having the police here did not make things any better. The officer asked, "Anyone else involved in this?"

Andy answered, "Yes, my wife." They asked where she was and what happened.

Andy explained, "Don't know. I was up in my office when I heard the crash and a scream."

I added, "I think she ran off to the hall bath. Follow the trail of blood and you will find her."

One of the officers left and followed the blood trail which did lead to the hall bath. He knocked on the door and Lindsay screamed, "Ron...Sara I am not in the mood."

She was a bit taken back when the officer yelled back, "Police open the door ma'am."

The other officer radioed that it was okay for EMS to come in. When EMS came in, the second officer explained pointing to the library, "There is one person over there and another in this bathroom."

Lindsay opened the door. She didn't look as bad as I had thought, but still had some nasty cuts on her arms and legs. While EMS treated both Lindsay and Wynn, the police talked to Sara, Andy and I. Andy acknowledged he had not seen anything. I explained the circumstances, but omitting Lindsay's claim and her intoxication. Sara did the same, though she really did not see exactly what happened as she was not paying that much attention. The officers spoke to Wynn and Lindsay as well. They asked Wynn, "Miss Lee, do you want pursue charges against Misses McGrawl?"

I was expecting Wynn to decline but to my shock and Andy's horror, "Yes, I do. She needs to learn her lesson." With that Lindsay was cuffed and Mirandized before being led out to an awaiting police car on the front drive. Wynn was being taken to Scottsdale Healthcare Gary Hawk for further evaluation.

As the police and EMS were leaving I stood there with Andy in shock and commented, "This can't be happening!"

Andy still did not know what was happening, "What is happening?"

That question was answered by one of the officers, "Your wife is being taken into custody for domestic assault. You can post her bond once she goes through booking."

Once the police and EMS left Sara came over and apologized, "Sorry, Ron I had no idea it would lead up to this."

I was rather upset with her, "What!?!...I don't even understand what happened. What did Lindsay mean she 'saw you sleeping with Andy'?"

Andy turned red and stuttered, "Oh shit! This is my fault. Dang it Lindsay why did it have to come to this?!"

Now I was really confused, "How is this *your* fault?"

Andy was a bit embarrassed as he explained, "Well...see...I played a prank on Lindsay. She was spending so much time with Sara, so I thought I'd get her attention, make her jealous. So, I made it look like I was sleeping with Sara. I was not expecting her to react the way she did. I thought this would blow over in a couple days. Boy I sure made a mess of things. I've severed the great relationship Sara and Lindsay had. Plus, I caused her to hurt Wynn and get arrested. I can't believe Wynn wants to press charges."

I had my suspicions, "Lindsay charged at Wynn, not just ran into her. Of course she seemed a bit drunk too. I suppose as Wynn says, she needs to learn her lesson." I looked at the mess of glass, wood and blood and sighed, "Well, I'll get this cleaned up when we get back. I am going to head to the hospital and find out how Wynn is doing."

Andy told me, "I'll help you replace that door. I am going to head over to the police station and find out when I'll be able to bail Lindsay." He stopped for a moment, "...you know what she can wait until tomorrow."

Sara was shocked, "You are going to let her spend the night in jail?"

Andy confirmed, "Yes, she needs to understand what she did has its consequences. Also give her a chance to sober up. I'm sorry Sara I should have put a stop to her 'game' earlier."

The three of us headed over to the hospital to see how Wynn was doing. Upon arrival they took us to her room and explained, "We are going to keep her for a bit just to make sure she didn't have a concussion. Her left leg is nearly broken, and has several laceration but she should be fine. In a few weeks she should be able to have the cast removed."

I walked over the her bed side and asked the most obvious question, "How you doing?"

Wynn smiled, "I think the doctor pretty much told you everything. What happened? I remember seeing Lindsay coming towards me and then next thing I knew I was in the library in a lot of pain with Andy and you over me. I hope he is not upset with me."

Andy walked over and asked, "Why would I be upset. Like you said, she needs to learn her lesson. That is why I'll wait until morning to bond her out. I'm sorry you got hurt."

Wynn asked, "Not that it is my business, but did you really sleep with Sara?"

Andy laughed, "Yes and no. I was trying to play a prank on Lindsay, make her jealous and spend sometime with me. Just didn't know she would get this out of hand." We left for dinner and stopped off at a nearby chicken joint. During dinner Lindsay made her 'one phone call' to Andy's cell. He told her, "No, I am not going to come get you tonight. You need time to think about what you did and sober up. I know I am at fault here for instigating this prank, but you took it too far. Wynn is in the hospital and Ron could very well kick us out. You and Sara have been inseparable for nearly the past year. Both have been there for each others when needed. Wynn, she is like family to us, how could you? I need to smooth things over with Ron and Wynn and your time is up."

Andy turned to us and asked, "Convincing enough?"

Sara laughed, "Had me."

Andy replied, "Good may be she will understand her actions better."

Sara asked me, "You don't plan on kicking them out do you?"

I told her, "I really should after what Lindsay did to Wynn and my office. Especially after that little talk I had with them after Maya left. I warned them if they ever did anything to hurt you, I would not be very happy."

Sara was starting to plead and cry, "Please don't. Lindsay over-reacted, I know she didn't mean to hurt me...or Wynn."

I gave in, "Okay, I won't. Besides, Andy has already offered to help me replace the doors and to clean up the mess. I have no idea how I am going to get the blood out of the carpeting though. May need to call my carpet guy."

Upon arriving home Andy headed into the other garage to get a bin to place the derbies in. At least my office and the library were hardwood floors so that made the clean up a lot easier. Sara walked into the hall bath and was quite shocked by the amount of blood on the floor and in the sink. I was cleaning the trail in the foyer when the door bell rang. I opened the door to find Gary, "Evening Ron. Um, is everything all right?"

Giving him a very abridged version of what happened, "Lindsay and Wynn got into a bit of a scuffle in my office. Both ended up going through the French Doors."

Gary replied, "Ouch! How are they?"

I told him, "Wynn is still in the hospital. Broken leg, multiple cuts and possible concussion. Lindsay, I guess is for the most part okay." I did not mention anything about her being arrested.

Gary asked, "I thought that was her being placed in the police car."

Andy came over, "Evening Gary. Yea, Wynn filed charges at least for now. Lindsay needs to learn her lesson here."

Gary was lost for words, "Oh, okay. Hey if you need anything let me know."

Andy commented, "Going to need some help replacing the doors to Ron's office."

Gary walked over with Andy and I, "Hmm, well this door is not too badly damaged. But it would likely be cheaper and easier just to replace both doors. I can help you get them hung. You'll need to use the ACME truck anyway, you are not going to be able to get those into your Cruiser."

We headed over to the local home improvement mega-store. We could not find the same style as we had before, but found something that was a close enough match. Also found a product that we could use on the carpeting to get the blood stains up. Before I had a chance to stop him, Andy paid for the doors. With the help of Gary we got the new doors hung later that evening. Sara managed to get all the blood out of the carpeting in the living room. Gary departed and I returned to my office. I sat down behind my desk and looked out into the library. Sara came in and sat down in front of my desk, "You doing okay?"

I really had no reason to be mad at Sara, she was caught in the middle of this, "Yea. I know this intervention didn't go as expected. I am not mad at you. You were caught in the middle of this mess. If anyone is to blame it is Andy and he admits his fault. I just don't understand how this got so out-of-hand. I don't know..." My office line was ringing, "AZOutback, Ron."

Much to my surprise it was Wynn, "Hey Ron, Wynn here. They have gone ahead and discharged me, can you come down and get me?"

I told her, "Sure, we'll be down there in about 20-minutes." After I got off the phone I explained, "The hospital has discharged Wynn."

We met Wynn in the ER waiting area. Her left arm was bandaged in a couple places and in a sling. She also had a cast on her left leg. She saw me and commented, "You know, they said my armor likely prevented more serious injuries." as she made her way on crutches to the Cruiser, "I suppose I am going to be of limited assistance for the next few weeks."

I told her, "Don't worry about it, we can manage. You can still make it to the

kitchen right?"

Wynn replied, "Yes."

I gave a sigh of relief, "Good, otherwise we'd starve!" I couldn't help but think that timing of Peaches and Maya coming back was going to be perfect, but awkward.

Wynn told Andy, "If you like, I'll drop the charges in the morning."

Andy was relieved, "Yes, if you could please. I already bought Ron a new set of French Doors. Don't want to go broke bailing my wife out of jail as well."

Upon arriving home and entering into the house Wynn was amazed, "Wow, you three got this place cleaned up pretty well." She then looked into the library and saw the new doors, "Even replaced the doors already too."

I told her, "Well, Gary helped us out there. He came by earlier this evening wondering why police and EMS were here."

Wynn asked, "How bad is Lindsay?"

Andy replied, "I don't know. They took her into custody once the EMS patched her up. Must not have been too bad as she was not taken to the hospital."

Wynn laughed, "She'd make a good linebacker! I was not expecting her to charge me like she did. I was just trying to prevent her from leaving."

Andy informed us, "Well, she did play football in high school. All-girl team that made the boys look like wimps."

I asked Andy, "Hey, I talked to Kayré earlier today and she mentioned Lindsay is going to be focusing more on the stores now?"

Andy confirmed, "Yes. Now that we are going to have three stores it is not so easy for me to get to all three. I think she is bit stressed trying to get things going with Fort McDowell and trying to work at Budget Holstein. I hope her leaving is not going to put too much of a strain on Kayré. I know she is getting more business now."

I did not want to let the cat out the bag about Maya, "Kayré should be able to work things out on that end soon. I am rather tired and we need to get up early to get Lindsay. I am suppose to pickup Kayré and Kacie around 10:00 AM as they are coming with Sara and I. Kayré is suppose to be at the grand re-opening celebration for Corona de la Estrella's."

The next morning Andy and Wynn went to get Lindsay. Meanwhile Sara and I started loading the supplies we would need for Linda's job which included the two shuttle boxes and the new server that arrived before the drama yesterday afternoon. I was reviewing the job ticket and making sure we had everything we needed when Andy and Wynn returned with Lindsay. Lindsay got out of the car and walked over to Sara and I with a slight limp, "Sara, Ron...I'm so sorry about yesterday." I was going to say something, but then she turned towards Sara and got down on her knees, which appeared to cause her a great deal of pain, "Sara...please forgive me. I should not have let this get between us. Andy explained what happened. I am so sorry Sara."

Sara was not really in the mood and let it be known, "Lindsay, I told you nothing happened, but you wouldn't even listen to me. How long we have been together now? You really think I would intentionally do something like that? I really don't want to deal with you right now. Ron and I need to get going to our job. We can discuss this further tomorrow when you are down in Tucson."

To Be Continued...