

The Bike Trip : A Cabe Gallo Story

By Kate Simon

Cabe had finally finished his mountain of paperwork despite the fact Scorpion had a relatively quiet few weeks. Walter was upstairs working on some experiment. Paige was doing her carpool at Ralph's school. Sly and Toby were engrossed in their monitors while Happy was tuning up her Harley.

He smiled as he remembered Happy's birthday party when he and Kate had given her the bike. For a second he thought she might not accept it but he was delighted when she did. Doing things for the people he cared about was the best part of his now unlimited resources.

Cabe rubbed his still achy right hand. The cast had come off two weeks ago and the doctor said it had healed properly. He'd been relieved when he'd been able to start sketching again. He'd been able to ride his bike with no problem so he figured he'd be okay on a longer ride.

He reviewed the flyer he'd picked up at the motorcycle club he'd recently joined. Boozefighters were a group of guys who loved bikes and was founded by veterans. They also did a lot of work with veteran's groups. Their latest project was a charity ride from LA to San Francisco and back. You got sponsors for each mile of the seven hundred and sixty mile round trip. He knew Kate wouldn't want to come on such a long ride. She was game for short trips up the PCH but he knew she preferred riding in his Dodge.

He looked up as Happy revved her bike. He grabbed the flyer and walked over to her.

"Sounds good," said Cabe

"She's a thing of beauty," Happy smiled.

"She sure is. Happy I'm planning to go on a charity ride next weekend, LA to San Francisco and back." He handed her the flyer. "Would you like to come along?"

Happy reviewed the flyer and nodded. "Sounds good. Do I have to join or something?"

"There's a meeting tomorrow to go over the details. Why don't you come with me?"

Toby walked up behind Cabe just in time to hear the invitation. "You hitting on my woman, Gallo?"

"I'm nobody's woman," replied Happy. Apparently their on again off again relationship was in the off position again.

Cabe glared a look at Toby that turned lesser men to a puddle.

"Sorry," he said. "I need to go out for a while. If you need me, text me."

"So what do you think, Happy?"

"I think the Doc is nuts."

"About the meeting."

"Sounds good."

Toby pressed the buzzer on the speaker box. A loud buzz sounded and the gate opened. He pulled his Monte Carlo in Kate and Cabe's driveway.

"Hi, Toby. Thanks for coming.," said Kate.

"Would you like something to drink?"

"No thanks, I'm good."

"Let's sit on the deck," said Kate.

"It must be troubling."

"Excuse me?"

Toby smiled and tossed his hat on a side table. "The sound of the ocean is calming for you. Wanting to stay close means you need the comfort."

Kate smiled. "You are good."

"So I've been told." He dropped the snark and switched to doctor mode. "Okay, talk to me."

"The dreams are back but this time Trent Price is there too."

"Those dark circles under your eyes tells me it's every night."

Kate nodded and took a sip of her iced tea. "I see the militia guys, I take the shots, they fall. But now Trent is there too and he's laughing and he starts beating me."

"Where's Cabe?"

"I see him standing in the distance but I can't get to him. Then he fades and I'm left with Trent. It's usually around there when I wake up."

Toby leaned forward on his deck chair and held Kate's gaze. "This is essentially the same dream you had after the UN but now you've added the Trent component." He reached for Kate's hand. "You have PTSD. It's not uncommon in these situations. Your reaction to these difficult events is not abnormal. Your brain is trying to process what happened and you will, but it will take time. The aspect of your dreams that are unusual is the violence is not the primary focus, it's Cabe. Your fear of losing him is what's driving your dreams."

"I killed three men and got the crap kicked out of me and losing Cabe is my issue?" Kate looked doubtful.

"Yep. Trust me. I went to Harvard Medical School."

Kate smiled.

"What did Cabe say?" asked Toby.

She took another sip of her iced tea but didn't respond.

"You didn't tell him?"

She shook her head.

"Kate you have to tell him."

"Toby, you know how much he worries. I don't want to add to that. Besides, you said I'm fine."

"I said you'd be fine eventually, but that's not going to happen if you don't talk to him about it."

They were both surprised when Cabe joined them on the deck. "You coming on to my woman, Doc?"

Toby put his hands up in surrender. "I was just leaving. Kate, please remember what I said." He glanced over at Cabe "There's no time like the present."

"What the hell are you babbling about?"

Toby stood and pointed to the deck chair. "Have a seat. I'll show myself out."

Cabe sat down and looked over at Kate. She hadn't been herself since the Trent Price incident but he thought that was normal considering what the bastard did to her. He knew she hadn't been sleeping well.

"Katie girl, talk to me. What's going on."

"Toby wants me to talk to you about the dreams."

She'd had nightmares that woke them both following the UN incident but they had faded over the past few months. "Are they back?"

She nodded. "This time Trent is there too."

He took both her hands in his. "Tell me."

"It's the same as before but after I take down the shooters, Trent is there laughing. Then he starts to hit me."

Cabe anger flared and he struggled not to hold her hands too tight.

"I see you there in the distance. I'm calling out to you and you're coming to me but things are moving in slow motion. Then you fade away and I'm left there with Trent."

His hands shook a bit as he reached up to wipe a tear from her cheek. "Kate," he paused his voice cracked with fear. "Do you think I moved too slow?"

Kate turned and held his gaze. "No, it's not that at all. According to Toby my nightmares are not about what happened on the missions." She took a breath. "He says they're about my fear of losing you."

"Losing me?"

"I knew you were coming for me the second Trent showed up with a gun. I was certain of it. I was trying to hold it together, trying to buy time, trying to finish the mission. But when I was laying on that floor and he was beating me, I wasn't afraid of the pain." Kate started to sob. "I was terrified you wouldn't get to me in time. I was terrified I was going to lose you."

Cabe pulled her into his arms. "Oh, sweetheart. I'm so sorry." Kate sobbed like he'd never heard before. "How do I make this right for you?"

Kate pulled back and shook her head. "You can't. Cabe it was the third time in a year I thought I'd lose you. That's more terrifying to me than anything."

He reached into his jacket and handed her a handkerchief. "Sweetheart, You know there is nothing in this world that would make me willing leave you. Nothing."

She nodded and smiled. "I know. I also know that this is the nature of the job. We can't avoid it. I trust you don't take foolish chances and neither do I. I just have to figure a way to put all of it in place in my head and in my heart. I can't just yet, but I'll keep talking to Toby."

"And you'll keep talking to me?" he asked

"I'll keep talking to you."

Cabe held her by the shoulders and held her gaze. "Remember our deal Katie girl, no hiding."

She gave him a genuine smile. "That's Mrs. Gallo to you, boyo. Now kiss me quick before me husband gets home."

"Yes Ma'am"

Cabe opened the fridge and grabbed a bottle of water. There was nothing worse to him that feeling this helpless. He'd struggled with his own PTSD after his last tour with the Marines. and understood better than most what Kate was going through.

She joined him in the kitchen her eyes still puffy from crying. He folded her in his arms as much for his benefit as for hers. "How are you doing?"

She smiled up at him. "Better." She went to the fridge and grabbed her own bottle of water. "What do you want for dinner?"

Cabe could tell she was forcing herself to act normally when she felt anything but normal. "How about delivery from Terra Nova?"

"Oh, that sounds good. You know how much I love their vegetable lasagna."

"Good. I'll put in the order and you go stretch out on the deck. I'll change and join you."

Kate walked toward him and ran her hand over his tear soaked shirt and jacket. "I'm sorry, Cabe. I made quite a mess."

He lifted her chin and looked into her eyes. "Don't you give it a thought." He leaned in and gave her a kiss. "That's what I'm here for."

Cabe changed into a t-shirt and jeans. He looked at the tear stained suit coat and his heart clenched. He'd do anything to take this pain from her but he knew he couldn't. All he could do was be there for her.

He found her in her favorite spot, on the deck staring at the ocean. "Our dinner should be here in about forty five minutes."

"Sounds good."

"I've decided not to do that charity ride."

"What? You were looking forward to it."

"The timing isn't great."

She turned to face him and he saw his fiery Katie girl. "Oh no you don't Cabe. You're not putting your life on hold because of a few nightmares."

"It's more than just a few nightmares, Kate. I need to be here for you."

She put her hand on his cheek. "I know you want to, Cabe, and I love you for it. But you know it's going to take awhile for me to sort this out."

"But it's two days. If you need me..."

She slipped her arms around his waist. "Cabe, there will never be a time that I don't need you. Not for the rest of my life. But you can't stay glued to my side. That won't help either of us. I have a very strong sense of self preservation. I recognized I needed some help and I called Toby."

"Sweetheart, I want you to be able to talk to me."

"I will, Cabe. I promise from now on. What I meant to say is I knew I needed medical help with it. Toby is a world class shrink. This isn't going away overnight and altering your life because of it will make me feel worse."

"I need to be here for you."

"You are here for me, in every way that matters. I want you to go on the ride. It's only overnight. You'll have your cell and I can reach you whenever I want. If things get tense for me I have Toby and the rest of the team. I won't be on my own."

"You're sure?"

"I'm positive. I want you to go."

"I asked Happy to come along."

"That's great!"

"It will be interesting."

Cabe met Happy at the garage before the meeting. She smiled at him, seeing him in jeans and leather jacket.

"Good look for you, boss."

He hoped she didn't see his slight blush. "You ready?"

"Let's do it."

Happy followed him on her bike to the Boozefighters headquarters, a small building with attached garage for working on bikes. There were at least twenty five Harleys lined up in the front of the building. She jumped off her bike and walked the line of bikes like most women would in a jewelry store.

"Sweet," she said with a big smile.

"Let's go in and I'll introduce you."

Chairs were arranged for the twenty five or so people who were milling about. Most were wearing leather jackets and boots. There were lots of long beards and do rags.

"Hey Cabe! You made it." A tall man, Cabe's height and stuck out his hand. "Good to see you."

Happy fought the urge to let her mouth drop open. The guy was about the same age as Cabe. He had a strong jaw, baby blue eyes and a scruffy goatee. She looked at him and back at Cabe and back at the biker. He had a deep gravel voice. "Holy Crap," she thought.

"Happy, this is Bobby. I met him at the dealer and he asked me to come by."

Bobby extended his hand to her. "How did an old coot like Cabe land such a pretty little thing like you?"

"Bobby, you know I'm married. Happy is a colleague. She's also a genius mechanic."

"Is that so?" he said with a smile. "Well, sweetheart. I'm single."

"Down boy," she said as she shook his hand.

"So what do you ride?" asked Bobby.

"Harley Soft tail Slim."

Bobby nodded. "Nice."

Cabe took a step closer to her. "Happy is interested in going on the ride next week."

"Oh I don't know, little lady. Most of the riders are pretty experienced."

Cabe winced at 'little lady'. To her credit Happy didn't slug him in the mouth. "Did you work out that issue with your electrical?"

"Nah. It's still giving me fits."

Happy smiled. "Show me."

"I'd show her if you want it to be running for next weekend."

"Okay," said Bobby sounding unconvinced.

Cabe followed them toward the garage section of the building. She pulled the engine cover off Bobby's bike and poked around. She called out for tools like a surgeon. She twisted a few wires, tightened a few screws. "Okay, fire it up."

Bobby looked doubtful but turned the key. The motor turned over and purred. "Holy shit. You did it."

"You had a loose wire on your regulator. It happens." She turned to Cabe and gave him a sly smile. There was nothing she loved more than showing up someone who doubted her ability.

Cabe put a hand on her shoulder as they walked back to the main room. "Nice job, kid."

They grabbed a couple of seats and listened to the club president, Mike, talk about next week's ride.

"Ok guys let's settle. The ride next weekend is to benefit Tom Waring. He was an army master sergeant serving in Iraq. His vehicle hit an IED and he was seriously wounded. The two other squad members in the vehicle were killed. Tom is now confined to a wheelchair. The problem is his home is not wheelchair accessible. We're raising funds to pay for the renovations to his home. We've estimated will need to raise fifty thousand dollars to complete the project. Everyone is asked to get pledges per mile, seven hundred and sixty from LA to San Francisco and back. There's a Best Western that has promised us all rooms at a decent rate. Let Janice know if you're going to double up. She'll make sure everyone has a room. There are pledge sheets on the table. We leave at nine a.m. next Saturday. Don't be late.

"What do you think?" Cabe asked Happy.

"Sounds great."

Mike spotted Cabe and walked towards him. "Hey Cabe, who's this?"

"This is my associate Happy Quinn. She'd like to ride with us next week."

"Let her ride," said Bobby as he walked up behind them. "She's some crazy good mechanic. She can help anyone who breaks down,. You know how long I've been trying to get my bike back on the road. She fixed it in five minutes."

"Really?" He said with a smile. "I guess you're gonna ride."

"Cool," she said.

"Be sure to see Janice for your pledge sheets and room."

"Will do," said Cabe.

Once they were alone Happy pulled him aside. "You realize they think I'm your girlfriend."

Cabe smiled. "They'll figure it out soon enough."

"You're not mad?"

"Of course not. The idea that I could attract a beautiful young woman like you is very flattering. I've only known them a few weeks. They don't know me well enough to know I'd never cheat on Kate."

They approached the table where a woman in her forties with dark black hair and tattoo sleeves on both arms sat. "Hey Cabe, good to see you." She gave Happy an appraising look. "Who's this?"

"My associate, Happy Quinn."

"So is that what the kids are calling it these days?" Her smile came off like a growl. "You need a room for Saturday night?"

Cabe gave her an indulgent smile. "Two rooms, Janice."

When they'd finished registration and got all their paperwork they headed back to the meeting area. "You want a soda?" asked Cabe.

"Sure." Happy looked around the room and spotted a tall, long haired blonde guy watching the crowd. "Who's that?"

"That's Sven. He doesn't talk much."

A few of the bikers came over on the pretense of saying hello to Cabe. Happy just smiled and talked bikes, which made her even more appealing to them.

"So how do you know Cabe?" asked a cute but scruffy guy in his early thirties.

"He rides herd on my team, Scorpion. Makes sure we get the job done, watches our backs, takes down the bad guys. Cabe keeps us safe."

"This guy?" scruffy guy laughed.

"Hell yeah," said Happy.

Cabe drilled scruffy guy with a look. "Like she was my daughter."

That exchange seemed to put an end to the trolling for Happy's phone number. They said their goodbyes and walked out to the bikes.

"What did you think?" asked Cabe.

Happy smiled. "This is gonna be fun."

Cabe checked the storage section on his bike. He had a change of clothes a few bottles of water and a small tool set for emergencies. He was still nervous about leaving Kate alone overnight. The nightmares were still coming although she said they were no longer coming every night.

Kate came into the garage holding his St. Christopher medal. "You forgot this."

Cabe slipped it over his head and gave her a quick kiss. "Thanks sweetheart." The gate buzzer sounded. "That must be Happy." He hit the intercom. "Hey Happy."

Paige's voice came through the speaker. "No, it's me and Ralph"

He hit the button to open the gate and looked over at Kate.

"I invited her and Ralph for a sleep over. We're going to swim and order pizza and watch movies." She smiled. "I didn't want you to worry about me while your gone. I want you to have fun."

Cabe pulled her into a tight hug. "I love you," he whispered.

"Right back 'atcha, Gallo."

He opened the garage door as Paige parked in the driveway. Ralph bounded out the back door. "Hi Kate, I brought my AI project. Maybe we can go over it after we swim."

"I'd love to."

He looked up at Cabe as if he was just noticing he was there. "Hi, Cabe."

"Hi buddy."

Paige grabbed an overnight bag out of the trunk. "Hi guys. You ready for your trip, Cabe?"

"I think so. I got a bunch of pledges from Homeland agents. As soon as I mentioned what who it was for they all offered. I got about five thousand dollars in pledges."

"That's great. I hope you don't mind but the team pledged Happy. She doesn't know as many people as you do.

"That's fine, kid. It all goes to the same cause." The buzzer sounded and Happy's voice came over the speaker. "Hey boss, you ready?"

"Come on in."

Happy parked her bike next to Paige's car. She was wearing her birthday gifts, the leather jacket from Toby, the boots from Paige, the helmet from Sly and the St Christopher medal from her father. She pulled off her helmet and say it on her seat. "Hi guys."

Kate held out her hands. "Before you guys go I want to sign your pledge sheets."

"You don't have to. I did okay," said Happy.

"Hand them over," She took Happy's pledge sheet and glanced over the signatures. She looked up and smiled. "Richard Elia?"

Happy smiled. "He pledge fifteen dollars a mile."

"Wow, that's..."Cabe started.

"Eleven thousand four hundred dollars," said Ralph.

"That's great Happy," said Cabe.

Kate reached over to a work bench and grabbed a pen. She held out her hand. "Yours too, Gallo."

"You don't have to, Kate. We've both done well with our pledges."

"Do you really think I wouldn't pledge my own family?" She filled in a line on both forms and signed them. "Here you go."

Happy gasped. "Fifty dollars a mile? That's..."

"Thirty eight thousand dollars," said Ralph.

Cabe smiled. "Fifty a mile for me too."

"It's a good cause. Now, do you two need anything before you hit the road?"

"Yeah, I do." Cabe grabbed her hand and walked through the door to the kitchen. "I need this." He pulled her into his arms and gave her a deep kiss. "A little something for the road," he smiled.

Kate smiled and put her hand on his chest. "You go on now. Call me when you stop."

"I will."

They walked back out to the garage and Cabe noticed Paige and Happy's grins. "Okay, you ready, Quinn?"

"Let's roll."

Cabe and Happy met up with the rest of the Boozefighters at their headquarters. Destinations were set in their GPS for the six hour ride to San Francisco. They lined up on the road, most senior members up front, which left Happy and Cabe bring up the rear. It was an amazing sound, twenty five Harleys traveling down the highway. Even through their helmets it sounded like rolling thunder.

He looked over at Happy who was completely comfortable in the group of experienced bikers. Sensing she was being watched she turned her head towards Cabe and gave him a thumbs up.

She was such a good kid, he thought. She'd been through so much since she was a kid but had carved out a life and a family for herself. He smiled because he thought of himself as part of that family. She'd even found the strength to forgive her father and make him a part of her life. He didn't know he'd have had that kind of strength.

He worried about Happy. She was the toughest member of the team but that also meant she was the hardest to reach, maybe even harder to reach than Walter. Happy and Toby had been involved for some time but she kept pushing him away. Toby may be a snarky ass at times but he never gave up on her. Cabe liked that about him. Loyalty went a long way in his book.

Happy could feel Cabe watching her. Normally that would creep her out but not with him. He was just watching her back, like always. There hadn't been a lot she could depend on in her life. People flowed in and out of her life like the ocean tides. She was pretty much okay with that. Machines were dependable. She understood machines, they spoke to her. She could diagnose a machine the way Toby diagnosed everyone else. Toby. What a pain in the ass he was. He was like a dog with a bone and she was the damn bone. He never gave up. Sometimes that was okay but sometimes she just needed to get shed of him. She needed to breathe. Here on this bike she could breathe. These guys loved bikes as much as she did. She could speak to them in the same language. It

was comfortable. It was all they wanted from her. Well, all except that guy Bobby. She couldn't believe neither of them saw it. The same age, the same build, the same jaw, the same color eyes. The capper was the voice. It was all gravel. Happy would have thought Bobby was kinda of hot, if he didn't look exactly like Cabe.

Cabe. He was something. She didn't trust him at first, mostly because Walter didn't trust him. But she got over it pretty fast. He gave them a hard time when they screwed up but he also had their backs when the world was against them. He stood up against the Director of Homeland to protect her. Of course that was right before Cabe knocked him off a launch pad one hundred and eighty feet high to the concrete. She didn't have to look over to know he was watching her as much as he was watching to road. He was making sure she was okay with her new bike. Happy smiled. The bike Cabe and Kate had given her for her birthday. She'd never had a party before let alone presents. Cabe and Kate had fixed that in one felled swoop. Cabe was something.

They'd been on the road for about three hours when they came to their scheduled rest stop. They bikers rolled into a rest stop with a small food stand and a large park behind it.

Cabe and Happy looked over the menu hanging above the window. "What do you want?" asked Cabe.

"Hot dog with mustard and a bottle of water." Happy knew better than to offer to pay for her lunch. Cabe was old school. She kind of liked that about him. "I'm going to hit the ladies room."

He point to a group of trees by their bikes. "I'll meet you over there."

Happy returned to find Cabe sitting under a tree chomping on one of several hot dogs in the food carrier. "Damn, boss. You a little hungry?"

"They're small." He tossed her a bottle of water and then patted the ground. "Have a seat."

She sat down next to him and took a sip of the water then grabbed a dog and bit in. She looked out at the crowd of bikers milling around, talking and laughing. She usually wasn't this comfortable around strangers, but these guys were okay.

"So how you doing?" Cabe asked.

"I'm good."

"Bike running okay?"

She turned and gave him a 'did you really just ask me that?' look.

Cabe laughed and put up his hands. "Sorry." He set down his water and looked at her. "How are you doing? You and Toby seem to be on the outs again."

Happy sighed. "Sometimes he's just too much. He's all..." she struggled for words then through her hands up and said, "Ahhh. Way up here. It's like he never takes a break."

"Yeah, he is kind of...intense. Maybe it's because he tried so long to make you a part of his life and now that you are, he's afraid of losing you."

"He's an ass."

"No argument there, but he loves you."

Happy looked at Cabe with a small smile. "Yeah, I know."

"Happy, Toby is loyal. That's a rare quality. Talk to him. Tell him how you're feeling. He's a world class shrink."

"As he's always reminding us."

"Yeah, that too. But what I'm saying is he'll understand."

"So I should tell him to back off."

"Maybe you could tell him to give you some breathing room. Let him know you love him, but you need to be on your own sometimes."

"Yeah well..."

"You do love him, don't you?"

"As much as it pains be to say it, yeah I do."

Cabe took Happy's hand. "That's the only thing that really matters." He smiled.
"Trust me. I'm old. I know stuff."

Happy laughed. "Isn't that Kate's line?"

He laughed and held up his ring finger. "It's community property now."

They both stood and started clearing the debris of their quick lunch. "You toss this stuff and I'm going to hit the head," said Cabe. He realized Happy was just staring at him. "Everything okay?" He was stunned when Happy wrapped her arms around his waist in a tight hug. He wrapped his arms around her and patted her back.

He almost didn't hear her whisper "I love you, Cabe."

He placed a kiss on the top of her head. "I love you too, kid."

Cabe had taken Kate on several short trips up the PCH but this was nearly four hundred miles of indescribable beauty. This trip would feed his art for a long time to come. One of the more amazing sights was Happy on her bike, her long black hair flying from underneath her helmet. They were all quite the sight, twenty five bikers traveling en mass. When they stopped for gas some people watched, some people backed off. So many people judged them because of the bikes or the boots or the leather jackets. He wondered what some of those people would say if he pulled out his badge. Even the bikers didn't know he was an agent. He hadn't wanted any preconceived notions of him to affect his acceptance by the men. Just like the people at the gas station were judging them now.

He jumped off his bike while he waited for his turn at the gas pumps. He pulled out his phone and checked for messages. There was only one in the last few hours that said 'Headed to the beach'. He'd talked to Kate at the rest stop for only a few moments because she was in the middle of teaching Ralph how to dive into the deep end. She seemed busy and happy and most of all distracted. The text had been nearly three hours ago so he gave her a call.

"Hi boyo, you having fun?" she asked.

"It's great. Really beautiful ride."

"How's Happy doing?"

"Good. She seems relaxed."

"Wow. That's good."

"How are you doing?" he asked.

"We had a great day. Ralph was brave enough with his swimming to try being in the ocean. Of course Paige and I were with him, but he did it. He fell asleep on the couch about an hour ago."

"That's great, sweetheart, but how are you?"

"I'm okay." She took a breath. "Okay, we promised no hiding. Honestly I am a little worried about tonight. I know I'm not alone but if I wake up and you're not here I might be thrown."

Cabe fought the urge to swear. "That's why I wanted to be there."

"It's exactly why you shouldn't be."

"Okay, I'm confused."

"I have to learn to deal with this. It may hit me at night. It may hit me in the middle of the day. You know better than anyone that PTSD doesn't work on a schedule."

He sighed. "I know you're right but it's hard for me to watch you deal with this on your own."

"I'm not on my own, Cabe. Paige and Ralph are here. I promise if I wake in the middle of the night, I'll call you."

"Good."

"But please don't let worrying about me keep you up all night. Cabe, we both have to learn to deal with this. This night apart will be good for both of us."

"Damn you, woman. do you always have to be so logical. How am I ever suppose to win an argument against your irrefutable logic."

Kate laughed. "This is not an argument, it's a discussion. Now, I'm sure Happy and the rest of the group are anxious to get back on the road. Get going, Gallo."

"You're damn pushy, woman."

"If you don't stop complaining I won't tell you about my surprise."

"What surprise?"

She slipped into her Irish brogue. "Well, boyo, 'tis something you'll find interesting. I'll be seeing you later this evening."

"Seeing me?"

"FaceTime, boyo. 'Tis a miracle, this modern technology."

"Yes, Ma'am, it is."

Cabe jumped back on his bike and fell in with the group as they started the last leg of today's journey. He wondered what his Irish witch had in store for him. He only knew it would be good. The woman was damn creative.

It was six p.m. when the group pulled into the parking lot. Once again they attracted the stares of the hotel guests. Cabe had to admit they formed a fairly intimidating group but he was finding them to be a group of great guys. He watched as Happy stood in the middle of the group, talking and smiling. He was glad she seemed so comfortable and the group seemed to have accepted her as one of their own.

Cabe grabbed a quick shower in his room and changed into a fresh t-shirt. He checked his phone for texts and found none. Kate must be having a good time. He tapped her contact photo.

"Hi, babe. Where are you?" she asked.

"We've checked into the hotel and we're going to meet up for dinner in the hotel restaurant."

"Paige and Ralph and I are about to hit Terra Nova," said Kate.

"Sounds like you're having a good time."

"We are." Kate lowered her voice. "I'll call you tonight, text me when you're back in your room."

Cabe smiled. "What are you planning, witch?"

"Ah, not yet boyo. I'm worth the wait."

"You sure are. I love you."

"I love you too."

The hotel had set enough tables together to accommodate the entire group. It was a raucous group but fun.

Happy took a seat next to Cabe and grabbed a menu. "I'm starving," she said. "I'm feeling a steak and fries."

"Sounds great," said Cabe as he set down his menu. The waitress came and took the orders, smiling and laughing with the group.

"Have you called Toby?" Cabe asked.

"Why would I do that?" she replied but cast her eyes down her plate. She knew what he was going to say.

"Happy," he said in that tone only a dad could get away with.

"What? He's a giant pain in the ass, always hovering."

"He loves you."

"Yeah, well. He's still a pain in the ass."

"You love him."

"Yeah, well."

"Call him."

"After dinner."

"Now, Happy. Don't let him worry about you. That's unkind and that's not you."

Happy sighed, knowing she'd been beaten and worse, knowing Cabe was right. "Okay. I'll go out in the lobby. I won't be able to hear him in here."

Cabe nodded as she walked to the entrance of the restaurant. It was an open foyer that gave a clear view restaurant and led to the hotel. She hit Toby's contact photo and he picked up on the second ring.

"Hey," she said trying to be non committal.

"Hey. Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, I'm just checking in. Cabe and I are at the hotel and we're grabbing some dinner."

"Good. How was the ride?"

"Amazing. The view on the PCH is incredible."

"How are the bikers?"

"They're great. Talking bikes. Gearhead heaven."

"I'm glad you're having a good time."

"Yeah, well it looks like they're bringing the food, so I gonna go."

"Okay. Thanks for calling me. Happy, I love you."

She paused and took a breath. "Yeah, me too, Doc." She ended the call and looked up to see Cabe had been watching her the whole time. He smiled and nodded. For some reason that made her happy. Go figure.

"Hey sweet thing, where you running off to?"

Happy turned around to see a tall guy with brown hair, expensive polo shirt, khakis and altogether unremarkable looks. He'd come out of the bar on the other side of the reservation desk and from the smell of him he'd been in residence there for quite some time.

"Excuse me?" she asked not believe anyone would think that line would work.

"You and I should get to know each other." It was then the guy made a fatal mistake. He put his hands on Happy's shoulders.

Cabe had been watching Happy when a guy approached her. All he needed to see was the guy touching her. "What the hell?" he said as he leaped to his feet.

"What's going on?" asked Bobby. Cabe nodded toward Happy as he made his way to the foyer. He got there just in time to see Happy nail the guy in the solar plexus and watch him drop to the ground.

"You bitch!" he screamed. He pushed himself to his feet. "I was just being friendly." The guy noticed Cabe standing behind her. "Who's this, your Daddy?"

Happy turned and saw Cabe and every biker coming towards them. She turned back to the clueless guy. "Yeah, he is. And those guys are my uncles. I think they'd LOVE to meet you." The guy blanched white and retreated back to the bar.

She turned back to the group who were all laughing. Bobby came up to her and patted her back. "Way to go, girl."

Happy couldn't help but smile. These were a good group of guys who were ready to jump in to protect her. They returned to their tables as Cabe pulled her aside.

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah, I'm fine boss. Let's eat."

"You go in, I'll be there in a minute."

"You're not going to go all Federal on his ass, are you?"

Cabe laughed. "No, I promise."

He approached the hostess who'd watched the encounter from behind her station. "Sir, I'm so sorry about what happened."

He smiled. "It wasn't your fault." He pulled out his credit card and handed it to the girl. "I want you to put the tabs for everyone in my group on this. Add twenty five percent for a tip." The girl's eyes got wide.

"Yes, sir. Of course."

"Just signal me when you need me to sign and don't tell the others who picked up the check."

The girl smiled and Cabe rejoined his new friends.

They'd finished their meals and were having a good time talking bikes and the trip. Bobby pushed himself back from the table. "Well, I'm going to call it a night," he said as he signaled the waitress. "Sweetheart can I get my check?" The waitress smiled and said "Your check is paid. All of your checks are paid."

"What?" asked Bobby. "Who picked up the check?"

"I don't know sir, I just know it's paid."

The guys were laughing and debating who might have picked up the check when a uniformed officer approached the table. Cabe looked up to see the jerk from earlier standing in the foyer and smiling.

"Can we help you officer?" asked Cabe.

"We've had a report that this woman attacked a customer."

"What?" said most of the men in unison as they started to rise from their seats. Cabe put his hand out and indicated they should sit back down. He reached in his pocket and pulled out his badge. "Special Agent Cabe Gallo, Homeland Security." The cop's eyes widened. "Ms. Quinn did in fact hit that jerk in the chest," he said as he pointed to the aforementioned jerk. "She did so after he put his hands on her trying to prevent her from rejoining our group."

The cop looked back at the man who was still stupidly grinning. "Is that so?"

"You can confirm everything with the hostess. She witnessed the entire exchange."

"I'll do that. Sorry for the trouble, Agent Gallo."

"No trouble at all officer, you're just doing your job."

The officer left and Cabe turned to face the table, which was now dead silent. "You're a cop?" asked Bobby.

"Federal agent with Homeland."

"Bobby turned toward Happy. "Are you a cop too?"

"Independent contractor for Homeland."

"Huh. Why didn't you say something?"

"It didn't seem relevant. We're all just here for the bikes."

Cabe recognized he was losing the group and he had to make a quick adjustment. "What do you do, Bobby?"

"Huh, me?"

"Yeah. Maybe we should all get to know each other better. Bobby?"

His cheeks flushed a bit. "I teach high school English."

"Nice. Tommy?"

"I'm an accountant."

They went down the line and most of them had jobs no one would have guessed. "Hey, Sven, what do you do?"

Sven raised his hands and started signing. "I teach sign language to deaf kids."

"Are you deaf, Sven?" asked Happy.

"Yes. I lip read well so most people don't know."

Happy smiled and signed, "Awesome."

Cabe looked at her in surprise. "You sign?"

"One of the foster kids I was placed with was deaf. She couldn't communicate so we worked on it together."

Cabe smiled. She was always amazing. "Well, guys let's finish this up by me saying Happy and I are not here for any reason other than we both love bikes."

"And it doesn't hurt to have a cop on your side," laughed Bobby.

Cabe got to his room after nine pm. It had been a long day and very long ride, nearly four hundred miles. He should be dead tired but he wasn't. All he could think about was Kate and her mysterious plans for tonight. He text her as he kicked off his boots.

Back in my room. Waiting for your call, witch.

Give me thirty minutes.

He propped himself with pillows and flipped through the cable channels. He couldn't find anything that could hold his interest more than his wife calling him back. He loved it when she slipped into her Irish persona for more reasons than the accent was hot as hell. Kate was innately shy. Playing his Irish Witch allowed her to explore things she might not do as herself. She'd spent a lifetime being quiet and reserved. Her goal had always been to go unnoticed. That was until they met. He thought the minute he met her that she was a very passionate woman. He had never been happier about being right. He grabbed his phone the second it beeped. He hit the FaceTime button and his wife's face appeared. He smiled as soon as he saw her. Her long red hair was curly and wild, the way it always looked when she let it dry naturally. She was wearing a trace of makeup and a big smile.

"Well, boyo, seems like you've settled in. No wild parties with your new friends?"

"No Ma'am, I'd rather be talking to a witch."

"Ah, would you now? Is talkin' all you want to do?"

"What do you have in mind?"

She backed up from the phone and he saw she was wearing a short terry robe. "I picked up a few things for your return home. I thought you might like a preview of things to come."

"Oh yes, please." He felt like a horny teenage boy. It was funny how his wife could do that to him.

"Before we get started you need to get rid of that t-shirt. I want to admire those lovely tattoos of yours."

He complied.

"Ummm, that's better. Wait what is that? Are you wearing pants? Oh no, that will never do."

He complied again, leaving him nothing but his boxers. Some small part of him couldn't believe what he was doing. The rest of him told that small part to shut the fuck up and go with it.

"Now I think you might like to see what's waiting for you when you get home." She untied the robe slowly and let it drop to the floor. She was wearing a flame red bustier with black lace. He knew what to call it because he liked buying them for her. She stood back far enough for him to see the matching thong. She did a slow turn with her hands on her hips. As she turned around she dropped her hands over her bare ass.

"Holy shit," he said not quite sure if he said it out loud.

Kate turned back to face the camera. "So, I take it you like my little fashion show."

"Oh yeah," he said, this time sure he'd actually spoken.

She leaned closer to the camera letting him have a good view of her breasts. "Tilt the camera down. Let me see for ma' self."

He did as she instructed letting her see a noticeable tenting in his boxers.

"Well, now. Isn't that interesting. 'Tis a shame I can't do anything about it from here." She smiled a wicked smile. "Or can I? Do you have your earbuds?"

He nodded.

"Good. Put them in."

He grabbed his wireless earbuds and put them in as they automatically paired with his phone.

"Can you hear me, boyo"

"Yes." he whispered. He realized what she was doing. It was like she was there, whispering in his ear.

She began running her hands over the lace. "I'm glad you like this, but I think you'd like it more if I took it off, wouldn't you?"

"God yes." He was lost. She could tell him to run down the hall in his boxers and he'd probably do it.

She stood before the screen and started sliding the zipper slowly down her side. God, she was killing him. She held the loose fabric up against herself. "Should I let it go?"

He heard a small laugh as she turned her back to the camera. The fabric slid to the ground. She slipped her hands around the strings of the thong and slipped it off. She turned to face him, naked. He'd seen her like this countless times but she always made his pulse pound. She set the phone at the headboard of their bed. Then she crawled up the foot of the bed like a cat. 'Yup, she's a witch, definitely," he thought. He was aching for her, approaching some real pain.

He tilted his camera down to show he'd slipped off his boxers. "You see what you did to me, woman!"

"Well now. It looks like you've got a situation there. What are we going to do about it? She started whispering just like she would if he was there with her. "How would you want me to deal with your particular situation? Should I kiss you? Should I slip down your body and touch you. Or should I just take care of your predicament with my mouth?"

And that was all she wrote. Cabe gasped and leaned his head back on the pillows to catch his breath. When his pulse no longer rivaled a hummingbird on meth, he looked into his phone. Kate was smiling. "I can't believe we just did that," he said.

"Did you like it?" she asked quietly.

He saw a her smile fade a bit. He could tell when the old doubts creeped in. "Sweetheart, I fuckin' loved it." He saw her smile brighten. "Baby, you are hands down the hottest woman I've ever known."

Kate laughed. "You're not so bad yourself, Gallo." She slipped under the sheets of their bed. "You've had a long day and another one tomorrow. Get some sleep and call me in the morning."

"Good idea, after I clean up the mess you made." He loved it when she giggled like a school girl. He took a long look into the camera. "I love you, Mrs. Gallo."

"I love you too, Mr. Gallo."

Cabe got out of the shower and toweled off. He looked in the mirror and smiled. He'd slept like a baby, which was unusual for a hotel bed. Between the long ride and the conversation with Kate he'd gone right to sleep. He'd checked his phone first thing and there had been no calls or texts from Kate since last night. He hoped she'd slept as well as he had.

He sent Kate a text let her know when he was meeting everyone for breakfast and he'd be on the road by nine a.m. If she was still asleep he didn't want to risk waking her. His phone rang he smiled when he saw Kate's picture on the screen.

"Good morning, sunshine."

"Shut up, it's seven thirty in the morning. No one gets to be cheery before nine a.m."

"How did you sleep?"

"Really well. No dreams. How about you?"

"After last night?" He laughed. "I was down for the count."

Kate smiled. "That's good."

He whispered into the phone. "It certainly was and I owe you some payback."

"Oh really?"

"Definitely. I should be home by seven at the latest. Make sure Ralph and Paige have gone home by then."

"Really? Why?"

"Because once I get home you won't have time to chat."

Kate laughed. "That sounds promising. Now go meet up with Happy and get some breakfast and Cabe, "

"Yes, sweetheart?"

"Come home safe."

"I promise baby. I'll be home soon."

Cabe could hear the noise in the restaurant while he was still in the lobby. All the guys were pumped up for the return trip. Happy was sitting at the same seat as last night talking animatedly with Bobby and Tommy.

"Hey boss, you finally awake?"

"I was talking to Kate."

Happy lowered her voice. "How's she doing?"

Cabe was a bit startled with her concern. They hadn't discussed her situation with anyone but Toby. As much of an ass Toby could be, he'd never violate privilege. "What do you mean?"

"I can tell she's been having a tough time since the Price thing. Hell, after getting shot and the UN thing, anyone would be stressed. She looks like she's not sleeping well."

He smiled and patted her back. "I guess this is what happens when you work with geniuses." He paused and glanced down. "She has been having some difficulties but we're working through it, together."

Happy grabbed his hand, "She's going to be fine, Cabe. She's a strong woman, and she has you."

"She has all of us."

They finished their breakfast among the loud chatter of the bikers. As the meal was winding down, Sven came over to Happy and started signing. Happy smiled. "Sure," she said and signed. Cabe watched as the giant Swede left with the petite Happy, signing and laughing. When would he learned not to be surprised by the ability of genius?

He walked out to where all the bikes were parked and everyone was preparing for the return trip. Happy and Sven were still talking and signing. She notice Cabe's approached and waved. She finished her conversation with Sven and walked over to her bike.

"Hey, you ready to roll, boss?"

"Yeah." He nodded toward Sven. "What was that about?"

"He was having a little trouble with his clutch. I tweaked it for him."

Cabe and Happy started their bikes and took up their positions in the group. As they started the ride home he thought to himself Kate was right. Taking this trip had been a good thing for all of them, including Happy.

He watch the scenery pass as much as he watched the road, Mile after mile of magnificent coastline and the constant roar of twenty five Harleys. Despite everything that had happened, everything that was still going on, he felt relaxed for the first time since their honeymoon. He smiled when he remembered their interlude in the clearing. "Damn, that woman is creative," he thought. "I am one lucky s.o.b."

The group stopped at the same rest stop they'd visited the day before. Cabe grabbed himself and Happy a few hot dogs and bottles of water. He parked himself under the same tree and waited for Happy to join him. He was surprised when she returned with a bag from the gift shop.

"What do you have there?"

"I picked up a couple of things." She pulled a small pair of ray-ban like shades of the bag. "I thought these would look great on Ralph"

Cabe smiled "Yeah. He'll love them."

"I got a box of candy for everyone, and this," she pulled out the loudest, most obnoxious Tommy Bahama knock off ever created. "This is for Doc."

He exploded with laughter. He couldn't help himself. The thought of Toby wearing the hideous shirt was the funniest thing ever. "I'm sorry Happy, but it's just so...it's..and Toby wearing it is so..." He dissolved in laughter again.

Happy laughed with him. "I know! That's why it's perfect."

He wiped his eyes as Happy pulled one last thing out of the bag. It was a metal keyring that said San Francisco.

"I got this for you," she said quietly. "Just a souvenir."

Cabe took the gift from her and smiled. "Thank you, Happy." He reached in his pocket and grabbed his keyring. He added Happy's gift to the loop. "I love it." Then she really surprised him. She leaned in and kissed his cheek.

"Thank you for all this, Cabe. This is one of the best times I've ever had."

He reached for her hand and smiled. "You're welcome, sweetheart."

Happy jumped and started clearing away their lunch. "I'm going to pack this stuff away," she said as she headed off toward her bike.

Cabe sat under the tree for a moment and thought about everything that had happened in the last few years. Homeland, Scorpion and the group of misfit geniuses. Most of all, his wife. He stood and looked at the new addition to his keyring. He knew he was right where he was supposed to be.

They'd made good time and pulled into the Boozefighters headquarters about six pm. Everyone lined up at the table where Janice was sitting. As the club secretary she was the one who signed off on the pledge sheets as having been completed. Happy walked up to Janice and handed her the pledge sheet. She looked Happy up and down with what Cabe read as a grudging respect. Word must have gotten around about Happy's mad skills.

"This pledge isn't filled out right. They were supposed to write amount per mile, not total amount."

Happy saw Janice was pointing to Richard Elia's pledge. "No, that's correct. Fifteen per mile."

"That can't be right. That's.."

"Eleven thousand four hundred dollars," said Happy.

Cabe was relieved the room was loud enough that no one was paying attention to their conversation. Janice waved to Mike. He came over to the table and looked at Happy's sheet. "Are you fuckin' kidding' me?"

"Nope."

"Wait. Elia. Is that the guy with the big building downtown?"

"That's the one."

"Holy shit," whispered Janice. "What's this?" She was pointed to Kate's pledge.

"That's Kate Gallo's pledge. Fifty dollars per mile."

"That's thirty eight thousand dollars," said Mike.

"That would be correct," said Happy.

"Wait. Gallo?" asked Mike.

"Cabe's wife. She very generous."

"I thought you were a cop?" said Mike.

"Federal agent and so is my wife. Her father owned a big computer company," said Cabe. "She also pledged fifty a mile for me."

"That's seventy six thousand from two pledges. The guys are never gonna believe this," said Mike.

Cabe shook his head. "Don't make a fuss over it. All anyone needs to know is that we hit the goal and we'll be able to help some other disabled vets."

"Are you sure?"

He leaned in, making sure only Janice and Mike would hear them. "Happy and I are just here for the bikes. We had a great time on the ride and we'd like to do it again. I don't want the club thinking we're just a couple of rich assholes."

Happy pointed at Cabe. "He's rich, I'm not. I just know rich people."

Janice sat back in her chair. "Checks are supposed to be turned in within two weeks."

"Will do," said Cabe.

They took their signed sheets and said good night to the group. "That Janice is a hard case," said Happy as they walked to their bikes.

"Yeah, well. If I were her I'd have my doubts too." He grabbed his helmet and got on his bike. "I'm glad you made the trip, Happy."

"Me too, boss." Happy gave him a big smile. "You running home to see the missus?"

He gave her an even bigger smile. "Hell yes!"

Cabe hit the code on the gate and hit the button on his key fob to open the garage. He'd been thinking about last night's phone call and getting home for hours. He couldn't wait to see his witchy wife, to the point that his jeans had been painfully tight for the last few hours. As he got off his bike, the door from the kitchen opened.

He stood for a moment and smiled. Kate was wearing a tank top and shorts, bare footed and only a hint of makeup. It looked like she'd spent enough time outside to get a little color.

"Hi. How was the..."

He grabbed her and pushed her up against the wall. He took possession of her mouth, fierce and plundering. Her passion flared and she gave as good as she got. They finally came up for air, breathless.

"I guess somebody missed me," she said with a smile.

He took her hand and pressed it to his jeans. "I've been riding like this for hours, thinking about what I want to do with you."

"Cabe, I..."

"Talk later," he growled while he picked her up and tossed her over his shoulder. He couldn't think of anything other than getting her into their bed. He kicked open the bedroom door and tossed her on the bed.

Kate laughed as she hit the bed. Then her heart skipped. She'd never seen him like this. He was still wearing his leather jacket and boots. Here was a biker fantasy made real. He looked at her with a fire in his eyes that she thought might consume her.

He started stripping off his jacket and boots all while never taking his eyes off her. "Do you know what you did to me last night? How crazy you made me?" He yanked off her shorts and top. He only vaguely registered the blue lace lingerie she was wearing when he pulled them off her. There she was, just like he wanted, naked and panting for him. He pulled off his t-shirt and jeans, sending his boxers with them. He covered her with his body taking her mouth again. "Do you know what you did?"

She shook her head.

"You bewitched me. I would have done anything you said," he whispered as he bit down on her neck. "You finished me off with your words alone." He slid down her body, kissing and nipping, tasting. He'd tried to wait, try to prolong it but he couldn't not this time. He raised himself over her and kissed her as he slid inside her. He was overwhelmed with all of it. The passion, the heat of her. It was a kind of madness. He rode hard until he finally screamed her name.

He couldn't speak. He had to catch his breath and regain some of his senses, He now understood how Kate could have passed out when they were making love. He'd been damn close himself.

"Cabe," Kate whispered. "Are you okay?"

He looked up and smiled. "Yeah, baby, I'm okay."

She looked a bit confused. "I've never seen you like that."

He brushed a strand of hair away from her cheek. "It was all you. Last night was so fucking hot. The whole ride home I was thinking about getting home to you," he kissed her. "Having you," he whispered. "You drive me mad, witch." He looked into her beautiful eyes and smiled. "And I love every minute of it."

Kate woke to a dark room. She reached her hand for Cabe but found his side of the bed empty. She felt a wave of panic wash over her but forced herself to take a few calming breaths. She concentrated on the slight ache that reminded her of how Cabe had made love to her with such passion. She focused on the memory and pushed the panic aside.

Her heartbeat finally calm, she grabbed her phone. It read three a.m. She got out of bed and found her robe. She knew where she'd find him, the place he went whenever he couldn't sleep. The light from under the studio door told her she was right.

"Hey. What are you doing up?" Cabe looked at her with concern. "Another nightmare?"

"No, I'm fine." She sighed and walked toward him. "Okay, we said no hiding. When I woke up and you weren't there I did have a moment, but only a moment. I was able to control it.

He took her hands in his. "I so sorry, sweetheart."

"There's no need. It's going to happen and learning to deal with it is part of the process." She brushed her hand over his cheek. "You know that better than anyone." She looked down at his drawing table and saw an intricately drawn heart. It looked like multiple lines but it was actually only one, curved and point in places, smooth at others. "This is beautiful."

He smiled. "Thanks. I've been thinking about this one for awhile but it finally came to me tonight."

"It's beautiful. It looks like a variation on a triquetra, an Irish trinity knot."

"It is. The continuous line symbolizes eternity, never ending. And the heart, well, that's you."

Her eyes welled. "Oh Cabe." She stared at the heart and then at him. "I don't have words for this," she said and placed a soft kiss on his lips. "It reminds me a bit of your tattoos."

"Exactly. I thought I could have it put right here." He took her hand and placed it over his heart. "You're my heart, Katie girl."

"Wow," she whispered. A tear slipped down her cheek as she kissed him, knowing she would never be able to give words to what she felt for this man. She took his hand in hers. "It's late. Come to bed."

They walked back to their bedroom and got back into bed. Cabe pulled her into his arms.

"Cabe,"

"Hummm."

"I've seen where tattoos have been used to cover scars. Do you think you could design one for me?"

"Sweetheart, a tattoo is not something you impulsively. And I don't know if it's a good idea. It hasn't been that long."

"Cabe, it's been nearly a year."

"I thought we said no hiding. Isn't that hiding from what happened?"

"I don't think so. I'm never going to forget what John did to me." She touched the ragged scar on her shoulder. It had faded since the shooting but it was still a daily reminder. " I like the idea of turning this into something beautiful"

"A tattoo on the front torso can be pretty painful."

"You've done it."

"Exactly. I know what to expect."

"It shouldn't be too bad. I don't have a lot of feeling in that spot anymore. Nerve damage from the bullet."

"What? How am I just hearing about this now?"

"Because I never really think about it. It didn't affect my PT and my range of motion is fine."

"I don't know."

"I tell you what. I'll ask my surgeon if she thinks there's any risk. It will take time for you design it, giving plenty of time to think about it"

Cabe kissed the top of her head. "You really are a tenacious little thing."

"Yeah, but you love me anyway."

"Yeah, I do."

Cabe had kept his promise even if though he had his doubts. He'd come up with a design that he knew Kate would love, but he hoped she'd given it more thought over the last month. He picked up his sketch book and walked out to the deck. Kate was absorbed in a book and didn't notice he'd come outside. He'd painted her like this before, and probably would again. Kate was an endless source of inspiration.

"Hey there," he said.

She glanced up from her book and smiled. "Hey. I didn't hear you."

"I know. Did you put on sun screen? You're getting pretty pink."

"When I came out."

"And that was?"

"After lunch."

"That was three hours ago." He grabbed the bottle of sunscreen on the end table and set down his sketch pad. "Scoot over." He put some cream on his hands and rubbed it over her shoulders, brushing across her scar. "I finished it."

"Finished what?"

"Your sketch. the one you wanted."

She turned around so fast she knocked the bottle of sunscreen to the deck. "Show me."

Cabe reached for the pad and flipped to his drawing. He handed it to her and waited.

"Oh, Cabe. It's perfect." At first it looked like a long stem red rose with a variation of a trinity knot around it. When she looked closer she saw the stem, leaf and the three sections of the knot were all made of one line. The section of the knots were pointed on each end looking more like leaves. "It's going to be perfect."

"Sweetheart, are you sure this is a good idea?"

"Cabe, I talked to my surgeon. She said it would be fine." She took his hand. "I really want to do this."

"Okay."

"Do you know someone who can copy your work?"

"I know a guy."

Kate smiled. "Of course you do.."

The tattoo parlor was nothing like what Kate expected. It looked like the day spa she went for a massage. The room had tables with padded openings so someone you lay perfectly level, face down. There were heavily padded chairs that rivaled the spa pedicure chairs. Yup, just like the spa with really unusual art.

"Hey, Cabe. How you doing?"

Cabe extended his hand. "Eddie, I'm good. This is my wife, Kate."

Eddie was more like what she expected. About five foot ten with short black hair, his body was a walking billboard for his shop. She could see around his tank top that his arms and chest were completely covered. She'd bet so was the rest of him.

"Your designs are terrific. I can't wait to get started," said Eddie.

"Mine can wait. You could start Kate's first."

"Actually I brought someone in to do hers." He walked into the back room and came back with a beautiful young woman with long black hair with an earth mother vibe. She looked like she'd have fit in at Woodstock. What could be seen of her tattooed sleeves were beautiful. "This is Niche Smith. She's a terrific artist. She's done some of my best tattoos. He showed them a lion that looked like it could jump off his shoulder.

"Wow. You do amazing work," said Kate. "What do you think of Cabe's design for me?"

"I think it's terrific. Should only take a few hours."

"Are you comfortable with putting it over my scar?"

"I've done a lot of that type of work. Of course I have to see it to know if I need to make any adjustments."

Kate took a breath and slipped off the short cotton jacket she'd worn over a strapless sundress. Niche came up and examined her scar touching it lightly.

"Yeah, this is no problem. The rose will cover this part and the stem will trail toward your arm." She looked at Kate and smiled. "Sports injury?"

"Gun shot."

Niche's eyes got wide. "Eddie said Cabe is a cop. You too?"

"Federal agents and yes I am. This wasn't line of duty. It was just a crazy bastard with a gun."

"Wow." she said looking uncomfortable. "Would you like to get started?"

"Definitely," Kate said with a big smile.

Cabe took her by the shoulders. "Sweetheart, are you sure? Tattoos are forever."

"Yeah," she smiled. "Just like us."

Cabe had Eddie put them in chairs closest to each other. He wanted to keep an eye on Kate in case she had a problem. It would also help him take his focus off the pain he'd feel from his own tattoo.

They spent the next few hours in the chairs, talking about their jobs, the team, their trip to Hawaii. Of course Cabe left out the best part of the trip, the time they spent in the woods.

"How are you doing, sweetheart?" Cabe asked at hour two.

"I'm fine Cabe. Relax please. How many times to I have to tell you I'm no delicate flower."

Niche laughed. "Damn straight."

Kate's tattoo was finished around our three. Niche finally gave her a mirror and let her see the results. "Oh God," she whispered. "It's perfect."

"Thanks, I'm glad you're pleased."

Eddie stopped his work on Cabe long enough for him to see Niche's translation of his design. He was amazed. It looked like he'd put it on Kate's shoulder himself. "You do great work, Niche."

"Thanks, so do you."

After Niche treated and bandaged her tattoo, Kate sat in a chair while Eddie finished Cabe's tattoo. Although it was only the size of a fist, it had a lot more detail than hers. Two more hours passed before Eddie finished his work. It was just like Cabe's design. "Oh Cabe, it's beautiful."

Cabe extended his hand to Eddie. "Great work, buddy."

"Thanks Cabe." Eddie took a picture and then bandaged his work. "I know I don't have to tell you about the after care."

"No, I've got this."

"And Kate?"

"Oh, don't worry. She did all her research ahead of time. She probably knows more about after care than I do."

Eddie laughed. "I love an informed consumer."

They left the shop and headed back to their car. "Cabe, now that I have a tattoo, does that qualify me as your biker babe?"

Cabe laughed. He grabbed her hand and kissed it. "You are absolutely my hot biker babe."