

The Keepers of the Roses – Book II

The Return of Chantaliza Duvalier

By Coco

Copyright © 2006 by Coco
All Rights Reserved.

ISBN 978-1-956793-50-5

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except the use of brief quotations for the sole purpose of a book review.

Proudly Printed in the United States of America

Digital Publishing of Florida, Inc.
Oldsmar, FL 34677
www.digitaldata-corp.com

Dedication

To my daughter Nicole and my son David. You both have kept me going through the years ever since our Priscilla passed.

I dedicate this book to both of you, for keeping me grounded and loving me through all the ups and downs that her loss has caused us.

Without your love, I couldn't have kept on.

Your Father,
"Coco"

Chapter I

“Good morning, my beautiful roses,” said Lady Eleanor as she awoke from a long night of sleep.

“Good morning,” said Lizzy B, and like always, not a sound came from the other side of the room.

“So how do you think our day will go?” asked Lady Eleanor.

“I believe that we will have a wonderful day,” said Lizzy B. “Remember, Priscilla Mayor will be coming over today.”

“That’s right, I totally forgot about her coming over,” said Lady Eleanor.

“Are we going to wake up the sleepy heads?” asked Lizzy B.

“No,” said Lady Eleanor, “we will wake them when Priscilla Mayor gets here.”

Lady Eleanor got out of bed and said to Lizzy B that she would meet her in the kitchen when she was done. As Lady Eleanor walked into the kitchen, she could see that Lizzy B and Katrina were already making her breakfast. Lady Eleanor began gathering all her ingredients for her World-Famous peanut butter cookies.

“Good morning, Katrina,” said Lady Eleanor, “and how is our Hugo doing this morning?”

“He’s not too good,” answered Katrina. “He had another bad night.”

“Is there anything that we can do to help?” asked Lady Eleanor, as Lizzy B also looked on with a concerned look on her face.

“Not really,” said Katrina. “I just hope that he can shake it off this time as before.”

“So how are you enjoying your new electric cart?” asked Katrina, as she looked over at Lizzy B. Everyone present knew that she was trying to change the conversation.

“It’s great,” said Lizzy B, “but I think the twins are going to end up killing themselves for all they talk about doing is wanting to race.”

“It has been a long time since David last took them to see a real race,” said Lady Eleanor.

“Yes, it has,” said Lizzy B, as Katrina shook her head also, agreeing with what Lizzy B had said.

Just then the telephone rang. “Can you get the telly?” asked Lady Eleanor because her hands were full of peanut butter. Katrina walked over and answered the telephone.

“Good morning,” said Katrina, how can I help you?”

“Katrina,” asked the voice on the other side, “is it you?”

“Yes,” said Katrina, “it is she.”

“It’s Priscilla Mayor,” said the voice on the other end of the line.

“Hi Priscilla,” answered Katrina, “it has been a while since we last heard from you.”

“Yes, a little while,” said Priscilla. “Is Lady Eleanor in?”

“Yes, one second,” said Katrina. “Lady Eleanor, it’s Priscilla.”

“One minute,” said Lady Eleanor, “while I wash off my hands.”

Katrina put the phone down next to the sink and continued with breakfast.

“Priscilla,” said Lady Eleanor, “how are you?”

“Very well,” said Priscilla. “Are you ready to start part two of your biography?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” said Lady Eleanor.

“How does eleven sound to you?” said Priscilla.

“That sounds dandy,” said Lady Eleanor, “and you are staying with us from the start this time, I hope.”

“Yes, definitely,” said Priscilla, “and thank you.”

“We will see you at eleven,” said Lady Eleanor, as she hung up the phone.

“Remember that David and the kids will be coming over for supper,” said Katrina.

“We will be done for the day by supper time,” said Lady Eleanor.

“Auntie Mabel and Laurence will be coming home in two days,” said Lizzy B.

“That’s right,” said Lady Eleanor, “they want to sit in on part of the biography with Priscilla. Cookies are ready for the oven.”

“Already set and preheated,” said Katrina.

“You’re always ahead of the game,” said Lizzy B.

“I try hard,” said Katrina, as she wiped her forehead with a rag, making all three ladies laugh.

“Are we going to wake up the boys?” asked Lizzy B.

“That would be a good idea,” said Lady Eleanor.

Eleanor and Lizzy B headed to the room to get Nani and the twins up.

“Are you sleepy heads finally ready to get up now?” said Lizzy B.

“I’ve been up for a long time,” said Giovanni.

“Can’t we sleep for a little while longer?” said Adoni and Amadeus, and of course at the same time.

“If you stay asleep any longer, you are going to miss Priscilla Mayor, who will be here by eleven,” said Lizzy B.

“Okay,” said the twins, “we’ll get up.”

Lady Eleanor, Lizzy B, and Nani headed out the door as the twins followed slowly behind. As they approached the grand room, the doorbell rang.

“That must be Priscilla,” said Elizabeth.

“I’ll get the door,” said Lady Eleanor, for she knew that Katrina was sitting with Hugo in their room. As she opened the door, Priscilla appeared, but she looked very different.

“Is that you Priscilla?” asked Lady Eleanor.

“Yes, it is,” said Priscilla, “I just changed my hair color, and I’ve lost a lot of weight, due to too many days of working out in the gym.”

“You look stunning,” said Lady Eleanor.

“Thank you,” said Priscilla. They walked in and headed for the grand room. As they entered, the twins were chasing Nani around the chairs.

Lady Eleanor raised her voice and said, “How many times do I have to tell you that there is no racing in the house?”

“We weren’t racing,” said the twins, “we were only chasing Nani, that’s not racing.” Everyone started to laugh.

“They will never change,” said Priscilla as she began putting her laptop and paper pad on the table.

“No, they haven’t,” said Elizabeth, “but you sure have changed.”

“Yes, you have,” said the twins and Nani at the same time.

“Oh, my Lord,” said Elizabeth, “it’s contagious. They’re all three talking at the same time.”

Everyone, even Katrina, who just walked in, started laughing.

“Priscilla,” said Katrina, “how are you? Looks like someone has been hit by cupid’s arrow.” Priscilla began blushing. “When a woman changes her appearance to look her very best, usually means that there is a young man with interest in her life.”

“Guilty as charged,” said Priscilla.”

“What is she guilty of?” asked the twins.

Nani came over and bumped their carts and said, “She’s not guilty of anything, you bumble heads.”

“She’s in love with someone,” said Lizzy B.

“She is?” said the twins, “With who?”

“I will tell you all about it, maybe tomorrow.”

“You don’t have to if you don’t feel up to it,” said Lady Eleanor.

Priscilla looked around the room and could see that everyone had a look as if they were pleading to know more.

“Lady Eleanor, I would love to tell them all about it, but I am so excited to start writing the second part of your biography.”

“So, she is not going to tell us about the new love in her life,” said the twins.

Lizzy B bumped them on the other side of the twin’s cart and said, “She’s going to tell us, just not right now.”

“So, when?” asked the twins.

“You both stay quiet right now and let us get back to the business at hand,” said Lady Eleanor.

“Now,” said Lady Eleanor, “when we start the biography, boys, I don’t want any playing around, do you three understand?”

“We won’t make a sound,” said Nani.

“If we get bored,” said the twins, “can we leave the room?”

“Of course, you can,” said Lady Eleanor, “but don’t go making all kinds of noises in one of the other rooms where you could end up disturbing us.”

“Okee Dokee,” said the twins.

“Are we ready then?” asked Priscilla.

“Where would you like to start?” asked Lady Eleanor. “Right where we left off,” said Priscilla.

“Can you refresh my memory?” asked Lady Eleanor.

“Well,” said Priscilla, “Chantaliza Duvalier had just escaped in her helicopter and all of the roses had everyone under control in the laboratory.”

“Oh yes,” said Lady Eleanor, “I remember now. Well, the laboratory was a mess and the roses had everyone under control. Lawrence, Philip, and David walked in with Chelsy in tow.

“Chelsy was still a little shaken from being shot with the stun gun. As they walked towards us, Phillip began waving his hands and everyone settled down as he began to speak.”

“Everyone here knows who I am,” said Phillip. “What most of you don’t know is that I am not on Chantaliza’s side. I have been working undercover to keep Chantaliza in check. You have all witnessed the things, evil things I should say, that she is so capable of doing. She has gotten away with Nicole in her helicopter. Many of you have been held here, not of your own choice, you are now free to go. Those of you who worked for Chantaliza are also free to do as you wish, and I strongly advise you not to do business with Chantaliza again. Next time, we will prosecute all involved.

As for Chantaliza, she has too much money and power for us to prosecute her in any sense of the word. In France, that is, but

you can be sure that sooner or later she will slip, and I will be there to take her down.”

Just then all of Laurence’s men stormed the room with guns drawn, as Laurence waved them down. Phillip continued speaking, “These men will assist all of you who need help. The rest of you should leave the castle as soon as possible.”

Phillip looked at Laurence to see if he had anything else to add. Laurence just shook his head. Everyone started to help one another as Eleanor and David were tending to the Roses, especially Flanigan and Leo. “We have got to get out of the castle as soon as possible,” said Lawrence to Eleanor and David. “The French police will be here to investigate what has been going on in Castle Duvalier.”

Mabel walked over and picked up one of the roses as everyone followed her lead. Eleanor grabbed Leo and George, as David grabbed Flanigan. Everyone walked to the front of the castle, holding a rose in hand, including some of Laurence’s men grabbed the last of the roses.

Two thirty person buses were parked at the front of the castle, as Eleanor and the rest of their group began getting into the first bus, as Laurence and Phillip talked to one of the men who you could visibly see was the man who would oversee clearing the people from the castle. When they were done, they boarded the bus, and they were off to the airport.

Chapter II

Upon arrival, Lawrence and Phillip began to make plans on where they would go to keep everyone safe. First, they needed to get the best rose man in the business to see what they could do to help Flanigan and Leo, who were severely sick. Laurence knew of a man from England named David Austin. He was the premier rose expert in all of Europe. But would he be willing to take the trip, to America, because that is where they would be heading, after a quick stop in England. The House of the Rose was where they were headed because there was no way that Chantaliza would attempt anything for a while, until she could regroup.

Laurence called Chelsy over and explained to her what he wanted her to do to get David Austin to attend their quick stop at The House of The Rose. Then maybe when he meets the roses, he will want to spend a little time in America, helping us cure Flanigan, and Leo. Between Mr. Austin's knowledge and Dr. Montgomery's help, hopefully they won't lose a single rose.

The trip to the airport was a quiet one, everyone was in deep thought of what they had just been through and what they were going to be facing in the near future.

Laurence came walking over to the group, who were all taking turns washing up and changing into clothes that they had bought at the airport shops. "I have chartered a jet and we will be leaving within the hour," said Lawrence. "We will be going to the house of the rose, just to get whatever we need, we are going to America, where I know everyone will be safe. We will drop Luke off at his home on our way to The House of The Rose, where we will spend the night, preparing for America in the morning."

The hour went by quickly, and they boarded the chartered jet, as Chelsy said to Lawrence, “I was able to get in touch with David Austin, and he agreed to meet us at The House of The Rose later in the day, since he was a four-hour car ride away.”

“Good,” said Laurence, “How did he take the news of the talking Roses?”

“He actually had heard of the legend and is very excited to see that the legend of the Roses, are for real.”

Their flight was quick, and when they arrived, they rented several vans to take the roses, who were staying dormant, so that no one would notice them. Only when they were in the vans did they come alive. Leo and Flanigan looked as if they had very little strength left, as George kept trying to keep Leo up. Aunt Mabel and Phillip went to drop off Luke, telling him that they would be keeping in touch. Phillip handed him a telephone number that would contact them if anything occurred, or if he just wanted to talk.

When Laurence and the rest of the group arrived at The House of The Rose, they could see that Mr. Austin and three men were parked in front of the house. Laurence got out of the car, and walked over to the men, introducing himself as everyone else began to take the Roses in the house. Mr. Austin kept his eyes on the Roses as they were being taken into the mansion. Laurence turned as Mr. Austin was telling two of the men to get a three-foot chest that was in the trunk, as all the men headed inside The House of the Rose.

Everyone entered the house with Eleanor and David setting George, Leo and Flanigan on the dining room table. Mr. Austin and the three men that were with him came over as they were amazed with their eyes wide open when the roses came to life. David put Dr. Montgomery on the edge of the table as he began to look at Mr. Austin, reaching his tired stem as close to Mr. Austin as possible and looking at him from side to side.

“What is wrong?” asked Eleanor, as she came closer to Dr. Montgomery.

“Nothing,” said Dr. Montgomery. “I can see that you picked the right man to help with Leo and Flanigan. He is a good man, a man whose heart is pure, and he has an incredible love for roses. I can tell by looking into his heart, which is another thing that I have the gift to be able to tell how people feel about other things, that they care about or are pretending to care about.

“Good,” said David as Eleanor also agreed, as Mr. Austin and his assistants started to take up half of the table, making a small laboratory. They began to take samples from Leo and George, then from Flanigan. For an hour they continued to make different slides of the samples and looking under the microscope, as Dr. Montgomery discussed everything they were doing with Mr. Austin and his assistants. Everyone else went outside and were looking at all the damage that was done when the men from Chantaliza’s army attacked the House of the Rose.

Johnny D appeared to everyone outside and said, “Dr. Montgomery wanted to see Eleanor and David in the dining area.” Laurence and Phillip walked out at the same time.

“Everything has been arranged, we will be leaving at ten a.m. and will be arriving in New York City eight hours later,” said Phillip. All the roses outside were talking back and forth, after hearing that they were going to New York City. Eleanor told Laurence and Philip, what Johnny D said before they walked outside.

Eleanor, David, Laurence, and Phillip all walked inside the dining room as Mr. Austin started explaining what they came up with, looking at Dr. Montgomery, saying, “With the help of our colleague Dr. Montgomery, we were able to find what we think is the problem. The Roses are a mix of a human cell when they are alive, and a regular rose when they are dormant. The use of their magical dust as Dr. Montgomery has told us, weakens them, as in humans, causes extreme aging. Flanigan has been poked and drained to the point of if he were human, were dehydrated, or had lost an incredible amount of blood.”

Aunt Mabel had been standing by the front entrance to the dining room and walked in, directly to where Mr. Austin was

standing. “So, what are their chances of surviving, and can George live without Leo?” asked Mabel.

“We are not sure exactly what we can or can’t do, but what I will tell you is that I will go with you to America and do everything in my power to help them live. That is, if you still want me to go and assist.” Mabel grabbed his hand and said, “We would be honored to have you,” as everyone nodded in approval.

“What about your business?” asked Laurence.

“My son and my assistant can run it for me. This has been a dream of mine ever since I became a man who has dedicated his life to the love and care of the roses. I heard many years ago about the legend of the magical roses and to be in their presence, nothing could stop me.”

“Good,” said Eleanor, “I will introduce you to the rest of the roses if you wish.”

Mr. Austin looked over at his assistants, who you could visibly see also wanted to meet the rest of the roses. Eleanor looked at David and said, “Everyone can come and meet them.” Laurence, Phillip, and Mabel stayed behind to comfort Leo and Flanagan.

Mr. Austin and his group headed out the dining room, following Eleanor and David.

They proceeded to head out the French doors where all the roses stopped talking as they walked out. Eleanor walked over to where the roses were all placed on top of two tables with several chairs placed to one side. Eleanor began introducing the Roses one at a time. Mr. Austin and his assistants were all amazed by the beauty and the different colors and types of Roses. There wasn’t one that was the same, all were different.

Eleanor told the Roses that Mr. Austin was there to help them with any problems that they may have, from being sick to what the best form of plant food was best for each rose. Right off the get go, Adoni and Amadeus started with their questions.

“We aren’t sick,” said the twins, “and Dr. Montgomery tells us what we need to eat, so we’re just fine.” Of course, they said it at

the same time, making the three assistants, also Mr. Austin look back and forth at both Roses, causing everyone present to laugh.

David looked around and said, "Johnny D, can you show yourself? I know you are here with us." All four men looked around to see who it was that David was calling for, when suddenly Johnny D showed himself, scaring the three assistants, causing them to move back a couple of steps. Mr. Austin just stood there admiring the miracle in front of him. Eleanor thought to herself how she could see in Mr. Austin's face the complete care and love for the roses, for this soft spoken, English mannered man was someone she could tell that she would always be able to trust.

They spent a good hour getting to know each other, as they laughed at some of the silliness that the twins would come out with. Even the three assistants found humor in their conversation.

The skies were getting cloudy, and everyone started to move back in The House of the Rose. Mr. Austin and his three assistants proceeded to attend to Flanigan and Leo.

Dr. Montgomery and Mr. Austin spent most of the day conversing about their two patients, as Dr. Montgomery would call them. After much talk they began talking about the possibility of separating the Roses, a practice that Mr. Austin had done for years in his laboratories. George and Leo both shook their heads as they said, "it would not be an option." The twins overheard about getting separated and they just about had to be sedated because they drove everyone crazy. Mr. Austin was the only one who took everything they said without ever showing any sign of them upsetting him, which to Eleanor and David was a great thing. By this time Eleanor was really the only one who could take the twins' craziness for a long period of time, out of the group.

Supper was upon them, and everyone was sitting down at the big dining table. Mr. Austin and his laboratory set up had been moved to another table that was brought into the corner of the large room. He had sent his assistants back to their company, so that they could make the arrangements and send the supplies that Mr. Austin wanted sent to America. All of the Roses were set up in

different parts of the room, with only Dr. Montgomery and Lizzy B staying awake as the rest were silent and dormant.

Laurence began telling everyone after supper that they would be flying into New York and then they would be taking a train to Ocala, Florida. He had a perfect place for them to hide, His much younger sister lived on a ranch with her husband and two daughters. He had already contacted them, and they agreed on sheltering everyone until they were able to know what Chantaliza Duvalier's next move would be.

Laurence also looked over at Mabel, telling her that his men would look after Hugo and Katrina, and they too would be flying out when Hugo got his strength back, and his men would also oversee the reconstruction of The House of the Rose. There was a lot of work that needed to be done, since the battle. When supper was over, everyone enjoyed a fresh batch of Mabel's and Eleanor's peanut butter cookies, and Mr. Austin was hooked as he discreetly ate three, with milk.

It was getting late, and they would be getting up very early the next morning, for their trip to America would start. Everyone went to sleep with only Dr. Montgomery and Mr. Austin sitting up and discussing what they would be working on to try and save Leo and Flanigan. They had already given them a strong amount of nutrients and were able to distinguish many different things pertaining to the life stages of the roses and the dormant stage. It began to get late and both Mr. Austin and Dr. Montgomery finally called it a night.

Chapter III

Next morning the house was alive with everyone getting everything in order, as Katrina came from the hospital early and had breakfast ready before Eleanor and Mabel walked in the kitchen. She even had all the ingredients ready for them to bake quite a few trays of their peanut butter cookies. Mabel and Eleanor both gave Katrina a big hug and asked about Hugo. Katrina said that her Hugo would be fine as Mabel began to tell Katrina of their plans on going to America. Katrina looked at Eleanor and Mabel and said that Hugo would get better much faster now that he would know that they were going to America. He so dreamed of going there again before he died.

The twins started the morning being, like always, a pain in the rear, with one question after another. Katiuska and Fruelin Goldy both teamed up and made the twins an ultimatum, either they behave, or they would be left alone in the House of The Rose. Not a peep from the twins was said for the remainder of the morning. Dr. Montgomery and Mr. Austin spent the morning checking on Leo and Flanigan. Leo was getting weaker while Flanigan was showing signs of increasing strength. Not a great increase, but an increase, nonetheless.

There was a big bus parked in the front of The House of the Rose as everyone started to walk outside. They were ready to leave on their trip. Katrina came outside as all said their goodbyes. All the Roses were strapped down in the back of the bus, except for Leo and George, whom Eleanor was holding in her lap and Flanigan, whom David was holding. Mr. Austin was right behind them with Dr. Montgomery placed on the seat next to him.

Fruelin Goldy was making comments throughout the bus ride, on how happy she was that Dr. Montgomery had a new friend, but most of the Roses, especially Katuska saw a little bit of jealousy. Their trip to the airport was quick, since there was a lot of conversing going on, and very little time to sight see. Phillip and Lawrence were the first to get off the bus, which pulled into a hangar where a twenty-one-passenger jet was waiting for them to board. Both men hugged as David asked, "Where is Phillip going?" He will be taking care of this side of the Atlantic with Chantaliza Duvalier, said Laurence.

Phillip looked back and waved as he was about to get in a black Cadillac with a chauffeur. Everyone moved quickly as the wind began to pick up and rain would soon be on its way. Everyone was seated with all the Roses being strapped into their seats, with Mr. Austin sitting again next to Dr. Montgomery. The turbulence on the trip over the Atlantic was very scary for some of the roses but mostly for the twins, and George and Leo. The twins attempted quite a few times trying to make each other forget that they were on an airplane. To no avail, since their powers did not work on each other, only on people, as everyone laughed for a while watching the show.

Arriving in New York, they could all see the New York skyline as it appeared on the left side of the airplane. Some of the Roses were upset because they were on the right side of the airplane and couldn't see the New York skyline. But they got over it as they began to approach the airport, and the turbulence started again as everyone held on, when finally, the wheels hit the ground. Within minutes they were taxiing towards a hangar where two customs agents met them at the airplane.

After a while of looking through their plane and many questions about the roses, which they claimed were award winning roses, and it also helped having the foremost expert in Roses, Mr. Austin with them, everything went as planned. They were taken on a tour bus to New Jersey across the George Washington Bridge where they were able to catch a train.

When they boarded the train, they had an entire train cart for themselves, and Lawrence put one of his men on the front and one on the back of the cart for security. The flowers were all loving the sights of the buildings across the bay, of the New York skyline and then the countryside as they left the New Jersey area. Everyone on board was a little concerned with Leo's and George's health because Leo's downfall was beginning to poison George, that is what Mr. Austin and Dr. Montgomery began to believe.

The men knew that if the situation got any worse that they would have to clip Leo from George, but no one knew what would really happen if they attempted to clip the Rose. Even Dr. Montgomery had no idea what would happen, but they had to do something if it got any worse. Their trip was long and tiresome for the whole group until they finally pulled into the Ocala train station, as everyone was extremely nervous about George and Leo.

At the train station, they were met by Angelo and Cindy Pueblo, and their two daughters Lilly and Amanda. Lilly was eighteen years old, and Amanda was seventeen. They had a customized motor home, the nicest that any of them present had ever seen. Everyone was introduced, except for the Roses, who all stayed dormant. Johnny D was the only one who David kept tabs on, so that he wouldn't be left behind.

Laurence gave his sister a big hug as it had been years since they had seen each other, which to Eleanor and David was also the first time that they had seen Laurence show any real emotion towards any other person. Their ride to the Pueblo's ranch was a scenic one where they were able to see town square, which had a park with a big stage with a white picket fence around the stage and a gazebo that covered three quarters of the stage. There was a horse with the symbols of the North, South, East, and West that would move as the wind blew on the very top of the gazebo.

The courthouse was a couple of blocks up with a small house with an attorney's name on a post with a cross bar hanging with two chains. The further they drove; they noticed more farmland with horses on some and cows with a bull on others. There was even a farm that had at least twenty miniature horses.

Finally, they arrived at a turn off, and thirty feet into the driveway there was a large metal fence that had a big letter P with a star surrounding the P. The gate opened as they entered a long driveway with old, big, and beautiful oak trees. There were small gardens of annuals that were laid out in between every large oak tree. There was a large two-story house with a red brick frontage. Angelo pulled the motor home around the side of the house where there was a huge car port that was there to cover the motor home.

Coming to a complete stop, everyone started to unload the roses from the motor home as Mr. Austin asked if they could hurry and get his lab set up, as he was told by Angelo earlier at the train station that all his things from England had been delivered earlier that morning, with an assistant named Sophia. "Where is she?" asked Mr. Austin.

"In the basement," said Cindy.

The group unloaded and Cindy showed them to the basement, which was a wide-open room with many different areas with seating and two televisions. There was one area that was closed off by two drop sheets in a corner, where tables were set up for Mr. Austin and his laboratory. Mr. Austin and Dr. Montgomery started to get everything ready with the help of his new assistant Sophia, who Mr. Austin was surprised that someone who just started to work with his company was the person they sent to be his assistant. Flanagan, George and Leo were also brought downstairs as the rest of the group began unpacking and getting settled into the Pueblo's home. Flanagan was showing signs of improving.

Lilly and Amanda started to show everyone where they would be staying, since the big house had twelve fully furnished rooms, which the Pueblo's used when they had a horse auction to board the buyers from around the world. A separate wing to the back right side of the house was where the Pueblo's lived. Eleanor, David, and Mabel were all impressed with the home. Everything was in a country rustic theme, including terracotta tiled floors, with footprints of rabbits, chickens, and foxes, throughout the house.

When they were all settled in, all the Roses were taken downstairs in the basement, because Mr. Austin wanted to take a

sample of each rose and see what he could maybe find to help Flanagan, who looked much better, and Leo, who looked worse. When everyone was in the basement including the Pueblo's, all the roses came alive, startling Amanda and Lilly. Angelo and Cindy were amazed at the reality that the legend of the roses was true.

Eleanor noticed Leo's head move quickly towards George's and put her hand, cradling Leo as everyone watched. Mr. Austin looked at Dr. Montgomery as he shook his head, looking around at the other roses. He could see that they all knew that Leo's time was about over. George looked over at Leo as he swooped around Eleanor's hands that were cradling Leo's head. Johnny D came to life next to Eleanor, making the Pueblo's move back two steps from the appearance of Johnny D coming to life.

Johnny D put his face in front of George as all the Roses started to sway back and forth. No one in the room had any idea what was going on, until George let out a loud scream, saying

"Nooooo." A glittering form of powder came out of each Rose headed directly at George and Leo, as Leo's eyes opened. Johnny D moved back, letting George look directly at Leo as his eyes opened slightly.

All the roses asked to be brought closer as everyone stood around the table with not even a sound of a breath being taken. Leo began to speak, "I have seen Shaw Ling, and he sends his love. You, my brother, have a lot more to live for. I know you will miss me, but I will be fine. I will be looking down with Shaw Ling." Leo looked around the room, stopping to look at all the roses one at a time as tears began to flow out of all present, including Dr. Montgomery.

Leo leaned his head against Eleanor's hand again, looking directly at her, as Eleanor heard Leo say thank you. Leo's eyes closed and George began to weep loudly as David came over and started to comfort his big red Rose. Everyone started to notice Leo's rose buds drying up in Eleanor's hands as his whole stem too the base of the main stem also dried up and fell off on the table. Eleanor started to cry harder as she held what was left of Leo the Rose.

Mr. Austin started to pick up the dried pieces on the table, putting them in a stainless plate, then helping Eleanor put her dried up buds down. George wrapped himself around the two-foot stake in his pot of soil and went dormant. Every rose followed, going dormant. Dr. Montgomery was the last to go, looking over at Mr. Austin and saying that it would be a while before they would return. Dr. Montgomery took a last look over at Eleanor and went dormant.

Chapter IV

Everyone in the room was wiping their eyes as Eleanor asked Mr. Austin what just happened. Mr. Austin looked at everyone and in his soft-spoken English way said, “I believe that this is their way of grieving the loss of Leo.”

“Do you have any idea how long they will grieve for?” asked David.

“Not at all. I really don’t know, but I would like to spend time doing some experiments on the roses’ buds and leaves, in order to see what I can come up with.”

Everyone in the room began to put the pots with the dormant roses down on the second table, as the sheets were pulled down that kept the area separate from the rest of the basement. Mr. Austin and Sophia started their experiments of the roses as everyone walked upstairs to the back porch where they would discuss what they were going to be doing in the near future.

Laurence started by saying that he would have to be going back to Europe in a couple of days. Everyone was asking if anybody knew how long the Roses would stay dormant with no one knowing the answer. Eleanor said, “As long as they want,” as David agreed. It was close to supper time and Angelo asked everyone to get ready, as they were having a Puerto Rican specialty, arroz con gandulles, and fried pork chunks, with yucca.

No one outside of Laurence, Mabel and the Pueblo’s had any idea what he was talking about, so on their way in to wash up before supper, Cindy explained what arroz con gandulles was, a Spanish style yellow rice and sausage, and that yucca was similar

to potatoes with a garlic sauce. Everyone looked forward to the meal, although Eleanor was still hurting from the passing of Leo.

At supper everyone ate with very little conversation. There was a lot of eating, except for Eleanor who just picked. Mabel brought out some of her peanut butter cookies that she had made at the house of the rose, before leaving Europe. There was also a Spanish dessert called flan, which David instantly loved and had to have two servings.

When supper was over, they went down in the basement to see how Mr. Austin was doing with his tests on the Roses. Sophia was on her way up the stairs and had her thick black glasses off, as she started cleaning them, bumping into Laurence. Both looked for a second at each other as Lawrence let her through. Sophia asked where the bathroom was located. When they got to the bottom of the stairs, Laurence looked back up the stairs.

Mabel noticed and asked Laurence, “Is there a problem?” Laurence just shook his head. “No, but Sophia just reminded me of someone I’ve seen before but just can’t seem to remember from were. Mr. Austin was looking through a microscope as he noticed everyone approaching.

“How is the research coming along?” asked Mabel.

“Nothing major to report,” said Mr. Austin, “just that when they are dormant, they are the same as any other rose. I am working on trying to see if there is anything from their dormant state that can help them when they come to life.”

Eleanor walked over to the nine pots, cupping each rose, and Johnny D, who had his roots twirled up like a snake. The last she cupped was George as she kissed his petals, saying, “Be strong, my dear George, our Leo is in a better place.” David walked over, putting his hand on Eleanor’s shoulders, and walked her out of the basement as everyone followed.

The next three days, everyone waited for the roses to come back to life, since they wanted to bury what was left of Leo when they awoke. Laurence had left the day before for London, leaving Chelsy in charge of the six men that now patrolled the area. Cindy, Amanda, and Lilly took everyone around the horse farm the fourth

day. They got the grand tour of the stables, which were kept up better than many homes. The horses that were kept there were worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, with a few being close to a million.

They also had a little over two hundred head of cattle, which were also top of the line Black Angus. Mr. Pueblo was hardly ever home this time of the year because he would travel to different races and farms to sell and purchase horses and cattle. A loud horn sounded from the main home, which everyone knew from what they discussed earlier in the day that the roses had awoken from their sleep. Cindy pushed the six-seat golf cart as fast as it could go, arriving quickly at the front of the house, where a sprint to the door pursued.

David made it first, holding the door as Chelsy ran and opened the basement door. Within a minute, everyone was downstairs and standing around the roses as they all looked to be rejuvenated, for Mr. Austin kept them fed with a strong dose of nutrients.

“My roses,” said Eleanor, as she walked around looking at every rose, with Johnny D appearing and disappearing several times, joking with Eleanor as she tried to kiss him, as she did every rose.

David asked everyone how they felt, especially Flanagan who looked as if nothing had ever happened to him. George also looked as if there was nothing at all wrong.

“We have been waiting for you to come back to us,” said Eleanor, “we want to bury the leftover petals from Leo.”

Adoni and Amadeus both said at the same time, “Who is Leo, we don’t know Leo.” Dr. Montgomery also looked puzzled as he asked, “What leftover petals, and who is this, Leo?”

All the roses were asking the same question, as Mr. Austin put his hands to his face, gesturing not to say another word. Katiuska noticed him but didn’t say anything.

“How are you feeling” asked Mr. Austin, looking at Flanagan.

“I am fine,” said Flanagan as the twins both answered that they were fine too, but why didn’t he ask them. Frulin Goldy

looked at both twins as they both kept quiet, they knew the stare meant business.

“How was your rest?” asked Mr. Austin, as he looked at all the roses.

“Good,” said Dr. Montgomery.

“Why are we in the basement?” asked Johnny D.

“Can I take a petal and a leaf from each one of you?” asked Mr. Austin.

“Why?” asked all the roses at the same time.

“I would like to experiment and see if I can figure out, what can help each one of you when you are sick.”

“Why? Are we sick?” asked Adoni and Amadeus. All the Roses stared at the twins at the same time.

“That will not be a problem,” said Lady Hilly.

“Anything to help in keeping us healthy,” said Fruelin Goldy. “Now,” said Fruelin Goldy, “are we going to be able to see the rest of the horse farm?”

“Yes,” said David, “but first we need a sample for Mr. Austin.”

Sophia came walking down the steps as Mr. Austin walked over to her and asked if she could take a sample of each rose, a bud, and a leaf. He needed to talk to the rest of the group upstairs. Turning, Mr. Austin asked everyone upstairs as he explained to the roses that Sophia would be taking the samples for him, and that they would be back down in a minute.

Everyone followed Mr. Austin, as he first turned on one of the televisions and proceeded to walk up the stairs. Getting to the top of the steps, Mr. Austin continued walking out the kitchen door and about twenty-five feet from the house, when he finally stopped.

“Why are we so far out here?” asked Mabel, which was what everyone had been thinking.

“I know one of the roses has incredible hearing and I really don’t want them to hear what I have to say. I believe that anything that can cause them severe pain, like the loss of one in their group, their minds wipe it out, so that they won’t mourn the death, which

can cause either too much heartache or revenge. With their powers, revenge could be fatal to whomever caused them to want revenge.”

Everyone present just stood there without saying a word. Mabel finally spoke, saying that they were very happy that Mr. Austin came with them. “For the rest of us, I believe, wouldn’t have understood the situation.”

“I believe there shouldn’t be any more talk of Leo from this point on.”

Mr. Austin noticed Eleanor looking very upset. David looked over at her and said, “Eleanor, we just have to accept it, and maybe we can still have a funeral and just tell them that it was a friend.”

“A bird,” said Amanda, “Using a small box, we would be able to fit the dried-out petals and what was left of the stem.” “Good idea,” said Mr. Austin, as everyone agreed.

Back down the steps to the basement, David looked around and asked where is Johnny D? He appeared behind David, scaring David and Lilly. “Johnny D,” said David, “have you been following us?”

“No,” said Johnny D, “I was in the basement the whole time, but I was just about to go looking for all of you.”

Sophia looked over at Mr. Austin and said, “All of the samples have been taken.”

“Good,” said Mr. Austin, “we will pack everything, and I will charter a jet to bring us back to England, since my job is done here, and my laboratory there will give me much more information than what we have here in this basement.”

“I will be back,” said Mr. Austin as he looked at all the roses, one at a time.

“Can I stay?” asked Sophia. “Just in case anything happens to one of the roses, I can serve as your eyes and ears.”

Mr. Austin looked at Eleanor and Mabel, as they both shook their heads in agreement, as did Cindy. “Good, then help me pack and I will be on my way,” said Mr. Austin.

“Are we finally going to see all of the horses and cows?” asked the twins, as they started to make horse calls and mooing as if they were cows. Everyone laughed, even Mr. Austin, who was

usually very business like but always considerate. The group started to walk up the stairs as everyone grabbed a pot, with David and Chelsy grabbing the last two apiece.

Walking outside, Cindy asked them to wait as she went walking to this big metal barn and came driving back on a big flatbed truck with wooden side fences attached. Amanda got on as everyone passed the roses one at a time. Mabel sat inside the truck and everyone else was in the back on the flat bed of the truck. Cindy opened the window on the back of the seat and took them for a slow tour, explaining what every barn, field and boarding house for the farm hands was all about. Johnny D kept appearing and disappearing as they would stop. He would spook the cattle near the fences, and Adoni and Amadeus would laugh, as did everyone else, but Eleanor didn't find it too funny.

When they returned to the big house, David walked over to Eleanor and asked if there was something wrong. Eleanor just looked at him and said, "I'll be fine, just that Leo meant so much. How can they just forget?"

"That is just the way it is," said David.

"I know," said Eleanor, returning to the flatbed truck and helping to take the roses back inside the house. David looked around for Johnny D, and he was nowhere to be found. Fruelin Goldy looked at David and said, "Johnny D is just doing what he does best, disappear, but he will be back before it gets dark."

Cindy walked over to Mabel and asked her if that was okay with her. Mabel smiled. "Don't worry, he may scare some of your farm hands, but he won't hurt any of them."

"I don't know if that's good or bad," said Cindy, as both of them shook their heads and walked into the house. The rest of the day, everyone stayed in the living room. Every time one of the housekeepers would come around, the roses would go dormant. Mabel was telling Amanda and Lilly that they could not tell anybody about the roses, not even their best friends.

Both girls were upset because they were both dying to tell a couple of friends at school the next day. None of the farm hands could find out, since it could alert Chantaliza, who you know

would try to capture the roses again, and the reason that they were there was to stay out of the public eye. The girls agreed, as the phone rang, and it was Mr. Austin as he was about to board his plane back to England. He spoke to Mabel, thanking her and if there was anything they needed from him, not to hesitate to call. He would be keeping in touch, was the last thing he said.

Sophia was showed to her room by Lilly, who took a liking to Sophia right off the get go. Something to do with her being a little older, and mysterious, thought Lilly. Eleanor was Lilly's age but to Lilly, Eleanor was much too mature. Little did Lilly know of what young Eleanor had been through and seen in her eighteen years, which of course made her so much more mature.

After supper, Johnny D finally came back, appearing at the door to the dining room. "Where have you been?" asked David as Johnny D went invisible again.

"Come back, Johnny D," said Eleanor as he reappeared on the other side of the dining room. "Where have you been?"

"Just snooping," said Johnny D, "that's all." All the roses looked at Johnny D as the twins started to laugh.

"Why are you laughing?" asked David, as everyone in the room went silent.

"Because Johnny D knows something but won't say it," said the twins.

Dr. Montgomery looked at everyone and asked, "Where are you going to be staying at night?" In an attempt, to change the conversation.

It worked as Eleanor asked the roses, "Where would you be most happy staying?"

"I would like to stay in the basement," said Johnny D, as all the roses agreed.

"Can we be taken there, I know that I am tired," said Dr. Montgomery.

Everyone helped take the roses down to the basement as they each went dormant within minutes. The rest of the group walked upstairs and spent the rest of the night telling Cindy, Lilly, Amanda, and Sophia about the adventure that they had been

through with their roses. It began to get late, and everyone went to bed as the roses awoke.

Johnny D started to tell all the roses about everything he saw on his walk through the farm, the horses and the different men that worked the farm, mostly Mexicans. “They were small men,” said Johnny D, “between five feet and five feet five inches tall, but they could handle the horses like if they were Cody and Luke’s size. “All of the horses and the cows could sense my presence, every time I tried to touch one, they would run quickly as I got within two feet,” said Johnny D. Katuska started to talk to the roses, telling them that they would have to keep their eyes out, for they all knew that Chantaliza would be back.

The door to the basement creaked open as all the Roses went dormant and Johnny D made himself invisible. Eleanor walked down with a sleeping bag and a pillow, putting them down on one of the couches. She then walked around and gave each rose a kiss on their petals. Walking back to the couch, she laid down the sleeping bag and pillow. Looking around, she called out for Johnny D, who appeared two feet from her. Getting up, she kissed him on the petals and told him to stay inside till the morning. Five minutes later you could hear a slight snore as Eleanor fell asleep.

The next couple of days were spent with the roses watching a tremendous amount of television, always arguing on what to watch. David and Eleanor went to the local television sales place and purchased several televisions. The basement looked like a newsroom with so many televisions being on at the same time. Dr. Montgomery spent a little time trying to talk with Sophia about the science of roses, but she was always more interested in doing things with Lilly. Sophia would leave for most of the day when Lilly was at school but would call in every couple of hours to check that the roses were fine.

Chapter V

The first weekend at the Pueblo's, Lilly and Sophia had a friend apiece come and spend the night. That was routine for the girls, and they didn't want their friends or their friends' parents to get the idea that something was wrong. The Roses stayed in the basement all week, only being let out for about an hour a day to get some sunlight. Eleanor spent a little time with the four young girls, with Sophia always involved. Eleanor enjoyed being back with girls her age and a little younger. It made her miss her friends back in England, especially Alexandra, who must be worried stiff, since she hadn't spoken to her in a while.

That weekend the girls did everything to make sure that their friends weren't aware of the roses. Eleanor and David went into town, meeting a lot of Amanda and Lilly's friends. They had a great day at the town square, with kids their own age, although David and Lilly were a couple of years older, but no one seemed to notice or mind.

A couple of weeks went by, and Laurence contacted Mabel, telling her that Chantaliza Duvalier hadn't been seen or heard from by any of the agencies that he hired to search for her, not even a hint from his own men on where she could possibly be hiding, but they knew that they would find her eventually. Laurence would be coming back to Ocala in two weeks if there was still no sign of Chantaliza.

Eleanor decided to wait for Laurence to get back before they would have a burial for Leo, telling the roses a different story. Not even one had ever mentioned his name since the day he died. Mr. Austin would call every couple of days to see how the roses were

doing and that he was working hard in the laboratory trying to figure out the cell structure of the Roses when they were alive.

Sophia would speak to Mr. Austin and told him that she would be staying permanently, because she was happy in Ocala, and would continue to watch over the roses, but it seemed to most of them that being around with the girls was her main reason for staying. She told Mr. Austin that he would not have to pay her and that she had a trust fund and would be renting a room on the ranch from the Pueblo's, but she promised to keep him informed if anything happened.

Johnny D would spend a lot of his time playing jokes and scaring the heck out of a lot of the workers on the ranch. Even some of the ladies who took care of the ranch house witnessed strange things and were very suspicious about the fact that they were not allowed to enter the basement under any circumstances whatsoever.

Two more weeks had passed by, and Laurence arrived without anyone knowing, surprising the group on a Thursday afternoon. Everyone was surprised but happy to see him, as they all gathered down in the basement. Laurence began to tell them that Chantaliza was trying to regroup from what they were told. Mark and Byron who oversaw her security were again working for her. Every time that Phillip would get close, Chantaliza would move to another part of France or another country.

Chantaliza had many homes throughout Europe and quite a few in the United States, but mainly in the big cities, New York, Los Angeles, and even in Miami. From what they were able to understand, Chantaliza had no idea where the roses were being kept, but she would not stop until she found them again. Adoni and Amadeus went dormant. They didn't want to hear anymore about Chantaliza. Laurence also had word for Mabel that Hugo and Katrina would be staying at the House of the Rose, since Hugo was still under his doctor's care, and that they sent their love.

The rest of the day was spent talking of everything they have learned about Ocala and Laurence and his sister Cindy spent time together, taking walks and catching up on many years of not being

together. After a little over a month of everyone in the house together, they were all getting along extremely well, with Lilly all excited that her cousin Stephanie had just graduated high school and would be coming to stay for the summer.

The next day, the house was alive as Angelo Pueblo arrived, with their cousin Stephanie. They had decided to throw a party at the ranch house, inviting just a couple of close friends. David had gone into town to get some things that he needed for himself and six-hundred-pound bags of plant food that Mr. Austin had sent from England with a special blend of nutrients, especially made for their roses.

David had arrived at the ranch house, noticing a Volkswagen van where three men were unloading musical instruments. He walked in the front doors that were open, as Eleanor and the rest of the group were sitting in the living room. Eleanor noticed David and stood up, walking over to her brother, wanting to introduce him to Stephanie, who was sitting down looking at some pictures of Amanda's show horse competition.

David was thanking Mr. Pueblo for allowing them to stay at his home, when Eleanor grabbed David and turned him around, looking right at Stephanie. "David, this is Stephanie," said Eleanor, as David reached down, shaking Stephanie's hand, and looking at her directly in her eyes, as she too stared back with a big smile on her face. David searched for words that he couldn't find. A more beautiful female he had never seen, making his stomach tighten and the hair in the back of his neck rise. Stephanie also couldn't find the words that she tried hard to say, but a mumble was all everyone heard, causing a few of them to laugh.

Eleanor noticed David a little dumbfounded, so she grabbed his arm and sat with him in the coach across from where Stephanie and the girls were sitting. Mabel and Laurence looked at each other as Mabel winked, both having fully understood what had taken place in the room. Mabel stood up and said that she was going to take a nap before the scheduled party that night. Laurence also left the room since he would be going on a horseback ride with Cindy and Angelo.

All that was left in the living room was all the young kids, as Lilly, Amanda and Stephanie went back to looking at the photo album. Eleanor was carrying on a conversation with David as she noticed that both Stephanie and David would look over at each other when the other wasn't looking. When the kids were done Lilly walked over to David and Eleanor and asked if Stephanie could see the roses, since she was family and would be staying at their home at least through the summer, if not longer.

David looked at Eleanor and without a hesitation said, "Of course," as he looked at Eleanor, saying, "Remember, she is part of the family."

Eleanor just shook her head and laughed to herself as she looked at David, then at Lilly and said that it would be just fine. Sophia had been gone for most of the day and had just walked in, being introduced to Stephanie. Everyone got up headed towards the basement as Eleanor explained to Sophia that they were going to allow Stephanie to see the roses.

When they got to the bottom of the steps, all the roses went dormant, and Johnny D was nowhere to be seen. Eleanor explained to Stephanie what she was about to witness, as Stephanie looked at everyone else, thinking that it was a joke. When she looked at David, who was the last person she stared at more so than just a quick look, he shook his head, as if saying that it was true, what she was about to witness.

Eleanor asked her roses to show themselves as one by one they came alive. Stephanie looked at the roses with her eyes wide open, not knowing what to say or do, as she walked closer to David because she was a bit scared. Eleanor noticed and said, "They are harmless," as Lizzy B started to talk, saying, "Don't fear us, we are all dear friends."

Adoni and Amadeus both pulled themselves towards Stephanie, laughing as they said, "She is scared."

Fruelin Goldy just gave the twins a stern look as they both pulled back towards their pot.

"You don't have to be scared," said Lady Hilly, as Lilly put her hand on Stephanie's shoulder to comfort her.

Stephanie shook her head and said, “I can’t believe,” as she stuttered, making everyone laugh, as so did she. Like an ice breaker, Stephanie calmed down, wanting to know as much about the roses as possible. Every time she stared at them; she could not believe what stood in front of her. Katuska started to tell her the story of the roses, which took a little over an hour, but everyone present enjoyed the story, which had a lot of parts taken out. If not, they would have been there all week.

When Katuska was done, the roses clapped as everyone present joined in, as laughter went throughout the room. Laurence came walking down the steps as all the roses went dormant, until they noticed that it was Laurence. “Has anybody seen Johnny D?” asked Laurence, as Johnny D came to life, scaring Stephanie right into David’s arms. David held her, as her face was pushed into his chest.

Christopher looked at Stephanie and said, “A bit of amore has been struck.” Almost everyone understood, except for the twins. Fruelin Goldy and Dr. Montgomery looked over at the twins, making sure that a silly comment would not be said.

Stephanie realized that she was being held by David, as she slowly looked up at him with her sparkling green eyes and long wavy brunette hair. Everyone in the room was silent as you could visibly see that David’s knees were getting weak. They finally moved apart, as Laurence said that they should all be getting ready, because the party would begin in the next hour and a half. Everyone started to walk out of the basement as Eleanor, David and Laurence were left alone with the roses.

Laurence looked over at Johnny D and asked him, “Where have you been all day? A couple of ranch hands had to call the police because they thought that someone had been in their home trying to scare them if not rob them, but they keep their valuables with them, not in their home, so nothing serious was taken. The police came over to the main house and asked questions about if anyone had seen any strange people walking around. We don’t need that kind of publicity,” said Laurence. “It could alert Chantaliza. Do you understand?” said Laurence in a loud voice.

“I’m sorry,” said Johnny D, “I won’t do it again.”

“Good,” said Lawrence as he headed up the stairs.

“Are you okay?” asked Eleanor, while David stood there with a dumb look on his face. Eleanor thought that David probably didn’t even hear what Lawrence had to say.

Christopher looked over at David and said, “How does it feel to be in love?”

David looked at Christopher and the other roses with an embarrassed look on his face. Adoni and Amadeus wanted to know who was in love as all the roses started laughing, including Eleanor. David just looked around and walked up the stairs without saying a word.

Eleanor looked at the roses, especially at Johnny D and said, “I know that you have all come to love the stories that Johnny D tells you, and of his little jokes that he pulls on people, but until Chantaliza is in check, we will have to be more careful. Believe me,” said Eleanor, “we will have a lot of time to enjoy our lives, free of any harm.” All the roses agreed as Eleanor left, and the roses went dormant, including Johnny D.

Eleanor and the rest of the group began to get ready for the party that the Pueblo’s would be throwing in less than an hour. The band was all set up and were tuning their instruments, when Eleanor walked downstairs, seeing that David was dressed in a sports coat with leather patches on the elbows, with a turtleneck light sweater underneath. Eleanor walked over to David and said, “All you need now is a fancy pipe, and I would think that you were an eccentric entrepreneur.”

Both David and Eleanor laughed, but David got serious and asked, “Should I go change?” Stephanie should be ready shortly and he wanted to be present when she entered the large party room.

“You’re just fine, my strong, and handsome big brother.” Eleanor took his arm and they walked into the party room, while the band played a warmup song. Sophia was already in the room with a margarita in her hand.

Little by little, everyone started to enter the party room as David kept a watchful eye out for Stephanie. Much conversation

was going on in the room, as the band played soft music. Lilly, Amanda and finally Stephanie came walking through the door. David walked directly towards them, saying hi to Lilly and Amanda and then finding himself a little tongue tied with words, as he tried to say something nice to Stephanie. Whatever it was that he said, no one understood, but everyone smiled as they all entered the room, headed for the bar to get a virgin pina colada.

David walked over to Eleanor and told her what had happened, and she told him not to worry, since she was more than sure that Stephanie had an eye out for David. David looked at Eleanor a little more at ease than before. Six different couples came to the party as everyone danced and laughed. Laurence and Mabel were really dancing up a storm and seemed very friendly to each other throughout the night, thought Eleanor.

David went up to the band and asked them when they were going to be playing another slow song, and they told him after two more songs. David walked over to Stephanie and asked her to dance as the second song was about to end. They both walked to the dance floor as everyone walked off, and the music started to the song which began with "I do love you." David's face looked like he was about to pass out, since they were the only ones on the dance floor. Everyone in the room watched the young couple dance as Stephanie pulled David a little closer, calming his nerves down. David settled into the dancing and when they were done the whole room started clapping.

David escorted Stephanie back to where all the girls were sitting, and Eleanor had him pull up a chair. Angelo Pueblo went up to the band and grabbed one of the microphones and thanked everyone for coming. "The party is far from over," said Angelo. I just must sing a song for my lovely wife Cindy. The band started to play, "My eyes adored you," as Angelo began to sing, and everyone sat there and watched. When he was done everyone clapped, even the band.

Stephanie went over to talk with Mabel, who had called her earlier to her table. Sophia looked over at David and asked what song he would be singing for Stephanie, causing David to turn red

as an apple. Laurence went walking over to the bar, David noticing him, a perfect chance for him to leave the embarrassment that he was being given by the young ladies.

Angelo also was standing next to Laurence as was two other guests. The band was playing a Beatles tune called “Here Comes the Sun,” as one of the invited guests introduced himself to Laurence and David. Angelo looked over at the man whose name was Gerald Knots, a goofy looking fellow, very skinny with slightly bulging eyes, black hair and a thin mustache, and a look of a man who could deliver a punch line just by making a funny face.

Angelo looked over at David and Laurence and said, “Gerald is the man responsible for our local newspaper, *The Ocala Times*, and more.

“Well Angelo,” said Gerald, “are you going to let me get to the point of my conversation?” His eyes bulged a little further out, causing all present to laugh.

“Go ahead, Gerald, you know I like to tease you.”

“Yes, I do no,” said Gerald, “you’re just like your father but not as mean.”

“Get to the point,” said Angelo.

“Today one of my reporters got word that the police came to the ranch to investigate a possible B and E.”

“What is a B and E?” asked David.

“Breaking an Entry,” said Gerald, “but not just that, there has been a lot of talk about something strange going on at the ranch. You know I have my eyes and ears all around town, and I just wanted to know is there anything that I should be told about, that is, before one of my reporters decides to go snooping around for some information.”

“We have nothing to hide,” said Lawrence, “I think maybe the men are just seeing things, or one of them is playing a joke on the rest.” “Yes, I believe that is what it is,” said Angelo, “but I will get to the bottom of it, and you will be the first to know,” said Angelo, as he put his arm around Gerald. “This is a party” said Angelo, “so let’s leave the questions for some other time.” All the men agreed and made a toast to a good time.

The rest of the night, there was a lot of dancing and talking with a couple of adults getting a bit drunk, but especially Gerald Knots.

He went to the bathroom and made a wrong turn, leading to the door to the basement. Walking in, he heard someone talking as he headed down the steps. As he got to the bottom, everything was silent. There were two lights on as he focused as best as he could, noticing an array of pots with the most beautiful roses that he had ever seen.

Walking towards them, trying to keep from swaying, since the margaritas had gotten the best of him. Gerald threw himself on the couch. If he took another step, he would have fallen face down. Sitting himself up, he heard a noise coming from behind him, making him move faster but very uncontrolled. “Who’s there?” said Gerald, “and who was talking. I may be a little drunk, but I know I heard someone talking,” in a louder tone.

No one answered as Gerald began to laugh at himself. He started to think that his mind was playing tricks on him. Looking again at the incredible roses that were in front of him, he reached out to touch one, but almost fell off the couch. Another sound came from behind Gerald, who turned quickly, saying, “Who’s there?” in a slur. Again, there was no response as Gerald was trying to stand up, when he looked to his right, seeing what he thought was something moving towards the stairs.

“Hey,” yelled Gerald, “I see you,” as his eyes bulged further out trying to gain his vision, which was an impossibility. Gerald closed his eyes for a couple of minutes, trying to get his senses back in track. When the door to the basement opened, Gerald heard several footsteps coming down into the basement. Angelo was at the lead as Laurence and David followed.

“What in the world are you doing down here?” asked Angelo, as he made it to the couch.

“I don’t know,” said Gerald, “but there were some noises, was that you?” asked Gerald as his voice went from low to high. Everyone visibly saw that he was beyond drunk, as Angelo asked Laurence to help him with Gerald. Both men helped take Gerald up

the stairs and to the front doors, where his wife Helen had been waiting.

“I am so sorry,” said Helen when she noticed the men walking with Gerald in their arms.

“Don’t be,” said Angelo, “we have all had a bit too much to drink, once in our lives.” The men walked Gerald outside and into their Cadillac Deville that he loved, Gerald grabbing Angelo’s arm before letting go, saying, “Thank you.”

Angelo put his hand back on Gerald’s arm and said, “Not a problem, my old friend.” The car pulled away and everyone headed back into the party room.

The band called out, last song of the night, as they played “La Bamba.” Everyone got up and started to dance. Even David was pulled from his seat, the Pueblo’s and even Mabel and Laurence danced the last dance. When the song ended, everyone started to clap as Angelo went up to the microphone and thanked everyone for coming. The group started to say their goodbyes and within twenty minutes the band was paid and everyone staying in the house were sitting around the bar.

A great party, said everyone, as Angelo asked if they thought that maybe Gerald had seen one of the roses. Him being so drunk, they were hoping that he would forget the night.

“That’s a wrap,” said Cindy, as they began heading for their rooms. David looked over at Stephanie as she walked over and kissed him on the cheek, thanking him for the couple of dances.

David said, “No. Thank you,” as Stephanie walked away, holding Lilly’s arm as they walked out of the party room headed for their bedrooms.

Everyone went to bed except Mabel and Laurence, who decided to go for a walk. They talked of different things meaningful to both and how Mabel, for once since her brother and sister-in-law had died, was able to enjoy herself. Mabel thanked Lawrence for being a good friend, by kissing him on the cheek. Both felt a little tingle, which neither had felt in a very long time, then they walked back towards the house, and each headed for their rooms.

Chapter VI

Next morning Angelo was off again, to another show in Kentucky, and would not be back in town for at least two months. Cindy was a bit upset, but she knew that in a couple of years he would be retiring, and they would have all the time in the world to be together. She was also very used to taking care of everything, and she had a house full of guest, which would make this time a lot easier.

Everyone had awoken from the long night of having a great time at the party. Eleanor was a bit wary about the fact that Gerald was found in the basement. “What if he had seen one of the roses?” she asked Laurence and David after breakfast, when they went for a short walk. Laurence was not concerned about Gerald, but he was concerned about the ranch hands who had been talking in town about weird things happening at the ranch.

Cindy came walking out of the house calling for Laurence, since there was a call from England. Laurence excused himself and went running into the house. Eleanor and David followed him, as he headed for the telephone in the kitchen. They waited a couple of minutes before Laurence finally put down the phone. He didn’t say a word as David, Eleanor and even Cindy just looked at him, when Laurence finally spoke.

“That was Phillip. First, he wishes everyone well and says that he will be arriving in Ocala in the next two days.” Mabel walked into the kitchen and walked over as Laurence explained to her that he had just spoken to Phillip. Continuing, Lawrence started to explain to them that Phillip had found out where Chantaliza

Duvalier was staying and that he had someone in her group that was keeping him informed.

“Who?” asked David, as everyone else basically wanted to ask the same question.

“That he is not sure of, but he will explain everything when he arrives.” Lawrence said not another word, as Eleanor asked Lawrence, “Is that it, nothing else?”

“That’s all,” said Lawrence, as he looked at everyone. By their expressions, Lawrence could see that they expected to hear a lot more than he had told them. “Don’t worry,” said Lawrence, “Phillip will be here in a couple of days, and he will explain anything else he may know.”

Eleanor and David excused themselves as they went down to the basement to see the roses. All the roses were up and started to speak at the same time asking many questions. Eleanor said that they would have to ask one question at a time. Lizzy B looked at all the roses and said that she would like Katiuska to be the one who asked the questions. All the roses agreed, with Dr. Montgomery being a little upset that he would not be the one asking the questions.

“Go ahead,” said David as he looked over at Eleanor, who agreed to let Katiuska ask their questions.

“First of all,” said Katiuska, “why is Phillip coming in a couple of days? Is there a problem, and where is Chantaliza Duvalier staying?” All the roses stared at David and Eleanor as they both looked at each other.

Eleanor finally spoke, “First of all, Johnny D, were you snooping around upstairs again, as you were asked not to anymore.” Johnny D went invisible. “Well, that means yes,” said David.

“We came downstairs specifically to tell all of you what we knew, and yes, Phillip will be here in a couple of days. Now Johnny D, can we see you please?” asked Eleanor. Johnny D appeared as Eleanor turned to face him. “You have got to stop wandering around the house before someone sees or hears you, do you understand?”

“They can’t see him,” said the twins, as they began to laugh.

“What is so funny?” asked David. Frulin Goldy looked at the twins then at Eleanor, then David.

“We are all tired of being kept in this basement, we need more time out in the sun and getting fresh air,” said Fruelin Goldy. David and Eleanor looked at all the roses, as each looked at them with full agreement with what Fruelin Goldy had just said.

“I understand,” said Eleanor. “We will try and see how we could give all of you more time outside. You have got to understand that we are trying to protect you from Chantaliza and her madness to try and possess your powers.”

“We understand,” said Lizzy B, “but we also feel like prisoners, being kept here in the basement. Isn’t there somewhere else that we could go, where we don’t have to be so cooped up?”

“Trust me, my dear roses,” said Eleanor, “we will soon find the perfect place, just give us a little more time, but we will talk to Laurence and Cindy and see how we could get all of you out more often.”

“Is there anything else?” asked David.

“Yes,” said George, “what was wrong with the man last night? He could hardly walk.”

“That was Gerald Knots, a friend of the Pueblo’s and he is harmless. We’re going upstairs and see what we could do about getting all of you some more fresh air,” said Eleanor.

“Thank you,” said all the roses, as David and Eleanor headed up the stairs. Walking in the dining room they could see that everyone was having their breakfast, including all the young ladies. There was a knock at the front door as Cindy got out of her chair and headed towards the front door.

Everyone watched as a postal worker handed her a box, which she signed for and walked back into the dining room. “This is for you,” said Cindy as she walked over to Sophia.

“From whom is the box?” asked Mabel, as everyone else looked on intently.

Looking at the label, Sophia said that it was from David Austin, as she set it down on the ground next to her.

“You’re not going to open it?” asked Lilly and Amanda. “No reason to open it. I am sure that it is something for the roses, which I will take care of after breakfast,” said Sophia.

“Speaking of the roses,” said Eleanor, “we were talking to them this morning and they feel really constricted in the basement, as being in prison, they said. Is there any place else that they could stay, because they really do need more sunlight and fresh air?”

“I believe that we can solve that problem. The barn that sits sixty yards from the main house right next to where Sophia is staying will be vacant today.”

“Where are the horses going?” asked Stephanie.

“They will be shipped to Kentucky, because Angelo will be selling them at auction in the coming weeks.”

“There is also a one-bedroom efficiency connected to the other end, where they could be kept inside at night. That stable would give them plenty of light, since the center of the roof is of glass, which in the winter will allow the heat from the sun to warm the stables. I will make sure that none of the employees of the ranch will go anywhere near the stables or the efficiency.”

“That will definitely work,” said David, “and we could take turns staying with them at night.”

“Problem solved,” said Mabel, as Eleanor looked around and said, “Johnny D, I know you’re here so go and tell the roses the good news.” Everyone looked around as they heard a voice near the door to the basement saying, “Okay.” Everyone at the table found it funny and laughed.

After breakfast everyone went walking over to the stables to see where the roses would be residing, except for Sophia, who went to her room with the package that she received. Walking through the main door, it was eight foot high and was held by four big hinges. Cindy opened the door without really using any strength at all, and by the size of the door, it was hung perfectly.

The first sight of the stables was amazing, the fine trimming around the stable doors and the wood was all perfectly painted in a dark green and a dark brown pressure treated wood. Eight stables in all, four on each side. When everyone looked up, the glass that

covered the center of the roof was eight foot wide, and the length of the entire barn. It was an unbelievable sight. They could see the sunlight coming through, you could see how in the winter the horses would get heat from the glass roof.

Everyone walked through as Amanda took the lead and introduced each horse to the group, six horses in all, with two stables remaining empty. Going through the stables, they ended up on the other side, which had an identical door as the previous one that they entered, but this time Laurence opened the door. Going through they could see the efficiency as Cindy walked everyone over.

She reached into her pocket and opened the door with a key that she said was a master key to any door on the ranch. Everyone walked in and the place was immaculate, with wood trimming and even a fireplace at the corner of the room. A door led to a small bathroom. There was a full-size bed in the opposite corner from the fireplace.

“This will be perfect,” said Eleanor as David agreed.

“We can actually move the roses in the room today if you wish,” said Cindy.

“That will work,” said David, as everyone agreed.

“When will they be coming for the horses?” asked Eleanor.

“Well,” said Cindy, looking over at Amanda.

“By noon,” said Amanda.

Cindy walked over and put her hands on Amanda’s hair. “I can’t run this place without my Amanda.”

Lilly looked at Cindy and said, “I help too.”

“Yes, I know, my love, when the boys aren’t around, we can always call on you.” Everyone laughed, as Lilly puckered her lips, pouting.

They headed back towards the main house as they noticed Sophia pulling out of the driveway shooting up the rocks on the road. “Remind me to talk to that young lady when she comes back,” said Cindy, “if she keeps peeling out like that, we will have to replace the rock road.”

David started to talk to Stephanie as they were entering the house. Stephanie turned and asked, "Would you like to go on a horseback ride with Lilly and a friend that she has coming over in the next thirty minutes?"

"Sure," said David, "but let me make sure that Eleanor doesn't need me to help with the roses."

"I admire that about you," said Stephanie, "how you always put your sister ahead of everything you do."

"That is not always true," said Eleanor as she laughed, then saying, "I was only joking."

Mabel walked over to David and kissed him on the cheek, saying, "David is so much like my dear Peter was with me."

With that Mabel said that she was going to her room. Eleanor looked at David and said, "I want to move the roses at three, giving you plenty of time with Stephanie." David kissed Eleanor on the cheek and continued to walk with Stephanie and Lilly.

Everyone began to do their own thing as David, Stephanie, Lilly, and her friend John got in the Pueblo's golf cart and headed to the stables that were half a mile to the right of the ranch. When they arrived Lilly and Stephanie showed the boys how to saddle up their horses, which the girls were surprised how fast they both learned. When they were ready, everyone mounted a horse and began walking towards a trail that led them to a six-acre pond that the Pueblo's grandfather had made many years before, which was piped into a natural spring from nearby, then trickled down to another spring river.

The site of the crystal-clear pond was breathtaking, as David had never seen such a clear pond before. Lilly was the first to jump off her horse and walked the horse to the water's edge to drink. Everyone followed suit and when the horses had their fill they walked them over under a big old oak tree, which had a post to tie the horses down. When they were done with the horses, Lilly ran towards the pond and started to take her clothes off, scaring both John and David. They were both relieved to see that she had a bikini on under.

Stephanie looked over at the boys and said, “Did you think that she had nothing on?” Both John and David shook their heads, but Stephanie laughed. If their faces could get any redder, they would have burst.

“I’m only kidding,” said Stephanie. Lilly jumped in the water and called on the rest of them to come in, as Stephanie started to take her clothes off, as did John, but David just stood there watching Stephanie. She also had a bikini on, looking up at David. She smiled, then jumped in the pond, as did John.

“So, are you coming in or are you chicken?” asked Lilly as Stephanie splashed her for trying to embarrass her date.

“No, I’m not chicken.” He took off his shoes then his shirt. When he pulled off his shorts, he had on a small blue speedo suit, which both girls opened their eyes since only race swimmers wore bathing suits like that, but in England that was what was worn. Both Stephanie and Lilly looked at each other. Stephanie smiled and said, “He wears it well.” David ran and dove into the pond.

They played chicken and raced in the pond, having a ball for over an hour, then Lilly grabbed John and went swimming to the opposite side of the pond. David and Stephanie went closer to the shore and were laying with their hands holding them above the water just talking when they finally got closer and began to kiss. They both felt such a feeling inside that neither had ever felt before. The feeling that they were right for each other.

A whistle from the other side of the pond broke the stare that David and Stephanie had on each other. “What time did Eleanor say that you had to be back?” yelled Lilly.

“Three o’clock,” yelled David back as Lilly and John started to swim back towards David and Stephanie. Lilly was clearly trying to race John. John noticed and picked up his pace, but Lilly started a strong kick and beat him to where David and Stephanie had been waiting.

“Not bad for a girl,” said Lilly as she was trying to catch her breath and smiled at Stephanie. Lilly walked over to a bunch of bushes, reaching in. A door opened and she walked in what looked like a small shed. She came out in seconds with four big beach

towels. She shut the door and if you hadn't seen her open it, you would have never guessed that the shed had been there. "My dad had it put there years ago," said Stephanie, "and my mom planted the plants that surround the shed."

"That's cool," said John as they put their clothes back on and mounted their horses. Lilly led them on a different way than when they first came. "Where are we going?" asked Stephanie.

Lilly looked back and said, "We have plenty of time," as she wanted to show them one of her favorite parts of her ranch. After a good fifteen-minute walk on horseback, they arrived at a cluster of oak trees that were enormous. Slowly the horses walked under the trees and as they looked up in the canopy of the trees. David could not believe his eyes.

There was the most amazing tree house at the center tree in the cluster, with smaller ones on the three other oaks. They were all connected by ropes and planks that made a bridge. Without a hesitation, David, and John both jumped off their horses. Lilly and Stephanie laughed as the boys were asking, "how can we get up to the tree house?" Lilly told them that first they needed to tie the horses up and then she would show them how to get up in the tree house. David and John tied their horses and then tied the girls' horses as they both stood there waiting for Lilly.

Lilly walked around the back of the main tree as everyone followed and grabbed a string that was tied on the side of the tree with a hook. She pulled the string and jumped back as a rope ladder fell from the main tree house. David walked up to the rope ladder and began climbing with John immediately following him. Stephanie and Lilly watched them until they got in the tree house twenty-five feet up.

Looking down, David called to the girls and asked if they were coming up as John went walking across the rope bridge to the other tree. "No," said Stephanie, "you both can go ahead and explore, we have spent a lot of time in the tree house over the years." John and David did just that, spending a good thirty minutes walking around from tree house to tree house. Finally, they decided to climb down the rope ladder.

The girls were sitting on the bottom of the main tree as the boys approached. “That was the coolest tree house in the world,” said John as David agreed.

“When did you have it built?” asked David.

“My father built it for us about twelve years ago, and every year the same company that built it comes out and checks the structure and even adds new things every couple of years. The tree houses are meant to move with the natural growth of the trees.”

Stephanie looked at her watch and said it was about time for them to get back. They all mounted their horses. Walking the horses as they headed back to the main house, David couldn’t wait to tell the roses and Eleanor about the tree house. As they approached the main house, they could see that all the roses were being put in the back of the flat bed truck for their trip to their new room and closed in barn.

Chapter VII

“Eleanor,” called out David as he dismounted the horse, handing the reins to John and ran over towards her. “You said three o’clock. It is only two thirty. Why did you start so early?”

“Just loading them,” said Eleanor, “that’s all. I really didn’t think you would mind.”

“I don’t,” said David, “I’m just glad to know that you aren’t mad at me. Eleanor, they have the most incredible tree house in the world, and I can’t wait to tell the roses.”

Eleanor looked at John and then at David, with her eyes wide open, as something spooked the horse. The horse that John was on turned at the right time, as Eleanor reached in to ask David. “John doesn’t know about the roses, does John?”

“Not at all, Eleanor,” said David in a low voice, as Lilly said, “I’m going to take the horses back and can you wait for us before taking the roses to their new place?”

“Of course, we will wait,” said Eleanor, “but is John going to be joining us?”

“Oh no, he has to be getting back home.” John shook his head in agreement.

They pulled away on the horses as Eleanor looked at David and said, “You need to be more careful.” David apologized as Mabel came walking over with a fresh batch of peanut butter cookies. Cindy took one since she was hooked as she grabbed another, saying how incredibly delicious they were. David and Eleanor also took a couple as Laurence walked out of the house with a couple in his hand and a mouth full.

“So, what do you think?” asked Laurence as he walked over to his sister Cindy.

“Just as you said, delicious.”

“Good, now are we going to take the roses or are we going to stand here all day?” asked Laurence.

“We are waiting for Lilly and Stephanie to come back from putting the horses back in the stables.”

“In that case,” said Laurence, as he grabbed two more cookies and shoved another in his mouth, as everyone laughed.

“Sophia,” said Cindy as she noticed her walking towards them, “can I please have a little talk with you?”

“Yes, of course,” answered Sophia, as everyone went and sat on the porch, leaving the roses on the back of the flat bed truck, taking in the sunlight. “I need you to do me a favor,” said Cindy as she looked at Sophia. “When you pull out of your place, please be careful. The grey rocks that we use for our driveway shoot up if you take off too fast in your car.”

“I’m sorry. I was just in a hurry,” said Sophia.

“Well, I hope everything is alright,” asked Cindy.

“Everything is just fine. I just needed to get a few things from town, since the package that I have received from David Austin had a list of things that I would need in order to get new samples of the roses. He also sent me a new serum that will help the roses’ immune systems to get stronger.”

“Good,” said Eleanor “that is something I was hoping David Austin would be able to make their immune system stronger.”

“I will begin giving the roses their shots tomorrow morning,” said Sophia. “David Austin believes that in a couple of weeks we should see the roses getting much stronger.”

“Heck, I think they already look pretty strong,” said David, “but if David Austin thinks he could make them better then who am I to say different.” Just then Amanda came driving the golf cart with Lilly and Stephanie. “I picked up to hitch hikers,” said Amanda as they approached the front steps.

“Good,” said Laurence, “let’s get this show on the road.” “Johnny D,” called out Eleanor, “where are you,” as everyone

looked around. “Over here,” said a voice coming from the truck as everyone saw Johnny D come to life in the front seat of the truck. “Good let’s go,” said Eleanor as Cindy got in the golf cart with Lilly, Amanda, and Stephanie. Lawrence drove the truck with everyone else and followed behind the golf cart as David sat in the back on the bed of the truck with the roses.

Arriving at the efficiency, everyone began to take the roses out of the truck and placed them all over in the wide-open room. They came to life excited about their new place. David went around opening the windows, letting the light in the room. All the roses were commenting at the same time how nice it looked from the inside and Doctor Montgomery saying how cramped it looked.

Amanda, who had walked to the stables, came walking in the front door and said that she had a flatbed cart on wheels to take the roses to the stables. Again, everyone picked up the roses and placed them on the flatbed cart as David pushed it towards the stables. Entering through the big doors, all the roses were in awe of the beauty of the stables, but again Doctor Montgomery complained about the smell of horses. Fruelin Goldy looked over at Dr. Montgomery and said, “Would you like to be taken back to the basement by yourself?”

That quieted Dr. Montgomery for a while. David went around placing the roses in different areas as Johnny D said, “I will place them anywhere they want to be placed when everyone left them alone.” Sophia asked, “Can I go ahead and administer the new medicine that David Austin had sent to better their immune system?” Everyone agreed as Eleanor asked Sophia, “Can I assist you in administering the shots?” Sophia agreed, as everyone else left the stables and went on to the main house.

Eleanor and Sophia began with Dr. Montgomery as they injected a quarter of the fluid into him and then administered the same amount to the rest of the roses, leaving the twins for last. After they administered the fluid to the twins, they both began to act erratic, speaking each separately, which for the twins was something that they never did.

“Oh look,” said Dr. Montgomery.

“They are instantly cured, or this serum will be the death of us,” said Katuska.

Everyone looked over to where she sat in her pot as her leaves and petals began to shake out of control. Eleanor looked over at Sophia and said, “Is this supposed to be a normal reaction? It did seem that you gave her a little more than the rest.”

“Just a drop more,” said Sophia, “which was part of the experiment that David Austin had asked me to do. With all experiments there are different reactions, and they will all have some form of reaction until the serum works its way through their system.”

Dr. Montgomery started to feel a little weak and dizzy as did Lizzy B, Christopher, and Nani. Eleanor asked Sophia, “Are you sure that this is what is supposed to be going on?” Each one of the roses began to go dormant. Even Johnny D who came to life also went dormant. “Don’t worry,” said Sophia “they will all be fine. Their systems are just getting used to the serum and like I said, they will all react differently, but in the long run, it will make them stronger.” Eleanor just looked at Sophia for what seemed like minutes, as Sophia looked back and said, “Don’t worry. Mr. Austin knows what he is doing.”

Eleanor shook her head and said, “I hope you’re right, but even humans have side effects with some medications. I just hope that my roses will be alright.”

“Don’t worry,” said Sophia, “they will be fine. I think we should let them all rest.” They headed out the stable doors, with Eleanor looking back one more time. Eleanor headed back to the main house as Sophia said that she needed to go back into town for a while. Arriving at the main house Eleanor went looking for David as she entered, hearing voices in the back room.

“David,” called out Eleanor, as she walked into the room. Everyone was sitting around watching television and conversing about going out around town that evening. Eleanor sat down and told everyone what had happened in the stables with the roses. No one said a word when she was done, what seemed like minutes. “I know that medication for humans,” said Mabel, “can change the

way that some people feel and even cause other problems, but at the same time I also know that it can take a while to get used to some medications.”

“Yes,” said Lawrence, “and remember that we are dealing with roses who come to life, which is not something that there is much research. I do know one thing, that David Austin would not do anything to hurt the roses.” Everyone agreed and the conversation went back to planning on going out that night on the town. Eleanor said that she would not be going, because she would be spending the night with her roses. David looked at Eleanor and said, “I will help you bring the roses to the efficiency if you need me.”

Amanda, who was not into going out on the town, said, “I would be more than happy to help you, that way David can enjoy his night.”

Eleanor and Amanda stood up and walked out of the room as everyone else finished off their plans on where they were going that night. Arriving at the stables, all the roses were still dormant. Eleanor and Amanda loaded the flatbed cart with the roses and then walked them over to the efficiency. They put all the roses on one side of the large room and both girls sat down and started to watch the television. A couple of hours went by, and Cindy came driving up on the golf cart with their dinner in a basket and some drinks.

Both girls stood and sat down at the two seats that were around the small table and ate their food. Cindy walked over and stared at the roses, who were all still in the dormant stage. “How long do you think that they are going to be in this dormant stage?” asked Cindy.

“You never know,” answered Eleanor, “but I am going to call Mr. Austin in the morning when we get up, that is, if the roses are still in their present state.”

“I don’t blame you,” said Cindy. “Now are you both going to be staying here tonight?”

“Can I?” asked Amanda as she looked at Eleanor.

“Of course, you can,” said Eleanor as Cindy agreed that she could stay.

“Good, I will go back to the house with you and get my sleeping bag and a change of clothes.”

“Finish eating,” said Cindy, “I have plenty of time to get ready for our little outing tonight.” When Amanda was done, they left Eleanor alone with the roses as she again began watching the television.

About twenty minutes went by when a knock came to the door and Sophia stood there asking, “How are the roses doing?” Eleanor asked her to come in. As Sophia entered, she noticed that all the roses were still dormant. “Have any of them come out of there dormant state?” asked Sophia.

“Not since you saw them last,” said Eleanor.

“Mr. Austin said that there was a good possibility that they would go dormant and that would be actually a good thing,” said Sophia, “so their systems could strengthen their immune systems.”

“I see,” said Eleanor, “by them not burning any energy, it would be helping their immune system to get stronger.”

Sophia walked over and put down a small duffel bag that she had brought in with her. Reaching into the bag, she pulled out several plastic bags. Reaching in a side zipper, she pulled out a black marker and went to the first rose, which was Johnny D, and pulled a leaf from the long stem. Sophia then wrote Johnny D on the outside of the plastic bag after putting the leaf in the bag, then sealing it.

She then did the same with the second rose, which was Katuska. Eleanor walked over and asked, “Why are you pulling a leaf from each one of the roses?”

“Mr. Austin wanted a sample after a couple of hours of the roses having been given the immune system enhancer. I am going to be sending them to Mr. Austin by overnight mail so that he could see how their immune systems have either changed for the better or worse.”

“Will he be contacting you by phone when he finds out what his conclusion is?” asked Eleanor.

“Yes,” said Sophia, “he is supposed to be calling me in the next few days.”

“Would you mind if I had a bit of a talk with him also when he calls?”

“Not at all,” said Sophia, as she began to finish putting the last couple of leaflets in their own plastic bags with the names on the bags.

Amanda walked in as Sophia was putting the plastic baggies in the duffel bag. “Hi, Sophia,” said Amanda, “are you going to be going out with the rest of the group tonight? My mom said that you could drive the golf cart over to the house if you are going out with them at seven thirty and that there was a plate in the frig that you could warm up in the microwave if you hadn’t eaten yet.”

“Thank you,” said Sophia, “but I had something to eat in town, and I will be going out with them, but did Cindy tell you where we would be going?”

“Yes,” said Amanda, “I have a list of numbers and times that they would probably be at each place, that is, if they don’t stay at the same place all night.” David insisted of being called if the roses woke up, which brought a smile to Eleanor’s face, making her happy to know that David was still concerned with the wellbeing of their roses.

Sophia said her goodbyes and reminded them to call if the roses do get out of their dormant state. Both girls promised as Sophia shut the door and headed for her apartment on the other side of the stables on the golf cart. Eleanor and Amanda began to watch the television, as Amanda pulled out a bag of kettle corn that Cindy had made for them for their night of watching television and the roses.

Chapter VIII

Everyone was ready by seven fifteen and sitting on the porch as Sophia came driving up on the golf cart. Cindy got up and started walking over to their five-car garage. Everyone heard a motor start up as she drove up in front of the house in a custom high-top van. Laurence opened the front door for Mabel as David opened the back door for the girls. All three girls sat in the back long chair as David sat in the middle bucket seat, with Lawrence in the other seat.

Cindy pulled out without a word and headed towards town. They were going to one of the new hot spots in town called Rondo's, which was owned by a half-American, half-Cuban young man of thirty years old and married with three kids. Cindy told them that his menu had a silhouette of his body, and when he was introduced, there was no doubt that he was Rondo.

There was a table for seven reserved in the left-hand corner of the bar and grille. When they entered, a door man/bouncer named Glen was there to greet them and gave a kiss on the cheek to Cindy when they entered and walked them over to their table. The place was full of a mix of people, from younger adults to many in their thirties and forty's. Laurence and Mabel were probably the oldest in the place, but their classy appearance had many looking over towards their table. Not to mention just about everyone knew Cindy and Lilly.

There was a band playing everything that was new in the seventies, as they enjoyed the food, which had a Spanish twist to many of the meals. Rondo, the owner of the place, came over and was introduced to the other guests by Cindy, as the band called

him up to sing a song. He was amazing, with a soulful sound that had many dancing, as he sang many songs. David danced with the girls repeatedly, with Laurence and Mabel joining them several times.

As the night continued, Cindy asked Rondo to use his phone in his office to check on Amanda and Eleanor. Amanda answered the phone saying that the roses were still dormant and that they were fine, just watching the television. When Cindy came back, she couldn't believe that Gerald Knots was at their table. As she approached, she scared him from behind and of course Gerald played it to its fullest. Everyone laughed as Gerald's eyes bulged almost out of his head. Stephanie got a little scared, holding tightly and grabbing David.

"You old goat," said Cindy, "What are you doing out so late, and where is Helen?"

"Well, my dear," said Gerald, "I have eyes and ears everywhere in this little town of mine. I had a call that one of my dearest friends' wives was out dancing up a storm and since I was the last one out of the office and my dear Helen has a reading club meeting till twelve. Well, I thought maybe I should take this time to make sure that my dear friend's wife was not getting herself in any trouble."

Cindy looked at him and laughed and said, "I really think you could have come up with a better one, my dear old friend." Gerald looked at her and popped his eyes out, and everyone laughed. "Where is Missy Eleanor," asked Gerald, looking at everyone at the table. "She stayed at home with Amanda, since she didn't feel too good," said Mabel.

"Oh," said Gerald, "I may have to go back out to the ranch, Cynthia, since rumor has it that there are strange things going on at the ranch, and I know my dear friend Angelo is not around."

"You old goat, if I get a little bird to even mention an iota of you or one of your employees sneaking around my ranch, I will stop donating to those wonderful causes that you have so often asked me and my husband to donate. Now I do think that our donations have made quite a few of your charities something for

you to brag about, with your fancy high society friends. Now Gerald, would we like to talk about something else and forget about this whole conversation?"

"Already done, my dear Cynthia, just like I said at the start, just a rumor, nothing serious. Now, what does a man have to do to get another drink around here?"

Rondo was standing behind Gerald and said, "Just ask and your drink will come." Gerald jumped because Rondo said it so fast, scaring Gerald, causing all present to laugh.

The rest of the night they drank and danced till just after one in the morning, escorting Gerald to a taxi, as Laurence drove home since everyone else was a little tipsy. Driving down the main road that led to the house, Laurence noticed a car parked within view of the main entrance to the ranch, with two men in the car. Laurence continued towards the back area of the ranch, where he noticed another car parked also with two men in the car. Everyone except Mabel was sleeping in the car so Laurence drove further down the road and went around the entire property. Within half an hour he was back at the front gate, this time driving in as the guard at the gate waved and allowed them in.

Laurence first stopped at the house next to the stable and got out of the van, handing a small twenty-five caliber pistol to Mabel. He walked quickly to the door of the efficiency where the roses were kept with Eleanor and Amanda. Using the skeleton key that Cindy had given him when he first arrived at the ranch, Laurence quickly opened the door. Amanda was sleeping on the floor and Eleanor was reaching for her gun when Laurence said, "It's me, Eleanor."

"What's wrong?" asked Eleanor, "Why didn't you knock on the door?"

"Nothing's wrong, Eleanor, I just had a bad feeling, that's all. Go back to sleep. I just wanted to make sure that you were fine."

"Are you sure?" asked Eleanor.

"Yes," said Laurence as Eleanor looked at her roses and went back to bed. Looking down, she noticed that Amanda didn't even flinch and was still fast asleep. Walking out of the efficiency,

Laurence woke Sophia and helped her in her apartment with the help from Mabel, who assisted in putting Sophia to bed.

Cindy awoke as they pulled into the main house, as did everyone else in the van. Everyone headed to their rooms with Stephanie giving David a kiss on the cheek before she went up, then she grabbed a hold of Lilly's arm and headed up the stairs and to their room.

Laurence and Mabel went back to the kitchen after they helped Cindy into bed, Lawrence giving his sister a kiss on the cheek. Mabel pulled out a couple of peanut butter cookies that she had made earlier in the day and two glasses of milk. They sat there and ate a couple of the cookies without saying a word. When they were done, Mabel looked at Laurence, who she could see was in deep thought.

"Are you going to go to bed, or do you want to talk for a while?"

"No," said Lawrence, "you go ahead. I need to do a little thinking for a while."

"Good night," said Mabel as she walked over, kissing him on the cheek. Laurence watched Mabel walk away then headed for Angelos's office, and he called Phillip. The phone rang several rings when finally, he heard a female's voice.

"Hello," asked Laurence, "is this Phillip Juste's room?"

"Yes," said the voice on the other side, "but he has left out of town for a couple of weeks."

"Thank you," said Laurence and hung up the phone.

Good, thought Laurence, that means that Phillip will be arriving in the morning. Laurence walked outside and started the van and drove over to the big barn halfway through the ranch, where he would find what he was looking for. Opening the doors, he looked over to the right where the day before he noticed some rope and a bundle of two-foot spikes. Grabbing a hammer that was on the working table next to the spikes, Laurence headed back into the van and headed for the stables.

Laurence put a stake in the ground that surrounded the two windows and the front door to the efficiency, then he tied the rope

a half turn on each stake in the ground. He brought both ends to where the van sat. Cracking open the window, he passed the strings threw, then wrapped them loosely around his left hand. If anyone would come near the efficiency, they would trigger the line and Laurence would attack.

Sitting there for a couple of hours, Laurence fell asleep, waking up when Eleanor came to the van door, noticing that Laurence was in the car. She startled Laurence and before he reached for his gun, he noticed that it was Eleanor. "What are you doing?" asked Eleanor as she was looking around the front of the efficiency and seeing all the wooden stakes that were planted in the ground.

"I was just trying to make sure that you and the roses would be safe for the night. I know I am getting old," said Laurence, "and there was a time when I could stay up for days."

"Are the roses still dormant?" asked Laurence, as he got out of the van and began pulling the stakes out of the ground. He then threw the stakes up against the side wall of the efficiency. Then he noticed Sophia walking over with a duffel bag in her hand.

"Eleanor," asked Sophia, "are the roses still in their dormant state?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, "what is in the bag?"

"Oh, Mr. Austin asked that I administer more serum to the roses for at least three consecutive days. Trust me," said Sophia, "Mr. Austin knows what he is doing." She led herself into the efficiency. Laurence and Eleanor followed her as Amanda had already left to take care of her daily duties on the ranch. Laurence wondered how Amanda was able to walk out in the dark without triggering the rope.

Sophia started to put the serum on the small two-person table and filled the first vial completely. Eleanor walked over to Sophia and asked, "Can we wait for the roses to get out of their dormant state? That way we can be sure that they are not being harmed."

"Mr. Austin was very specific about not stopping the shots of serum for the first three days." Eleanor looked at Laurence for some help, but he just walked over to her and said, "Mr. Austin

knows more than anyone else.” Eleanor finally agreed and Sophia gave another dose of serum to every one of the roses.

When Sophia was done with the shots, she said, “I need to go into town and mail out the leaves that I took from each rose the day before, and overnight them to Mr. Austin.”

Laurence asked Eleanor to go with him to the main house and take a shower and have breakfast with the rest of the group. Eleanor at first didn’t want to leave the roses alone, but Laurence convinced her by saying that Phillip would be arriving sometime in the morning.

They went back to the main house, locking the door to the efficiency. When they arrived at the main house, both Laurence and Eleanor went to shower and change. Walking down the steps when they were done, they heard a commotion coming from downstairs. Both met at the staircase, hurrying to see what was going on and walking towards the front of the house. They could see that Phillip had arrived. Cindy and Mabel were helping prepare a big breakfast with the kitchen help.

Eleanor walked up to Phillip, who was wearing their signature small black trimmed hat. “My dear Eleanor, how are you?” said Phillip as he put his hand out, but Eleanor gave him a hug. “Thank you,” said Phillip. “I really needed that.”

“So did I,” said Eleanor as David walked in the room.

“Phillip,” said David, walking over and giving him a firm handshake. Laurence was last, giving his dear friend a strong, manly hug.

“We have much to discuss,” said Laurence as he gestured with his right arm towards the living room.

They spent a good twenty minutes telling Phillip everything that had been going on and including the two men that Laurence saw in the car in the front of the ranch and the ones at the back entrance. Stephanie and Lilly walked in the room and were introduced to Phillip as he began to explain where they were with trying to keep an eye on Chantaliza Duvalier.

He began to tell them that she was in Switzerland and was hiding in her mansion, with a lot of work being done in an

underground bunker that she was working on, and in Switzerland they couldn't do anything to her. "That is," said Phillip, "until she tries to strike again. We have someone who is working on the inside who will keep us informed with any move that she tries, but Madame is being extremely careful with who she tells of her plans. Everyone who is working for her is under extreme alert, and at any moment they may be called on for whatever she may need." The front door opened with Sophia entering the main house, and she walked into the living room as Laurence introduced her to Phillip. Phillip walked over and shook her hand, staring at her face as everyone noticed the stare.

"Is everything alright?" asked Laurence as everyone else was about to ask the same question.

"Yes," said Phillip, "just that you remind me of someone, and I just can't remember who or from where."

"Don't mind Phillip," said Laurence, "he remembers faces and stores them in his head, and if there is any similarity between a person, he meets from someone he once knew, his mind will register a similarity. Believe me when I tell you, it has helped us many times in the past." Just then Cindy walked into the room saying that brunch was being served in the kitchen. "Good," said Laurence, "I am starving."

At brunch there was much conversation about their night out the night before and their time with Gerald Knots, who Cindy said would be crazy to snoop around. When they were done, Mabel brought in a tray of peanut butter cookies and everyone ate at least two, with Phillip and Laurence eating four apiece.

CHAPTER IX

A noise went on behind David's chair as if something had fallen, causing Laurence and Phillip to reach in their jackets but not pulling out their weapons as they noticed Johnny D coming to life but laying on the ground. Cindy stood and walked into the kitchen, sending her help home for the day. All three women left out the back door immediately. Everyone in the dining area was surrounding Johnny D, who was still on the floor, when Cindy walked into the room.

"What's wrong?" said Eleanor, who was the closest to Johnny D with David on the opposite side.

"Whatever it is that Mr. Austin gave us is changing our immune systems, and all of the roses are reacting in very strange ways," said Johnny D in a slurry voice as if he were drunk or on medication.

"Are the rest of the roses up?" asked Eleanor, as Johnny D turned his head looking at Eleanor and he got a little loud, really sounding as if he were drunk.

"I said that they were acting different, didn't I?" He turned his head, looking at David with a face as if what was wrong with Eleanor.

Eleanor got up and ran out the front door with Sophia right on her tail. They jumped on one of the golf carts and were off towards the efficiency. Laurence picked up Johnny D and everyone headed out the front door and jumped into the van headed for the efficiency. They arrived and the door to the efficiency was wide

open with a lot of commotion going on inside. As Laurence was about to walk in the door, Lyle came flying out the front door with the twins holding onto the back of his pot laughing and screaming that they were flying.

Lyle started to fly around the building three times, then on his last trip around he said in a slur, “We’re going to crash,” as the twins said at the same time, “Bombs away,” and they let go of Lyle. Lyle went spinning around as David dove, saving the twins from hitting the ground. Phillip jumped up, catching Lyle but making him fall backwards onto his behind. Causing the twins and Lyle to laugh hysterically. Everyone present had no idea what was going on as a wind started to come from inside the house and a stream of fire, making everyone move back quickly from the front door.

Two lightning bolts came through the door, almost hitting the top of the stables, as everyone jumped even further back. After the lightning bolt, David ran in screaming, “Stop this madness.” Laurence and Phillip followed him in, and the minute they entered, the static electricity in the room had everyone’s hair standing straight up in the air. “Eleanor,” called out David as smoke in the room made it hard to see.

Katiuska yelled to Elizabeth, “Blow the smoke out.” In seconds the room was cleared.

Eleanor and Sophia were both at the right corner bent down, holding each other. Cindy and the girls walked in, as David looked over at Dr. Montgomery, who was laughing, and screamed, “What in the world is going on?” Everyone went quiet; a pin drop would have been heard as a siren, that’s how quiet it was in the efficiency.

Eleanor stood up and went walking towards David as David held her and asked, “Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine,” said Eleanor. David looked over at Sophia, who also said that she was fine.

“Now,” said David, “can someone explain to me what in the world was that all about.”

Katuska looked around the room and said, “We are having reactions to the chemicals in the shots that Sophia has been given to us.”

“There is something wrong with the serum,” said Flanigan, “it doesn’t feel right.”

“I believe that maybe there was a problem in the transportation. Maybe it was exposed to some heat, which changed the complexity of the serum,” said Dr. Montgomery.

“I know that Mr. Austin did explain that there would be different reactions,” said Sophia, “but I don’t think he thought that the roses would react the way they have so far. I will have to call him to see what he thinks about their reaction.”

“Lizzy B,” said Eleanor, as she looked at all of the roses, “are we in danger from the powers that all of you possess?”

“No,” said Lizzy B, “we just had to let out a little steam. I don’t think I feel the same as I did a little while ago.” All the roses agreed as Johnny D looked like if he had gained his strength back.

Eleanor looked around the room as everyone stood there, looking around at all the roses. “What do you think?” Laurence and Phillip asked Eleanor.

“I don’t know what to think but I do know that if they lose it like they just did, they can be harmful to themselves and anyone around them.”

“Mr. Austin did say that they needed to have at least three days of the serum before stopping,” said Sophia, “and I have witnessed plants take an incredible turn around when a serum takes its full potential.”

No one said a word as everyone was in deep thought, when finally, Phillip spoke. “I believe that if you do give them one more dose, it should be done and they should be left alone for at least twenty-four hours just in case, for everyone’s safety, that is.”

Adoni and Amadeus both looked back and forth quickly and said, “We did nothing wrong except going for a ride with Lyle, and it was cool. Can we do it again?” Everyone in the room laughed, even Dr. Montgomery.

Fruelin Goldy looked around the room and noticed that Sophia was gone and asked, "Where is Sophia?" Everyone looked around and no one even noticed her leave.

"She probably went to call Mr. Austin," said Cindy.

"Good," said Eleanor, "I would like to talk to him also." Eleanor walked out of the room and towards Sophia's apartment. Just before she got around the stables, she heard Sophia's car start and before she made it around the wall, Sophia was off towards the gate.

Walking back quickly to the efficiency, everyone was still standing in the same spots. "Did you speak to Mr. Austin?" asked David as Eleanor walked in.

"No, I didn't, and Sophia left in her car, in a bit of a hurry," said Eleanor.

"Maybe she spoke to Mr. Austin, and he told her what she needed to make it easier on the roses," said David.

"I don't know," said Katuska, "there is something about Sophia that I don't understand, but I get a feeling like she is not being truthful about certain things."

"We like her," said the twins, as did Christopher, saying, "She works for Mr. Austin and he really cares, more than anyone we've ever been with, except Eleanor." The roses started to argue between themselves on what each one thought of Sophia. Laurence had enough after listening for a while. "That's enough, my crazy friends." George stretched himself, getting behind Lady Hilly. "George and Leo," said Laurence, "you don't have to fear me. I am your friend."

"Leo. Who is Leo?" asked George as all the roses started asking Lawrence who is Leo. Johnny D went invisible as Eleanor noticed then calling out his name. "Johnny D, come back now." Johnny D reappeared on his way out of the front door. "Come back in here," asked Eleanor. "Do you know something that you need to explain to the roses?" asked Eleanor.

"No," said Johnny D as Katuska looked at Johnny D and said, "He is hiding something."

“Speak your mind,” said Fruelin Goldy, “we are all family here.” Dr. Montgomery looked around the room, and Fruelin Goldy gave him a hard look, then said, “Don’t even say a word.”

Not a word was spoken as everyone waited to see what Johnny D had to say.

“I think I know who Leo was,” said Johnny D as he looked straight at George. George looked behind himself to see if there was anyone else there. The twins also looked to see where Johnny D was looking and said, “Is there someone behind George? Because I don’t see anyone, do you, George?” Fruelin Goldy gave the twins a hard stare and they moved their stems lower to their pots.

“Go ahead, Johnny D,” said Eleanor.

Johnny D looked from side to side. “George, you used to have a twin like Adoni and Amadeus.”

“No, he didn’t,” said the twins. “George is alone, he has no twin. We are the only twins.”

“No,” said Johnny D, “I swear he was a twin, and he was your best friend, I swear. You have all forgotten him, but I didn’t.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?” asked Lizzy B.

“When we went dormant last time, no one mentioned him, so I tried to say something, but everyone looked at me like I was crazy. Flanagan knows, we spoke about it when you were all dormant,” said Johnny D.

Everyone, including the roses, looked at Flanagan. “I believe he is telling the truth. I don’t remember him but if you look at George’s side you can see under the first leaf that there was another full-length stem that came out from that spot.”

George stretched himself then turned back to his pot as everyone watched. George touched his stem, lifting his first leaf, and the minute he saw the spot where another stem could have been, George looked up and asked, “What happened to my brother?”

No one said a word until Katuska looked over at Fruelin Goldy then at Dr. Montgomery. “Can we be left alone? By tomorrow morning we will be back to normal,” said Katuska.

Johnny D headed out the door as Katuska raised her voice and said, "That means you too, Johnny D."

"Oh, you see," said Johnny D, "I already know the story, so I really don't have to be here to hear it again."

"That's why you do have to be here," said Eleanor. "They need you to tell what you know." Johnny D walked back in with his head down and stood next to the roses.

Everyone said their goodbyes as Eleanor was the last to leave, walking over to George and saying, "Your twin brother Leo really loved you more than life itself. He died so that he wouldn't take you with him." Eleanor gave every rose a kiss on the cheek and said, "If for any reason you need me, send Johnny D. I will be at the main house."

Eleanor told them to lock the door from the inside as she shut the door. She waited until she heard Johnny D turn the lock. Everyone was waiting for her as she rode in the golf cart with Cindy, Lilly and Stephanie back to the main house. Upon arrival, the phone rang in the main house and Cindy ran quickly to answer it. It was a bad connection, but she was sure that it was Mr. Austin on the other line.

Cindy called Eleanor, saying that Mr. Austin was on the phone but that it was a bad connection as she handed Eleanor the phone. "Hello," said Eleanor.

"Hi, my dear, said the person on the other side." The static was hard to distinguish the voice on the other side, but it did sound like Mr. Austin. They spoke on the phone for a couple of minutes. When Eleanor got off the phone, everyone was in the living room talking about what had happened earlier in the day. Stephanie and Lilly were never really told of the true powers that all the roses possessed.

Eleanor walked in and everyone went quiet. "What did he say?" asked David as everyone listened intently.

"He said to forgive him. He never thought that the roses would react the way they have, but he was almost positive that if they get administered one more shot that their systems should get stronger and that their reactions to the serum will cease."

“That sure does make it a lot easier,” said David, “I was scared to death when I saw the fire come out of the efficiency door.”

“Now we can all rest a little easier,” said Cindy as everyone agreed.

Chapter X



*If you enjoyed what you have read and want more, please go to **closetbooks.com** and purchase our novel. Thank you. We have many more novels that will be released in the very near future.*