Settling The Clan
by hummerhouse

Summary

Disclaimer: The TMNT are not mine. The original female character, Lavinia Daniel aka Hamato and other original characters contained in this work of fiction are mine. No money being made.
Ongoing Word Count: 223,537
Overall fic Rating: NC-17
Overall fic Warnings/Kinks: TCest, polyamory OC/Turtles, language, violence, sexual kinks, adult situations, angst, F/M, F/M/M, multiples, attempted rape, BDSM, alternate universe, torture, death (no main character!)
~~This is Book 2 of a continuing TMNT saga. Book 1 may be found in its entirety by clicking this link = http://archiveofourown.org/works/3785722

!!~Winner in the Universal TMNT Fanfiction Competition 2016: (Erotica Ballot) Hottest Group 2nd Place and (General Ballot) Most Loveable OC~!!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Lavinia stared out her window at the cold rain mixed with sleet. It was dark outside; the day was done, her work finished, and there was nothing left for her to hide behind. Now the pain flowed in, overwhelming her as it seeped into every part of her being, leaving her cold and shivering.

She could heal anything except this; her own heart.

Did they miss her? Feel pain at her absence? She hoped they had cared for her that much. They had each other to help with their feelings; they had family. Lav had what she’d always had – herself; all alone and needing to make that be enough again.

Somehow she would find a box within herself where her feelings could go and she would lock them inside. Lav had dealt with the loss of her family this way before. She would do it this way again. That and a move would keep her sane. Moving always helped; to get away from familiar sights, away from her desires.

She glanced at the case file on the table belonging to a five year old girl with terminal cancer. Her frantic parents would bring the girl to Lav’s hospital tomorrow. It was their last hope.

Lav would heal her. That’s all she could do now, hold on to those victories and get through each day.

It was late at night like this when things got to her. She would suddenly wonder what they were doing and her mind would follow old paths. Raph would be out with Casey, or home punching his bag. Mikey in front of the televisions, Donny in his lab, Splinter meditating, and Leo….

Lav blinked back tears again, willing them and her feelings into a corner recess. She had so wanted to be part of a family again, to be a part of her intended family. But it hadn’t worked out for her. In the end it really hadn’t mattered what she wanted.

In the end the promises hadn’t mattered either. In the end it was her clan leader, her Master, who had let her fate be decided by fear. The fear of what could happen to her because of what she was.

Her gift, her curse; by day she reveled in it, the joy it brought as she healed the sick and dying children. At night she hated it, because that was when she was left cold and shivering.

Touching her forehead to the cold glass, Lav let some of the tears escape. They blended with the shadows of the rain reflected onto her skin and all of them ran slowly down her cheeks.

Raph crouched low on the parapet of the building closest to Lav’s apartment. The Foot had ceased to watch her from the rooftops and it required less stealth for him to spy on Lavinia now than in the past two months.

At first, he had tried to avoid coming here at all. He was sure their decision was right and he used every bit of his will power to try and forget the expression on her face when they asked her to leave them. It hadn’t been enough.
That’s when Raph had started to question himself and to seriously question what they had chosen to do. He wanted to blame it all on Leo; it was Leo who told them what needed to be done. But he had to share that blame because he didn’t fight for her. He let guilt get in the way of thought; he had grabbed at the offering of his never again having to worry about getting her killed.

But it wasn’t long before he understood how his feelings had gotten in the way of rational thought again and then it was too late. Mikey nearly hated them all, if that was possible. That in itself was a terrifying thing; but then the rest of the brothers were estranged and Raph began to understand they were unraveling.

All because of what they had done to Lavinia. The enormity of it struck him finally and left him hurt and shaken; retching in a sewer tunnel one night after he had escaped the bitterness of the lair. When he was finished, and the pain had subsided a little, he had gone straight to her building.

He needed to look at her.

He needed to know she was safe and whole. He needed to protect her from the world they had thrown her into. And he needed her to tell him not to hurt anymore.

Raph wasn’t going to get that because he knew he couldn’t make contact with Lavinia. The truth of it was clear when he saw his first Foot ninja crouched on a rooftop spying on Lav’s apartment.

The cold fury that brought out was hard to squash, but he had to, because getting rid of that ninja would have given Karai the truth she was seeking. That Lavinia was indeed their mystery woman.

So Raph had bypassed him and others like him until he found his own spot to look into Lav’s apartment. It was semi-dark and he decided maybe she wasn’t home, when he saw the light flick on in her foyer.

Within minutes she crossed in front of the picture window and he got his first glimpse of her in three weeks.

His chest was tight and his stomach curled in on itself. She was so beautiful. He had choked back a sob when she came to the window and looked out, almost directly at him, though he knew she couldn’t possibly see him.

When the moonlight hit her face, he could see her sadness. It washed over him and tears stung his eyes. Raph started to shake and didn’t try to stop the tears. While they soaked his mask and ran over his face he swore he would come every night until he could figure out a way to undo this damage. There had to be a way.

Tonight he had seen the van parked down the street from her building and recognized it as belonging to Karai. She hadn’t given up entirely; but she was loosening her surveillance. No reason to be less cautious. Karai was quite capable of being subtle and this could just be part of an elaborate trap.

Raph saw Lavinia come to stand before the window, as she did quite often. Some nights he didn’t see her at all, but he waited patiently for the light in the foyer to come on so he would know she was home.

On the nights she approached the window, Raph would study her, not giving up his post until she had long gone to her own bed. Tonight he watched her put her head against the glass, and
saw the play of rain shadows on her face, giving her the appearance of crying.

It took a minute before he realized that she was crying.

Don stepped out of his lab and looked around the too silent lair. No televisions and no sign of Michelangelo. He sighed, knowing where his formerly lighthearted brother was.

Mikey had practically moved into Lavinia’s room. He spent hours in there during the day and slept in her bed at night. When he wasn’t in her room, he was either working out or cleaning.

Mikey cleaned with a vengeance. His moods were quicksilver; the wrong word or look could bring down a fury none of them had ever suspected lurked under that shell. He had explained in precise, clipped terms to Raphael one day that he’d be damned if Lav was going to come home to a pigsty.

His orange banded brother would not let go, his pit bull jaws clamped tight on the certainty that a little time and his own tenacity would fix their current situation.

That somehow his rebellion would bring Lavinia back home.

With a deep sigh, Don went into the kitchen and set about brewing a pot of coffee, careful to disturb nothing and leave no mess. Raph was out again; he went out every night and stayed gone into the wee hours. He wasn’t fighting though, at least not all of that time, because Casey often called looking for him.

Raph was worrisome enough when he was predictable. This uncertainty about his disappearances was more than a little frightening. He had started to change within a couple of weeks of Lavinia’s leaving.

Don managed to burn his finger on the pot. He darted for the sink and let the cold water run over the injury, closing his eyes and cursing his inattentiveness. That was happening a lot more also, a side effect of lack of sleep, not eating and just plain worry. He had glanced at himself in the mirror this morning and quickly looked away. His haggard appearance was not pleasant to see.

The throb in his finger dulled by the water, Don carefully poured out a cup of coffee and walked out into the lair proper. Sensei was in his room, probably deep in meditation. He did that more often now; not bothering with his soap operas. Don worried about him too; afraid that something physical was manifesting itself in that old body.

Master Splinter assured him daily that it was merely old age and that his meditation helped more than anything to ease his body and mind. Don knew by the wistful expression on his face that he too, missed Lavinia.

Hearing a sound finally, Don followed it until he was standing in the door of the dojo. Of course it was Leo. He spent almost all his time in here, running through endless katas, or working through imagined or past fights in his mind, while slashing, spinning, stabbing – all his magnificent ninjitsu skills brought to bear on an invisible enemy.

This explained why Mikey was hidden in Lav’s room. Their little brother avoided Leo like the plague these days. Practice was sketchy at best; they all still showed up because it was their duty, and Leo worked them as hard as he could. But Raph was surly, Mikey openly antagonistic and Don uninterested.
If Mikey was working out at the weight bench when Leo came in, Mikey would get up without a word and leave the room. He wouldn’t sit at the same table with his eldest brother and answered direct questions with monosyllables.

This wasn’t a home anymore, Don realized. They were cohabitating from necessity. The reason was plain enough – Lavinia.

Don ran his fingers across his forehead. He could fix almost anything that was broken but he didn’t know how to fix this. He had helped to break it in the first place, but putting it back together would be hard.

It had dawned on Don after about a month that they had royally screwed up. His mind, cleared of divisive fear and panic, resumed its usual logic and clarity of thought. They should never have sent Lavinia away; the action solved nothing, it did not achieve its stated objective.

Somehow they had all, except for Mikey, bought into a faulty premise and let that tear their family to pieces.

Don knew that some of it, for him, was because Leonardo had said it was the right thing to do, and Don believed with his entire being everything Leo said was true. He couldn’t survive without Leo’s calm assurances; his quietly positive authority.

Don sure as shell wasn’t going to put it all on Leo’s shoulders either. Leo hadn’t held back his arsenal when he’d explained to them how he’d come to his decision, so Don knew every bit of the reasoning behind it. Replaying it later in his head, he saw how many flaws and discrepancies there were, but Don was unwilling to acknowledge that Leo had made a mistake.

He was more unwilling to let himself realize what had actually been driving their leader.

Watching Leo work in the dojo, Don understood this was his way of isolating himself from everyone. He only did it when he was beating himself up over something, and it didn’t take a genius to figure out the problem.

Leo was finally coming to grips with his mistake.

Don sipped his coffee. This was step one to putting their family back together. Leo had to be the one to admit the mistake and then begin to remedy the error. Don’s personality wasn’t suited to the task of opening that kind of valve in Leo. Calm and logical discussions were his best traits.

The only one who could possibly pop Leo’s cork was Raphael.

Turning away, Don walked slowly back to his lab, his mind working hard. He and Raph had talked a little, enough so that Don knew that Raph had decided they’d screwed up. If Don could find the right words, he could send Raph after Leo and get the repairs started.

Words were his thing, after all.

Mikey lay on Lavinia’s bed staring up at the ceiling. He hadn’t moved in a couple of hours, too caught up in his frustration to do more than just lie there.

This situation just really couldn’t go on much longer, he decided, for about the thousandth time – today. He had never had to work so damn hard to get his brothers pulled around to his point
of view on anything.

Sitting up finally, he flipped his feet over the edge of the bed and began swinging them, stopping when he realized he was mimicking Lav. What the shell, why shouldn’t he if it made him feel close to her?

Smiling, he let his legs part the air as he contemplated various options. Having a plan always made him feel better. He had finally started talking to Raph and Don a little, though he made sure he wasn’t too friendly. From things that had been said, the hot head was obviously turning towards Mikey’s point of view.

Not that Raphael would admit out loud to Mikey that he’d screwed up big time. Though it would be enjoyable to hear, Mike didn’t need it, he just needed Raph to be on his side.

Pulling Don around was harder. The teacher’s pet was much too timid about getting a failing score from big bro’ and sure as shell had major problems believing teach could be wrong.

Although Mikey was pretty sure that’s exactly what was happening - finally.

The last couple of times Mikey had stated with positive assurance that Lav was coming back, Don hadn’t told him in that sad, patient voice that he should try to move on without her. In fact, Don had kinda looked at him like he was a specimen in a jar and hadn’t said anything.

That was a really good sign, ‘cause it meant Don was thinking hard about something and not just mouthing cheesy platitudes.

Narrowing his blue eyes, Mikey turned his thoughts to Leo. He was still pretty freaking mad at his big brother. Mike knew Leo was all emo over this situation and that was all right and exactly as it should be. Leo and his big selfless decision had made everyone else miserable so there was no reason why he shouldn’t suffer as well.

Mikey was doing his best to make him suffer, too. Leo could handle lots of pain, tons of responsibility and loads of just plain crap, but what he couldn’t stand much of was the lack of physical pleasure.

Leo absolutely needed loving, physical contact in order to feel real. Mikey didn’t know if anyone else in the family had picked up on this unspoken fact, except maybe Lav, but Mikey knew. Mikey had known for a long damn time, even before they had become lovers.

So Mikey was holding out. He almost laughed at that, he sounded just like some chick in one of Master Splinters ‘stories’. My boyfriend is doing me wrong, so I’m holding out. My husband won’t buy me a new car, so I’m holding out. My brother won’t bring our woman back, so I’m holding out.

He stopped swinging his legs and stared at the wall. Yeah, sounded silly all right, but it was working. For good measure, he was holding out on Raph and Don as well. He was pretty sure they were all still going to each other to take care of certain urges, but Mikey was, after all, Mikey.

He had a good idea of what their brothers loved about him and he knew part of it was his eternal optimism and excitement. He was holding that out as well. Mikey did not feel like being joyful when part of the family was missing in action. As far as he was concerned, that’s exactly what his brothers had done to Lav. Pushed her out in the middle of the battle field and just left her standing there.

Just because Leo didn’t want to watch anything bad happen to her. There was probably a
psychological term for that; Mikey just didn’t know what it was. Leo was in deep denial; way too deep to acknowledge that he had a fear of anything.

Leo always told Raph he hated to be called ‘Fearless’, but Mikey suspected he kinda liked owning that title. Most of the time, shell ninety-nine percent of the time, it fit him to a ‘T’.

This was that one percent and Mikey didn’t know if Leo even saw it. Amend that, Leo was in deep, deep denial. Watching Lav almost die once had scared the crap out of Fearless and rather than face that he was fearful he chose to ignore it, so of course it started eating him alive.

The worse it got, the harder Leo fought to deny it, until finally Lav became the embodiment of that fear. Sending her away was Leo’s last ditch effort to rid himself of that demon.

Dissociation. Mikey snapped his fingers. That was it, the word he was trying to conjure. That was Leo’s way of handling Lav’s near death experience and his fear of watching her die.

That was Mikey’s new task. Get Leo to catch on to himself. Well, Mikey wasn’t the Ancient One by any stretch of the imagination, but he could think of a few things that might snap Leo out of it.

And since Mikey wasn’t speaking to him, Raphael was one of the better choices for that job.

Leo’s eyes were closed as he let the katana in his hand become an extension of himself. In his mind, his opponent faced him, weapon drawn and tip pointed at his throat. Leo moved first, driving the man backwards as their blades sang together before his opponent shifted and went on the offensive.

Leo countered his move, his cross stroke fluid and powerful as he parried the thrust, following through aggressively. His opponent faltered a step, as he had done in real life, and Leo had reacted to the opening instinctively, his katana sweeping back across the others chest.

The fight had ended quickly, but it was a good one to replay. Leo straightened and bowed to his invisible and very dead adversary. The short duration of the battle helped remind Leo how quickly one could lose such a fight. Permanently.

He glanced at the doorway, knowing that Don no longer stood there, but hoping just the same. His solitude however, was complete. In more ways than one.

Being the leader wasn’t easy. Leo sheathed his katana and passed a hand over his face.

Crossing the dojo, Leo pulled several candles from a storage shelf and retrieved the box of matches. Settling himself cross-legged on a mat at the side of the room, Leo lit the candles and closed his eyes.

As his breathing slowed, Leo’s mind began to pull away from his physical self, but he found that he couldn’t escape into the place where his pain melted into oblivion. The pain he was trying to ignore wasn’t in his body, and Don’s departure without saying a word to him earlier was just another reminder.

His job was to keep this family together and he was failing miserably.

He frowned, his eyes still shut, determined to push this thought away. It was counter-
productive; he wanted to find solutions, not blame, in his meditation.

His mind had other ideas. His mind had become less receptive to his constant reminders that past decisions were correct. Leo’s mind nagged him with doubts and questions. The most glaring of late was - if his brothers all thought sending Lav away was wrong, why was he so positive it had been the right thing to do?

His own arguments were beginning to sound false. The other thing was there, the thing he wouldn’t acknowledge. If he accepted that it was the primary reason behind his choice to destroy their family, he was a failure.

His choice to destroy their family. Why did he say it that way to himself? That was new, he didn’t choose to destroy their family; he chose to preserve Lavinia’s life.

Liar.

He made a sound decision. He followed the same reasoning that had made Master Yoshi send Lavinia away.

Liar.

Leo had thought it through and his logic was irreproachable. She wouldn’t change, their enemies wouldn’t change and the danger was too great.

Liar.

His brothers had agreed with him, all except Mikey. Mikey just didn’t understand the ramifications of keeping Lav with them. Mikey was too naive to be rational.

Liar.

This was all too fresh; the loss was still too fresh. It had only been two months. They’d all get over it and his family would mend.

Liar.

Mikey wouldn’t stop loving him.

Liar.

Leo’s eyes snapped open. His heart was beating fast, thundering in his chest. Maybe he should go to Mike and tell him he was sorry, try to explain everything again. He hadn’t gotten the chance in two months; Mikey just kept avoiding him. Leo could find him and force him to listen to reason.

Force his little brother. Leo felt true self-loathing then. He actually thought about forcing himself on Mikey.

What the shell was he turning into?

For Master Splinter, it was time.

His bushy eyebrows rose and he breathed deeply, coming out of his meditation as he felt his oldest son and clan leader attempting to enter his own. That Leonardo was having difficulty
achieving peace these days was of no surprise to his father.

His father also knew the reason for Leonardo’s unrest. He had made a decision and was coming to terms with the fact that this decision had been wrong.

Such was the burden of leadership. That Leonardo could bear this weight, Master Splinter had no doubt. Nor did he doubt that his son would find the correct end to this particular path in his life.

It was Master Splinter’s job as Sensei and father to begin guiding his oldest towards the light.

He would need to guide the rest of his sons as well. The fracture between the four of them was large. They were learning a lot about themselves with this rift, and the biggest thing yet to learn was how to repair it.

Raphael was sullen and secretive. Donatello was distracted and hidden. Of Michelangelo…

His youngest had surprised him. Michelangelo had stood up to his brothers and pronounced the decision to be incorrect. He had not accepted it and even now waged his own private war to right the wrong that had been done.

Only two months ago they had been a strong team and even stronger family. Sending Lavinia away had broken that unity; it had broken their trust and their beliefs. The good intentions of the move did not hide the glaring truth that the choice was wrong.

And when Leonardo had come to him to discuss the decision, Master Splinter hadn’t tried to dissuade him from placing his first foot on this path.

The lesson to be learned was far too great. Their Sensei could only bow to Leonardo’s decision as clan leader and stand aside to let the path begin to unwind.

Did he worry during these two months? Of course he had, he was a father and a brother and his entire family was in pain. But if he did not allow Leonardo to make this misstep while Master Splinter was alive to guide him, then the ones he made after their Sensei was gone would be harsher, more painful, and quite conceivably deadly.

So the father had closed his eyes and accepted what would happen. Age and wisdom gave him the foresight to know, and the patience to wait for the inevitable outcome.

If he seemed to spend more time in his meditations and less time with his sons, so be it. He would not hold their hands anymore; they were grown. The one who needed to be watched over was Lavinia, and Master Splinter spent his time doing just that.

He could reach part of her while he meditated and he took comfort that she was still in New York City. She hadn’t run away, although he could feel her enormous pain. How much longer she would be able to stand this pain was fast becoming unclear. If it became unbearable, then she would run. And they might never find her again.

Therefore, it was time for the path to be cleared and the house to be righted.

It was time to act.
Lav stood before the full length mirror as she pulled up the zipper on the back of her gown. She could have asked one of the guys to help her with it, but they’d be more likely to pull it down rather than up, especially Raphael.

Smiling slightly, she admired the dress. It was satin and form fitting, not her usual style because it was very revealing. But it was also expensive and looked it; and considering who would be at tonight’s celebration, she needed to look the part she was playing.

Carrying her shoes, she left her bedroom and walked back towards the living room of her apartment. The Turtles were all at her place tonight enjoying the luxury of her window view of the city and availing themselves of the wide screen television and fully stocked fridge.

She turned towards the kitchen when she heard Raph ask, “Hey Lav, didn’t ya put some beer in here the other day?”

“Yes I did,” she responded, stepping inside and stopping to watch him rummage around in the refrigerator.

He leaned back and started to turn, saying, “Well, I can’t find . . . Whoa!”

Raph froze when he spotted her, his mouth hanging open. Don came out of the pantry just then, carrying a screwdriver and her blender.

“Lav, I think I found the problem w . . . .” He looked up and gawked.

Lav’s dress was a beautiful shade of purple, nearly matching his bandana.

“Damn, Lav. That’s fuckin’ hot,” Raph finally managed to say.

She smiled. “Thanks for the compliment. Check the back of the second shelf for your beer.”

Lav turned towards the living room and Raph watched her ass as she walked away. Beer forgotten, he slammed the fridge shut and followed her. Don was not far behind.

Lavinia picked up her clutch from the little table behind the couch and checked the contents. Mikey was sprawled on the couch itself flipping through channels and when he heard her he glanced up. Then he promptly dropped the remote.
“Oh shit, Lav!” He sat up straight and his exclamation turned Leo’s head from the bookshelf. His eyes widened and he gave her his full attention.

Lav laughed lightly. “I’m glad this meets with everyone’s approval.”

“Man, that thing fits you like a second skin,” Mikey observed, running his eyes up and down her body, then licking his lips suggestively.

Raph stepped closer. “Maybe ya’ should just stay home.” His voice was rough.

“Afraid not,” she answered with a twinkle. “This is one event I have to attend. It’s no simple task to open twelve clinics in this city and the people who donated the money need their night to shine. That’s how we get them to give more money.”

“A valuable lesson in economics,” Leo commented.

Raph ignored them and swooped over Lav, lifting her high into his arms and burying his face in her throat.

She giggled and pushed at him. “Stop that, you’re going to wrinkle me.”

“I wanna do more than wrinkle ya’,” he informed her, his voice muffled as he nipped at her skin.

“Down, big guy.” She managed to extricate herself from his grip, settling on her feet in front of him.

Lav put her hand up to touch her hair and Raph moved one of his to cover a butt cheek, smoothing over it from top to bottom.

The phone rang and Lav reached for it as Raph exclaimed, “Ya’ ain’t wearin’ any panties!”

Lav gave him a furious look as she covered the handset, then spoke into it. “Yes . . . I’ll be right down. Thank you Douglas.”

When she hung up she told Raph, “I’ll teach you about woman’s undergarments when I get back.”

“That’s good, ‘cause I wanna learn about them.” Raph smirked. “Ya’ might wanna teach Don while you’re at it; I think ya’ fried his brain.”

Indeed, Don had not spoken a word since spotting her in the kitchen. Now he barely managed an indignant squeak. The only thing he could think about was how her breasts swelled out of the lightweight purple fabric, the secret lining inside unable to completely disguise her nipples.

She bent to draw her heels on and her ample breasts shifted, fighting their enclosure. Don produced a small choked sound, padding a bit closer and Lav smiled at him, picking up her clutch and moving through the foyer.

With the door open, Lav told Raph, “Maybe the two of you should help each other out while I’m gone.” Throwing them an evil little grin, she pulled the door shut behind her.

As soon as that purple dress was out of his sight, Don snapped out of his trance and headed back to the kitchen, intent on repairing Lav’s blender.
Raphael on the other hand, was totally riled up, and completely focused on purple. Whether Lav was serious with that last comment or not, Raph had been left with a slow burn that was quickly intensifying.

Stalking Don into the kitchen, Raph watched for a moment as his genius brother dismantled his current project. He was standing at a little desk in one corner, his back to Raphael, and his movements were focused and precise.

The way he moved when he was working was one of those things that turned Raph on. Don was always so sure of himself, his hands never faltered and the concentrated look on his face was damn sexy.

Raph liked to make him lose his concentration.

Sauntering closer, Raph got right behind Donny, well into his personal space. After a couple of minutes, Don asked, “What are you doing, Raph?”

A corner of Raph’s mouth twitched. “Twenty questions. I’m standing behind ya’.”

Don knew his brother. Twenty questions indeed. He didn’t really need the first one to figure Raph’s purpose.

“Try Mikey. He’s just watching television,” Don told him.

“Ain’t interested in fightin’ with Mikey right now. Ask me another question.” Raph’s voice was low, the tone enough to send a chill down Don’s spine.

“Wait for Lav,” Donny said, trying to ignore his brother.

“Nuh uh. Ya’ know I ain’t good at waitin’. Sides, it ain’t her I want right now.” Raph ran a hand over Don’s carapace, enjoying the erotic sound of rough skin against the plates.

“Raphael . . .” The screwdriver fell from Don’s fingers as Raph’s hand reached the bottom edge of his shell and slipped lower.

“Ya’ wanna spend all night playin’ with a blender, Don? That do it for ya’?” Raph loomed over him, breath heating the skin on the back of Don’s neck.

Don’s shoulder twitched and gave him away. Raph grinned triumphantly and then his hand found Don’s tail and started stroking it.

“Shell,” Don moaned despite himself. Raph had a way of getting through his defenses and turning his rational mind into sheer mush.

“Come on Donny. Leave that mess ‘n come with me,” Raph urged, gripping Don’s shoulders and turning him towards the door.

Don moved obediently, Raph’s manipulations of his tail coaxing him from the kitchen, down the hall and into Lav’s bedroom.

“Um, Raph.” Don hesitated. He’d never even sat on Lav’s apartment bed, and the sight of crisp white linen against the rich wood of her four-poster made him a little self-conscious.

It didn’t have that effect on Raphael. He pressed his mouth against Don’s in an almost brutal kiss, pushing him back towards the bed as his tongue moved inside Don’s mouth. Don’s bo
staff was quickly tossed aside and the sound of Raph’s sais hitting the floor soon followed.

The overwhelming intensity of the kiss washed away all of Don’s resistance. He let Raph spin him around and push him onto the bed, his face rubbing into the soft top blanket as he landed.

Raph’s hands were firm as he spread Don’s legs and crawled between them; his palms stroking the curve of Donny’s ass before reaching around to coax Don’s cock out and then pumping him to painful hardness.

“That’s right Donny, give it up for me. Ya’ like this don’t ya’? Ass in the air, cock rubbin’ against clean sheets. Feels good don’t it?” Raphael’s chuckle was low and deep.

Don wiggled a bit and spread his legs wider. He did like this; the clean smell of Lav’s bedding, Raph’s skillful hand on his cock, Raph’s fire waiting to consume him.

“Yes~s.” Donny churred, his eyes squeezing tight.

Raph’s cock slid out, filling to a proper erection. Raph rubbed it playfully against Don’s entrance, watching smugly as Don lifted his tail up.

“You’re ready for a dickin’, ain’t ya’ Donny? Don’t wanna get the cart before the horse though.” Raph wet a finger in Don’s precome and started to prep him quickly, being a little rough in the process.

Donny didn’t care; was beyond caring about anything except the need for Raph to enter him, claim him. He groaned as Raph removed his finger; then Raph’s weight settled on Don’s shell and he felt his brother brace himself.

“Tell me what ya’ want bro’.” Raph’s cock dripped precome in wet trails along Don’s ass and around Don’s entrance.

With a moan, Don told him, “F . . . fuck me Raph, please!”

Don lifted his hips as he felt Raph’s cock push into him and then fill him. He fist the sheets and panted, rocking with Raph’s thrusts.

Raph squeezed Don’s cock and pumped it, churring as the tight heat of Don’s ass surrounded him. He began to thrust faster, harder, pleasure curling through his groin as he fucked Donny.

“Nice ‘n tight Don. F . . . feels good. This what ya’ like? G . . . gonna leave your mark on this fancy b . . . bed?” Raph growled, shifting to drive himself deeper into Don’s ass.

Their harsh breathing and deep rolling churrs filled the room. Then Raph found the angle that hit Don’s prostate dead on.

“Aaagh!” Don shuddered, a jolt moving through his abdomen and settling at the base of his cock. It was quickly joined by another as Raph drove against that spot over and over with the intensity of a jack hammer.

Raph couldn’t hold on much longer; he could feel the pressure building to an unbearable level and he lost his rhythm completely, pumping into Don with frenetic bursts. He stroked Don faster, determined to bring his brother off first.

“Come for me Don. Do it,” Raph urged, squeezing Don’s cock as he pumped. It was
enough to push Don over.

Don shook uncontrollably as the force of his climax surged through his shaft, come spurting out over Raph’s hand and landing in milky ropes across the bedding.

Raph came a split second later, his seed a fire burst, spilling into Donny and leaving Raph breathless.

When his breathing slowed, Raph pulled out of Don and grabbed a corner of the blanket to wipe himself down, then tucked his cock back into his shell. With a smug expression on his face, he helped Don roll over and wiped him down as well.

“Shell, Raph. All over Lav’s bed,” Don croaked, seeing the mess they’d made.

“Ya’ know what, Don? Ya’ worry too much.” Raph yanked the blanket out from under Don and crumpled it before throwing it on the floor. Then he lay down comfortably next to his purple banded brother, turning onto his side and placing his palm on Don’s chest.

Don sighed and closed his eyes as Raph rubbed his scutes soothingly.

“I guess she won’t care,” he murmured, starting to drift off.

Raph kissed his shoulder. “Ya’ know damn well she won’t care. Go ta sleep.”

“You to?” Don slurred, enjoying the feel of Raph next to him.

“Yeah, I’m right here with ya’.” Raph watched him fall asleep and whispered, “I always will be.”

The auditorium that was hosting the grand opening gala had a back entrance and that’s where Lav asked her driver to deliver her. The front with its red carpet was for people wanting or needing the spotlight, not for people like her. A line of cars moved slowly to drop their passengers at this door; far less showy, this group nevertheless represented most of the real power.

Inside Lavinia mingled with practiced ease. She had been doing this sort of thing for a much longer time than any of this group would ever suspect.

The evening progressed along normal lines. Lavinia met new people, became reacquainted with some she hadn’t seen in a while, and generally made herself available to the board of directors. They would guide her to people who might conceivably be new sources of income, and she would try to persuade them to become charitable donors.

She had run up against the mayor a few times already tonight. He enjoyed being seen with attractive women, and the more he had to drink, the more people he felt he needed to introduce. Since he was useful, Lavinia humored him, even putting up with his occasional roaming hand. His wife either didn’t care, or was inured to the antics.

“Lavinia.” A hand touched her shoulder and she turned. The mayor stood smiling at her, grasping her hand in his. “Here is someone I’d like you to meet.”

He turned partway and held his other hand out to a woman coming up behind him.

It was Karai. Dressed entirely in black, her pale skin looked translucent and somewhat
surreal. For a brief moment, the woman coming towards her merged with the image of the woman on a rooftop from two months ago. Lav saw the katana in her hand and the vicious desire on her face as she stared with victorious eagerness at the Turtle she wanted so badly.

The image blurred and melded back into the present. Somehow Lav managed to keep a neutral expression on her face. Karai stepped closer and put out a strong hand to grip Lavinia’s proffered one.

“Lavinia Daniel, may I present Karai Saki. She is carrying on with her father’s legacy of good works in our wonderful city. I am really surprised your paths haven’t crossed before this. Miss Saki is most interested in helping inner city youths.” His honor was clearly pleased with himself for bringing the two women together.

Lav spoke, keeping her voice carefully modulated. “I am happy to meet you Miss Saki. Our program is especially designed to assist lower income parents get the health care their children need. Please, tell me if there is anything at all you would like to know about the clinics.”

Karai’s eyes narrowed. She was staring hard at Lavinia, her brow slightly furrowed.

“Have we met before, Miss Daniel?” Karai asked.

“No, I am sure not,” Lavinia told her. “I must have one of those faces,” she added with a flippant laugh.

Karai’s face didn’t relax. Lav could feel her doubt and suspicion; it pooled off her in waves, although her face gave hardly anything away.

“You have a lovely, unforgettable face, my dear.” The mayor told Lav, pressing a kiss to the back of the hand he had grabbed. He had clearly had a few drinks over his limit.

“You are a diplomat and a politician,” Lavinia joked with him.

A waiter came up to them with a snack tray and Karai shook her head, sending him away. Lav caught a brief glimpse of the prosthetic ear she wore as a replacement for the one Leo had cut off.

Lav’s hands felt cold as she stood just a couple of feet away from the Turtles sworn enemy. She knew that this woman hadn’t really gotten a good look at her that night on the roof, having been too focused on Leonardo. But she had looked at her enough to make this chance and less than providential meeting potentially deadly, unless Lav kept her wits about her.

“It is more in your voice, Miss Daniel. I am sure I have heard it before.” Karai’s attention returned to Lavinia.

“Probably at a function like this one,” Lav responded, waiving her free hand.

The mayor still clung to her other, and for once, Lav was holding him tightly. She did not want to be alone with Karai, daughter of the Shredder, Oroku Saki. The evil being who had murdered her first master and beloved adopted father.

His honor broke in again, unable to pull free from Lav’s grip he pressed against her and said, “Lavinia is quite devoted to our fair city. She attends all our charity functions.”

“Is that so? Then I’m sure we should have met before this. My father’s legacy provided for many gifts to his adopted city and I am kept quite busy continuing his good works.”
Lav smiled. “Oh, you mustn’t let his honor mislead you. I haven’t been in New York all that long. I didn’t need to be here for some of the preliminary work.”

Karai looked at Lavinia, her head tipped slightly, as though puzzled. “You’ve not been in New York very long?”

“No.” Lav decided to stretch the truth a bit and hoped the mayor was drunk enough to pay no attention. “I only came to help with the finishing touches on this project. I tend to spend a lot of time in airplanes, going from one project to another.”

“Then you do not make your home in New York?” Karai pressed.

“I have a place I can stay, but I don’t live in New York proper,” Lav said, thinking to herself, “I live under it.”

“That is . . . interesting,” Karai muttered, more to herself.

“And you. You said this was your father’s adopted city. Where did he come from?” Lav asked.

“Japan. The both of us moved here at the call of our family business. It has been a number of years for me now.”

“Do you miss Japan?” Lavinia asked, her voice low, maintaining the even tone. She would be careful that Karai heard nothing in her voice that would remind her of the woman on the rooftop.

“Sometimes, yes. Quite often, actually,” Karai admitted, despite herself.

“Then why do you stay here? Couldn’t you do the same work from Japan?” Lav’s voice maintained its soothing tone, though curious. Would she get an answer?

“Unfinished business keeps me here,” Karai stated sharply, pulling herself together. This Daniel woman had an almost hypnotic voice, nothing like the woman on the rooftop. Maybe she was being foolish.

Lav nodded. “The problem with unfinished business is that it tends to hold up your life.”

The mayor chose that moment to interrupt. “I hate unfinished business. I do enjoy a good party like this, though. I can forget all my worries and enjoy myself.”

“Not quite all I’m afraid. It looks as though your assistant is giving you the high sign. I think he has someone you need to meet.” Lav nudged him with her arm.

“More? Come with me then and help me fend them off.” He grinned and began pulling her, as she knew he would. His assistant was nowhere to be seen, but the mayor couldn’t focus anyway.

The ruse took her away from Karai. With a quick apology, Lav allowed the mayor to drag her to a crowd of his political supporters. Standing patiently next to him, Lav watched Karai unobtrusively.

She saw when Karai signaled to a man standing against one of the walls and watched as the woman whispered instructions into his ear. A casual glance caught the man leaving quickly and the corner of an eye witnessed Karai’s hurried telephone call.
Lavinia would have liked to run from the room right then, but knew what a seriously bad idea that would be, so she forced herself to behave as normal for another hour. As she mingled, she studiously avoided Karai and the woman seemed to have no desire for her further company either.

Finally, Lav felt it was appropriate to bid good evening to the mayor and other gathered dignitaries. She managed to extricate herself with little fanfare and gathered her wrap quickly, stepping to the door to phone her driver.

As she waited, she wrapped her cloak tightly around her shoulders and scanned the nearby crowd.

For someone who had spent their entire life running and hiding for one reason or another, spotting the man who was watching her was simple. In fact, it was so simple that Lavinia suspected they were trying a loose tail on her, a tactic whereby one person allows themselves to be seen and then shaken loose, so that the other hidden follower could work without suspicion.

If Lav weren’t so worried, she would have been amused. She might look young, but she was far from naïve when it came to that sort of thing.

Her driver pulled up to the entrance and Lav stepped out of the building, climbing into the back seat as her man held the door for her. Once he’d climbed behind the wheel and pulled away, Lav leaned forward and tapped on the glass shield that separated the two sections of the car.

Frank Logan was in his forties, an ex-army ranger and a dangerous man to cross. Driving a limo suited his temperament; not the kind of man to be tied down, the constant movement of this job kept him busy and mobile.

He’d been Lav’s driver for over a year and right from the beginning he knew she was different. Not just in the way she treated him, with quiet respect and dignity, but in the way she handled herself. He could tell she had been through something in her life and that she had secrets. He could also tell she was not the type of woman to scream and run from a fight.

Logan had found out a while back that she was shrewd and careful. He pressed the button that opened a speaking panel and asked, “Something?”

Lavinia liked and trusted Logan. He was a reticent man and a capable one.

“I’m being followed,” she said.

“Okay, so we lose them,” he said without hesitation. He’d already been through one very strange adventure with her and had suspected at the time it wouldn’t be the last.

“As long as it takes, Frank.”

“Mmm,” he replied. Serious this time. From her tone, probably as serious as the last time. He left the panel open it case she wanted to tell him anything. As he suspected, she didn’t.

For over two hours, Logan played cat and mouse with several very experienced drivers. Eyeballing the first didn’t take long and his suspicions ran along the same line as Lav’s had earlier. This was a decoy, meant to seen and dislodged easily.

The second car took a half hour to spot and the third longer. Logan reasoned the third when he realized how hard it had been to find the second. They were working in unison; follow, fall back, new car takes the lead, then reverse. The constant changing made it harder, but Logan was an old hand at this and he didn’t look so much at the cars as he did at the plates.
Having found them made it much easier to lose them. It just took time to find the exact set up he needed, a nice busy intersection crammed with traffic and people. A quick glance for police and the risk of a dented bumper took him through a red light and skimming past a group of pedestrians who received a scare and a couple of bruised hips.

Lav said not one word the entire time. No protest at his action, no suggestions on how to do his job. That’s one of the reasons he liked being her driver and one of the big reasons he took such a personal interest in maintaining her safety.

Logan took a little more time to make sure the pursuers were truly lost and to make sure there wasn’t a fourth car before he drove her back to her apartment building. She didn’t ask if he was sure he’d lost those other cars, she trusted that he had. Another reason he liked her.

Opening the door, he held his hand out to assist her exit. Her hand in his was small but strong, and she squeezed his hand quickly before pulling away.

“Thank you Frank,” she said softly, the squeeze of her hand and the look in her eyes more than enough thanks.

“Anytime.” His quick smile was wolfish and charming.

Logan didn’t leave until she was safely inside her building. When he drove away, he thought that if he’d had a daughter, she might be just like Lavinia.

Lavinia entered the apartment as quietly as possible, shedding her outer garments in the foyer. Glancing at the clock, she saw it was after two. She’d been driving around for a couple of hours.

She knew Leo would be awake and waiting for her. Moving into the living room she saw Mikey first, sound asleep on the couch, television on but the sound turned down. Half his blanket was lying on the floor and she stooped down to retrieve it, setting it back on top of him.

Lav found Leo and Raph seated at the dining table, engrossed in a game of Chinese checkers.

“Late night,” Raph commented without looking up from the game.

Lav smiled a little. So competitive.

“Yes.” Knowing she couldn’t keep this to herself much longer, Lav took a breath. “I ran into a small problem tonight.”

Leo’s head jerked around to her immediately, game forgotten. “Problem?”

“In the kitchen?” Lav asked. “I don’t want to wake Michelangelo.”

As they followed her, Lav realized her feet hurt. She hadn’t even thought to take her shoes off yet, usually the first thing she did. In the kitchen, she turned to face the two Turtles and the shoes were once more forgotten.

“What happened?” Leo asked.

No beating around the bush, that wasn’t Lav’s way. “Karai was at the party. The mayor introduced us.”
Raph hissed, his hands clenching into fists. Leo remained calm. “Did she recognize you?”

Lavinia shook her head and said, “No. Not then, but she was suspicious. I could feel it. And the questions she asked. She never has gotten a good look at me, but she heard my voice and that’s what caught her interest. I spent the rest of the night talking as little as possible and changing the pitch when I had to talk.”

“But ya’ stayed . . . .” Raph began, but Lav interrupted before he could start to chide her.

“Long enough so as not to draw attention to myself. I’ve spent the last couple of hours in the limo having Frank make sure we weren’t wearing any tails. And we had one, by the way. That woman is very efficient.”

Raph’s laugh was humorless. “Yeah, she’ll find ya’ anyway. She’ll do it the way Donny did the first time we were tryin’ to find out about ya’.”

“No she won’t,” Lav informed him. “I transferred title on several of my properties to a dummy corporation. Don suggested I do that so people like Karai wouldn’t be able to track me so easily.”

“That buys you some time tonight. Don’t underestimate her; she’ll keep trying until she gets the information she’s looking for,” Leo said grimly.

“So I will continue to appear to be exactly the person she met tonight; another society dilettante with a cause. I already told her I travel a lot. If I go missing for periods she’ll just think I’m not in New York.”

“That is going to curtail your ability to go on patrols with us,” Leo told her firmly.

The look on Leo’s face kept her from protesting. She wouldn’t get in an argument about this with Leo in front of Raph anyway, but the fact that he was right made the point moot.

Leo continued, “We can let Don and Mikey sleep a little longer; but Lav, you need to shove some things in a bag and be ready to spend time at the lair. The longer it takes Karai to find you, the better the odds are that she’ll believe you don’t stay in this city.”

As Leo turned and left the kitchen, Raph moved closer to Lavinia, once more drawn to her body encased in purple satin. Worry was set aside as remembered lust started to cloud his brain.

“Yeah well, we don’t need ta rush just yet, do we Lav?” Raph was stroking one hand along her satin clad hip, pushing her back against the center island.

Lav’s eyelids slipped lower as she tilted her head to the side, her breath catching at his forceful presence.

“N . . . no. Probably not,” she murmured.

Raph grinned and touched her neck with his mouth, pressing gentle kisses to the side and along the jaw line. Lav hummed her pleasure as his wide tongue snaked out to lick her skin; then his mouth crawled over hers and she found herself surrendering to his invasion.

Both his hands were climbing over her body, his palms smoothing her dress against her skin. When he cupped her breasts she gasped and then arched her back as his fingers found her nipples, caressing them through the fabric.
His touch became rougher; greedy. Raph pushed her head back as his kiss turned forceful, his hands on her tits bold as they squeezed her almost painfully.

It was nirvana for Lavinia. Raphael attacking her, fighting to dominate her, surging over her body in his possessiveness. She loved being controlled by him but she also loved making him have to control her.

So Lav opened her eyes to watch Raph’s face as she bit his lip.

“Hey!” he yelped, jerking back.

Lav smiled and leaned in to touch the spot with her tongue, letting him see the dot of blood before curling her tongue back into her mouth.

“Oh shit baby,” he moaned, feeling his cock jerk inside his shell.

Her head came forward again, tongue snaking sensually against his mouth, and then she touched the bite mark with just the tip.

Raph felt a little buzz and a tingle, the wound closing under her power. The electric spark moved down from his mouth, through his chest, and wrapped itself around his dick.

His cocked dropped down, swelling quickly.

Lav snapped her teeth down on his lower lip, hanging on tight, and began pulling him towards her. He let go of her breasts to wrap both hands around her body and slammed her against him with enough force that she grunted, raking her teeth over his lip.

Raph allowed her mouth to leave his for a second before he claimed it again, smashing against her lips brutally.

Then his hands moved higher, finding the straps to her gown and pulling them down from her shoulders. He rolled them down her arms, stopping just beneath the curve of her elbow and tied the excess length behind her back, trapping her limbs while exposing her twin mounds. The chill kitchen air hardened the nipples completely. Raph’s hands found and explored the excited nubs as his tongue moved in the warmth of her mouth.

Groaning into his kiss, Lav tried to lift her arms to his neck, but the straps prevented this movement, so she started to wriggle against her bonds.

Raph stopped her. “Vicious little minx. Ya’ deserve to be tied up,” he husked, his eyes fever bright and boring into hers.

Lav swallowed and he fell back to her mouth, his tongue swirling around to taste her. His hands were on her breasts again, squeezing and fondling them, sending wave after wave of delight straight into her puss. She was already wet and on fire down there, and she pressed herself against him, rubbing at his thick, muscular thigh.

Without warning, Raph spun her around, pressing her stomach to the countertop. He put a hand to her neck and bent her over until her tits touched the cold marble surface. Raph stroked down her back, slid his hand around to run across her tits, pausing to pinch and twist gently on her nipples, then that hand joined the other on her hips.

Slowly and deliberately, Raph caressed his way over her thighs, down to her knees and to her ankles. Squatting behind her, he let his hands enjoy the feel of her feet encased in high heels.
before grabbing the hem of her gown.

He pushed it up just as deliberately, letting the satin rub her legs as it made its slow slide over her. Lav moaned, standing as still as possible so as not to be distracted from the sensual feeling.

Raph bunched the fabric as he climbed and stopped only when he had lifted her dress free of her rear. The tightness of the gown kept it in place as he released it from his grip.

“Damn, Lav, what do ya’ call this thing?” Raph croaked, his voice almost gone from lust.

“It’s called a thong. It’s to keep lines from showing through tight fitting garments.” Lav shifted as he rubbed a hand across her bare ass cheeks.

“Geez, ya’ might as well be wearin’ nothin’.” His voice was low, with the first hint of the churr that was building in his chest.

Reaching for the small flat band at her waist, Raph pulled the thong down and slid it off of her. Lav stepped out of it when it reached her feet, and as soon as she was free, he put his hands on her inner thighs and spread her legs.

With a dark chuckle, Raph leaned his plastron against her bare butt and breathed hot air across her neck as he asked, “Ya’ hot for me Lav? Ya’ wet for me?”

Without waiting for an answer, his hand delved into her opening. As soon as he touched her moist folds, the churr broke free.

“Fuck yeah, you’re wet. Don’t matter how fancy the party is, ya’ always come home ta Raph, don’t ya’ sweetheart?” His finger stroked across her clit and he licked a spot between her shoulder blades.

Lav’s gasp was his only answer. Pressing solidly against her clit, he rubbed harder, and then nipped her skin.

“Ya’ always come back ta me, don’t ya’?” Raph husked, wanting an answer.

“Y . . . yes, Raphael, always,” she moaned her response.

“I got somethin’ ya’ can’t get from those people, don’t I?” He pushed a finger into her, sliding a hand back up to her neck and keeping her rigidly in place.

“Raph . . . .” She struggled to push her hips against him and he bit her again, more forcefully, producing a yelp.

His breath steamed the delicate skin on her back as he said, “Ya’ dream about me, don’t ya’ baby?”

With a deep groan, Lav responded, “Yes, Raph, yes.”

He chuckled again. Raph put his teeth against her back and raked the edges of them downwards, scratching lightly at her sensitive skin. His hand maintained its firm grip on the back of her neck while the other moved rhythmically in and out of her wet pussy.

Lav’s ass was smooth, tight and perfectly molded; it had been calling to Raph since she walked out of her bedroom wearing that dress. He placed several kisses on her butt cheeks and
rubbed his face against the skin.

Lav was panting, eyes closed tight as she fought to control her response to his finger inside her, but the heat in her gut and the tingle in her pelvis were growing stronger. She tried to shift her hips to the side, but as she did, Raphael bit her. Right on the ass.

“OwwWW!” Lav shrieked, trying to buck his teeth loose.

He let go to tell her, “You’ll get fucked at my pace, got that?”

“Damn Raph, what are you trying to do to me?” She moaned again, unable to garner much ferocity when his hand was doing such wonderful things to her pussy.

His laugh was challenging. “I’m teaching ya’ not ta tease me. Ya’ got Donny so worked up with this damn dress I like ta never got him on his knees. Now he’s passed out an’ I’m hot again an’ you’re gonna take care of it.”

“F . . . fine.” She breathed heavily. “Just get . . . umph . . . get on with it. Oh God!” Lav cried out as a second finger pushed in beside the first, making her jerk in response.

His answer at her movement was to take another bite of her ass.

“RaAAAPHH!” she protested loudly.

“I’m gonna fuck ya’ hard, Lav. That what ya’ waitin’ for?”

She whimpered. “Do it. Please Raph. I’m not . . . ohhh! Last. Not g . . . going to . . . .” She became incoherent when both his fingers began to move inside her.

“Ya’ want more, Lav?” Raph taunted.

He was going to make her beg, she could see that clearly now. Her natural stubbornness argued she should refuse, but his hand was doing wonderful things and she did want more.

“More. M . . . more,” she stuttered against her will.

“Ya’ want my cock?” His breath trailed up her body slowly.

“Yes. Yessss,” Lav hissed.

Raph’s cock was dancing and bobbing between his thighs. It had gotten almost to the point of being painful while he was teasing Lav, precome dribbling in generous pools across the head and down the shaft.

Standing behind her, he pushed down a bit harder on her neck and watched her ass lift higher in response, her heels helping raise her height just the perfect amount. Churring at the sight of her pale skin beneath him, Raph removed his hand from her pussy and placed the tip of his pole against her entrance.

“I’m gonna make ya’ pay for that bite,” he informed her, his voice deepened by desire.

Then Donny strolled into the kitchen. He froze at the sight of Raph pinning a half-naked Lavinia to the counter top, her breasts flattened against the hard surface and Raph obviously about to spear her.

“Damn guys . . . .” Don finally managed.
“Bout time ya’ got up,” Raph said and thrust viciously into Lav’s body.

“Ahhhh!” Lav shrieked.

Raph started to move, pounding in and out, making her tits bounce.

Don took in the bunched up purple gown, the high heels on long tapered legs and her breasts jumping against the marble. His cock sprang to life, sliding free and swelling quickly.

Raph laughed. “Yo, Don. Ya’ wanna take care of that?”

“Oh, shell yeah,” Don grunted.

“Then climb up here.” Raph slapped the counter top, pulling Lav’s upper body back towards himself by his hold on her neck.

Don leaped up with one smooth bound. Scooting forward, he placed his erection under her face and pulled his thighs in so that her tits rubbed against them. A deep churr rolled out of his chest as Raph pushed her mouth onto Don’s cock.

Her mouth surrounded his meaty organ with exquisite heat. With just the head of his cock inside her mouth, she pressed her tongue against the tip and rolled it across the slit, swallowing the precome that dribbled free. The vibration danced up his cock and his moan was followed by a deep churr as she pulled more of his dick into her mouth.

Raph was pounding her steadily, driving back and forth; holding her hips steady. Deciding to change the angle, one of his hands slid around and cupped her pussy, his fingers parting her folds to capture her clitoris between them.

“Uhhhh.” Lav groaned as he squeezed that sensitive button and rolled it between his thick digits. He pushed against her mound and lifted her hips higher, adjusting himself accordingly, and thrust more of his length into her sodden vagina.

Her answer was to constrict her muscles around his intrusion, making herself tighter, making his dick fight harder to enter and exit. His triumphant laugh made her purr, that’s what he’d been wanting all along; his rough fucking was made so much better when she responded in kind.

Don was lost to their play; his eyes shut as she licked her way along his shaft, and then used her teeth to scratch lightly. His hips moved in reaction while she obligingly bobbed up and down on his cock, occasionally stopping to squeeze around the head and delve the tip of her tongue into his slit.

His toes were clenching in pleasure and his legs were tightening. He could feel her tits rub against his thighs, he could even feel her nipples; they were that hard.

“Oh, shell . . . .” Donny churred, suddenly wrapping both hands around the sides of her head. He pushed at her, bringing her down on his organ, lifting her up when he needed, directing her speed and fucking her mouth with zeal.

Lav felt him stiffen, felt his cock throbbing in her mouth. She opened her throat as he got closer to the edge, letting his head go further into her mouth, knowing how much he enjoyed when she deep throated him.

Don felt the soft lining at the back of her throat, felt the head of his cock slide past that
point and go further in and frantically pushed her head down while lifting his hips. The pressure was too much, that wonderful feeling starting to spiral towards the final outcome.

“I’m gonna . . .” It was all he managed as his cock exploded, washing the back of her throat with come.

Lav relaxed her throat and let his ejaculate spill inside; flowing down her gullet, filling her. She loved the taste of him, the smell of him, the idea of him; the essential Donatello surging in and merging with her.

“Donny tastes good, don’t he Lav?” Raph asked as though reading her mind, following with a brutal thrust that brought her back to him.

She inhaled her first breath after several long minutes of Don’s climax, and the rush of oxygen brought with it the delicious feel of Raph’s fingers creating that final tingle in her womb.

Letting Don’s cock slide from her mouth, Lav rolled her tongue across her lips, savoring the final taste of his salty essence. Don leaned back on his elbows with his eyes glued to Lavinia; seeing the green glow of her eyes and the way her shoulders tensed, he knew she was close to her own orgasm.

A low moan issued from her throat, letting Raph know she was close. He regulated the rhythm of his slide into her body and sped up his fingers ministrations on her clitoris.

“Ahhh….ahhh!” Lav panted and shuddered.

“Come for me baby,” Raph husked, his eyes partially closed as he felt his own orgasm growing near.

Her eyes closed tight and her breathing stopped completely. Raph felt her legs stiffen on either side of him, and then her hip bucked against his hand and a violent tremor enveloped her entire body.

“Oh fuck Lav. Fuck!” Raph cursed, feeling her cunt snapping around his pulsing length and then he spilled over, climaxing hard.

Raph let his head rest against her back while his cock twitched out the last sticky traces of his seed. He could already feel the prickle of her current sweeping down his spine.

Don straightened and moved further forward, his knees over the edge of the counter. Straddling her upper body, he grabbed her breasts between both hands and pressed them against his growing erection.

Lav felt Raph’s cock hardening inside of her and moved to shift her legs. A sharp swat on the rear was his response.

“Raphael!” she wailed.

“Told ya’ not ta move.” He chuckled evilly.

Stroking his hand along her ass, Raph tilted his head back and closed his eyes as his cock rebounded completely. Surrounded by her heat, it throbbed with need.

But this was his lesson to teach and he had one last grand finale for her. Sliding his hand back from her clit, he touched his own dick, buried deep in Lav’s cunt. Pressing a finger there, he
pushed in.

Lav inhaled sharply when she felt Raph add his finger to her already completely filled vagina.

“W . . . What are you doing?” Another shriek as his finger plunged in fast.

“Hmmm, nice ‘n wet. Need ya’ ta be wet now, Lav. Got a surprise,” Raph growled against her.

Before she could reply, Don began stroking his cock with her tits. His tip was inches from her face and Lav leaned down to kiss it lightly. Don shuddered and squeezed her soft flesh, pumping his hips for added friction.

“Again Lav,” Don moaned.

Her tongue stole out and licked all around and under the head of his cock before dipping into the slit. Don began to churr and move faster. The look on his face made her duck her head again and wrap her mouth around his dick, tickling the tip and collecting his precome as it leaked free.

Lav felt Raph remove his finger, and if her mouth hadn’t been otherwise occupied, she would have asked what he was up to. A second later, she didn’t need to ask.

His finger was pressing firmly against the entry to her ass.

“Mmm, mmm!” she protested around Don’s cock.


He pushed his finger slowly past the tight ring of muscle, her own juices lubricating his way. Moving inside her, pushing in and pulling out, he stretched and prepped her as best he could.

Raph pumped his cock carefully inside her pussy, keeping the pace moderate enough so he wouldn’t come just yet. It was damn difficult, he was right on the edge, but he badly wanted to fuck her ass.

Removing his finger, Raph leaned against Lav’s back and rumbled, “Ready or not . . . .”

Pulling his hard cock out of her tight cunt was one of the most difficult things he’d ever done. Wrapping a hand around the base, he guided the tip to her anus.

Don was grunting and thrusting his hips, squeezing her breasts around his stiff organ, relishing the thrill of her mouth on his cock. He partially opened his eyes when he felt her tense up and realized what Raph was about to do.

“S . . . slow Raph,” Donny warned him quickly. “Her teeth on are my cock.”

Raph started laughing, a deep gnarl in his chest that was soon replaced by a churr. Following Don’s request, he pressed in slowly, although he wanted to just lunge forward with all his might.

Lav willed her body to relax and turned her concentration on pleasuring Don. His cock was hot between her breasts and solidly rigid. She could feel it twisting against her skin, swelling and pulsing, so she brought her mouth further down on the shaft.
The added heat from her mouth triggered the flood gates. With a loud groan, Don came, flexing his thighs uncontrollably while he flooded her mouth a second time. Swallowing with audible gulps, Lav took every drop, licking his cock clean before he pulled it from her lips.

Raph began to move faster, hands on Lav’s hips to pull her back as he thrust, grinding against the velvety walls of her ass.

As the initial sting of his entry gave way to exquisite pleasure, Lav moaned loudly.

“Ya’ like that, doncha wildcat?” Raph asked, his movements slowing and becoming erratic as the pressure in his groin intensified.

“Mean . . . .” she hissed back, twisting her head and tightening her inner muscles.

“’S good, babe. Can’t scratch, can’t b . . . bite, ya’ still gotta fight m~eee.” Raph came, one final push burying his cock in her rear.

Shuddering deliciously, Raph didn’t move, letting the rush of his orgasm sweep through him. After several wonderful moments, he began to come down, feeling a nice warm glow replace the frantic lust.

Don lay on his shell atop the counter, chest heaving. Lav’s head was resting on one of his thighs, eyes closed and a contented smile on her lips.

Raph had his cheek against her back, trying to catch his breath. A faint sound coming out of Lavinia made him chuckle.

“Ya’ sound like you’re purring.” He rubbed his face on her skin and she squirmed.

Sighing contentedly, Raph pulled out of her body and tucked his cock back into hiding. He caressed her arms once before untying the straps of her dress and setting them back on her shoulders.

Donny sat up and watched her pull the purple fabric over her breasts, a delighted smile tugging at the corners of his lips.

“That was a damn dirty trick, spinning me so I couldn’t fight back,” Lav told Raph as she pulled her dress down and rubbed a hand across her butt where he’d slapped her.

Raph stooped over to retrieve her thong. “Yeah, well all’s fair . . . .” Raph taunted, swinging the undergarment from his finger.

Lav reached for it and Raph snatched it back. Grinning, he brought the wisp of fabric up to his nostrils and inhaled loudly.

“Think I’ll keep these.” His voice was cocky.

= = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

Karai was back in the tower of the Foot headquarters building. She’d left the charity event shortly after Lavinia’s departure, completely uninterested in the affair. She only attended these things to keep the Saki name alive in New York’s elite circles.

She was in her office when she received word that the Daniel woman’s driver had lost the men Karai had assigned to follow her. When asked if it was deliberate, her people had admitted
they were not sure.

Karai had dismissed them. The maneuver Daniel’s driver had made was a bit too fortuitous, and Karai’s already burgeoning suspicions were growing. Her own brief interaction with the woman left her unsure and unsteady, two feelings she loathed.

She’d meant to ask the probing questions and get the woman off balance. Somehow the conversation had shifted and it was Karai who found herself faced with a conundrum.

Why didn’t she return to Japan?

The woman’s question hung in her mind, refusing to go away. She didn’t need to stay in New York. Karai could run her empire from Japan just as easily. There were loyal people here who could secure this operation; she’d only come to New York to repair the damages caused by her father’s incapacitation. That time when everyone thought he was dead.

It took her hand to pull the Foot together and give them someone to whom they could swear their fealty. She had accomplished that and so much more.

She did not need to be in New York. Her father was gone but his empire was secure. The Utroms had fled to their home world. Why did she stay?

Honor. Did she even know that word anymore? The lines had become blurred; she had done her duty, paid homage, done her father’s bidding. He was gone and she had to answer only to herself now.

So why didn’t she return to Japan? She would much rather be there.

Leonardo.

Her usual masklike countenance crumpled in pain and anger. With a vicious swipe of her hand, she hurled everything from her desk top. Her palms pressed flat on its smooth surface; she leaned over and breathed hard, striving for control.

She could not release him from her mind. He came unbidden into her thoughts at any time of day or night. She dreamed of him. He was the first to urge her to look deeper into herself, the only one ever to question her honor. Leonardo had made her question herself.

Karai spun around, hips against the desk, arms back to support herself as she looked out her window at the panoramic skyline. Sometimes that was an aid to help her find her center and her control. Sometimes it wasn’t.

He was a mutant and a freak, she told herself, as she had done countless times. He had destroyed her father, had caused her to betray her father. He had taken her ear. Leonardo was her enemy.

He was strong and muscular, came the unbidden voice. He was gifted and honorable and loyal. His voice was sure, he was sincere and . . . and powerful. He had let her live.

Her eyes squeezed shut and so did her legs, the warmth those thoughts always brought burning its way into her most intimate area. The flush on her cheek told her she wouldn’t be able to ignore this tonight; she would have to take care of it. Karai had plenty of useful toys for that purpose. She also had willing men, if she wanted to partake of them.

They weren’t Leonardo.
This was turning into a damning obsession. Somehow she had to find permanent relief. Breathing heavily now, nearly panting, Karai ran over her options again.

Kill him. That was permanent enough. She just had to catch him and best him. Her missing ear was a reminder of how hard that was.

Kill his family. That would shame him; make him come to her so she could kill him. She almost got him that time, through Raphael. The woman had been an unknown factor that had saved them.

Kill her. Karai smiled cruelly at that option. Yes, if Karai knew for certain that Lavinia Daniel was Leonardo’s mystery woman the potential for satisfaction would be incredible.

Her agile mind reminded her that killing someone like the Daniel woman would be tricky at best. That bitch had many, many friends, and some of them were extremely powerful. If Karai made a mistake and was attached in any way to the woman’s death, the repercussions would be devastating.

Would they outweigh the satisfaction? Would killing Leonardo’s lover destroy him, or at least make him less desirable? Disgusted and shaking, Karai admitted that’s what she needed most; to do something, anything, to pull him off the pedestal her mind had lifted him up on.

She had to be sure this woman was the right one. That was the first step. Karai hadn’t bothered to look at her that night on the rooftop. As always, her eyes were for one, and only one.

Leonardo. A shiver ran up her spine. She nearly had him. He was putting his swords at her feet, kneeling before her, giving himself to her. Her mouth had gone dry as she watched him surrender.

Nearly surrender. That bitch had killed herself to save him; and his brother had come back from the dead to do the same. Karai was sure Raphael was dead; just as she was sure the woman had destroyed herself on Hun’s knife.

She was wrong on both counts and had no explanation for anything. Karai had been informed of the woman’s continuing existence only two weeks after their encounter. Somehow she had survived. Somehow she had done something to save Raphael.

Whoever this woman was she was special and unique. Karai’s pride would allow her to accept no less a woman as an adversary and rival. This Lavinia Daniel appeared to be such a woman. Poised, secure, intelligent and quite lovely. Head turning beautiful, as a matter of fact.

Hun, as usual, was useless to her. He hadn’t bothered to look at the woman much, either. In the warehouse, he had been groggy and dizzy from his encounter with Jones, and beyond noting Leonardo kissing their new female companion he hadn’t been able to focus much and actually see her.

That night on the rooftop, he held her tightly against his chest, her back to him. He wasn’t looking at her face, even when he was molesting her. Hun had eyes only for the freaks he was attempting to torment.

Clenching a fist to control her anger, Karai decided the first step needed to be taken and the dwelling on past events pushed aside. She turned and pressed a finger to the call button under her desk.

The shoji slid silently open and one of her retainers entered. Dropping to one knee, he said,
“Mistress Karai.”

Karai found of slip of paper and pen in her desk and wrote something hastily upon it. Folding it neatly, she stepped around her desk and gave it to the man at her feet.

“Take this to the head of my intelligence section. Tell him I wish to know something by tomorrow.”

“Yes, Mistress.” He bowed and quickly withdrew.

Karai smiled. Now she would learn something about the mysterious Miss Daniel. Her men would dig into her past and they would follow her. If she had any contact with the Turtles, they would know immediately. Karai would know immediately.

And then Karai would act.
The atmosphere in the lair was slightly strained. It had been one week since Lavinia’s chance encounter with Karai. Things had changed in that week.

As Leo had predicted, it hadn’t taken long for Karai to find Lav’s apartment. The Turtles had then discovered the Foot ninja who kept her apartment under surveillance. They were scattered across several different rooftops and were easy enough to locate since the Turtles were looking for them.

Don had also discovered a few Foot Tech ninjas in the process. He had made glasses from the special optics the Tech ninja wore, taken from a couple who the Turtles had defeated over a year ago. Leo suspected they were there and Don confirmed it.

Someone had tried to break into Lav’s home but her sophisticated security system kept them out. Lav removed the photo of herself and Master Yoshi just to be on the safe side, keeping it in her room at the lair.

The display of weapons on the wall of her dojo she chose to leave alone. Her biography, created to give herself a background, included information about her martial arts abilities. There was nothing to be done about that, she argued, other than to make it appear as though it were not a big secret.

She was also being followed. Curtailing her activities as much as possible helped throw some of the dogs off her tracks; the Turtles were quite adept at getting her to various appointments and back home again when things came up that she had to deal with.

They all decided the best plan was to wait out Karai. And to avoid being seen.

“Leo is really mad at me, isn’t he?” Lav asked, removing her shoes and then sliding her pants off.

Don lay across his bed, watching her. “Yes he is. You shouldn’t have followed us, Lav.”

Lav shrugged out of her top and fluffed her hair, standing next to Don’s bed in just a bra and panties.

With her hands on her hips, she remarked, “He said I couldn’t come with you, he didn’t say I couldn’t follow. I stayed out of sight.”
“Uh, uh. You have to stop doing that thing where you choose to take words so literally. Leo’s intent was clear and you purposely disobeyed him.”

“So now I’m persona non grata?” She slipped the panties off and removed her bra.

Don flipped the blanket back and held his hand out to her. As she slid into bed next to him, he tossed the blanket over her and pressed close to her body.

“You screwed up.” They were on their sides facing each other and he placed a hand on her waist. “Lav, you know how worried and keyed up Leo is over this thing with Karai. And as far as we know, Bishop is still hiring mercenaries to find us and Lin Zhu has half of New York City spying for him.”

“I know. I messed up.” Lav sighed. “I can’t help it, Don, I worry too. Every time you guys go out I think something’s going to happen and you’ll need me and I won’t be there.”

“You need to deal with that. We’re a team and Leo calls the shots. Right now, he needs you to do what he asks and trust that he knows what it is he’s asking.” Don pressed a kiss to her lips and pulled back to see if she understood.

“Is that it, Don? Or is there something else?” Lav asked quietly.

Don lifted himself a little and peered down at her curiously. “What else?”

Her eyes searched his. “Don, Leo hasn’t touched me in over a week. He hasn’t touched me since the night I met Karai at that party.”

“Lav, I’m sure it doesn’t mean anything.” Don smiled comfortingly.

Lav didn’t return the smile. “He hasn’t said much to me either. He’s...aloof. We practice and spar and that’s it. I know I was wrong to follow you guys. I’m just scared.”

“You know Leo can be a little...intense sometimes. Especially when it involves Karai. Let him work through it, it’ll be okay. I promise.” Don leaned over to kiss her again and then deepened the kiss as she responded hungrily.

Their lovemaking was quiet, slow, and intimate. Don’s hands and Don’s mouth were all over her body, bringing her to intense heights of passion, making her moan and shiver under him.

When he entered her she could only think to wrap herself around him tightly and hang on. Their bodies melded together perfectly, each knowing exactly what would please the other.

He brought her to shuddering, rolling orgasm, following her quickly with his own climax, sending his seed deep into her womb. She clung to him, panting, as he hardened again, and then she moved her hips up to greet his thrusts, desperate for every inch of him.

His release left her warm and numb; a residual tingle in her nether regions left a smile on her face. Don kissed her thoroughly as he drifted into unconsciousness, and she said the same.

Now the gentle rhythm of his breathing comforted her. Folded in his strong arms, warm under their shared blanket, Lav should have been asleep. But her mind went back to thoughts of
Leo.

He’d been really angry with her tonight. Beyond anything she’d ever experienced. The others didn’t know; Don didn’t know what had happened after she’d been caught.

Coming back through the sewers, everyone else had joked about her little escapade. Donny needed things from the junkyard and his brothers went with him; since the time Bishop had tried to catch him Don wasn’t allowed to go alone. Lavinia wasn’t allowed to go at all.

Leo didn’t say it that way, though. Leo said she couldn’t go with them. Just as she pointed out to Don a little while ago, and just as she pointed out to Leo when he busted her, she was not with them.

Her attempts at humor fell on deaf ears. Leo didn’t say much at that point, just that she was placing herself in danger and should know better. Lav thought she got off easy.

Until he pulled her aside after his brothers had entered the lair. He gripped her upper arm tightly, hard enough to hurt, and jerked her away from the entrance until they were in an intersecting tunnel.

“I want you to explain what you were thinking tonight, Lavinia,” Leo ordered, stopping abruptly and releasing her arm.

The sting of his words weren’t lost on her. “I’m not totally mindless, Leo. I felt the risk was low and I wanted to be with you guys on at least one thing. It’s frustrating to think that Karai is affecting our lives this much.”

“Taking idiotic risks expressly against my instructions won’t make any of this better. You told me you could be a team player when I let you join this team. Don’t make me regret my decision.” His voice was harsh and unrelenting.

Lav stepped back a pace, surprised at his rancor. “I said I was sorry, Leo. I won’t do it again.”

“No, I can guarantee you won’t;” he snapped at her. Leo spun on his heel, heading back to the lair, leaving her to follow or not as she chose.

Lav felt her own ire rise and she called to his retreating back, “Maybe if you talked to me I wouldn’t need to sneak around.”

When she didn’t hear anything, she figured he’d left. Hanging her head, Lav kicked at a pebble near her foot and started after him. Turning a corner, she nearly ran into him.

Leo stood completely still, facing her, his face as grim as she’d ever seen. It wasn’t aimed at their enemies, or against some injustice he’d witnessed or any of the noble things that usually made him take on the look. It was aimed at her.

Lav’s heart plummeted in that instant. The first tendrils of pain coiled themselves in her chest and she caught her breath harshly.

“I’m your clan leader, Lavinia. I don’t have to explain anything to you. Is that clear?” His voice was almost hateful as he pressed his face close to hers.

Lav found she was shaking and all she could do was nod. That wasn’t enough.
“Is that clear?” he repeated, stronger now.

“Yes,” she managed to croak out.

He stared at her for a minute more and she found she couldn’t meet his eyes. When she looked away, he marched off.

Lying in bed with Don, Lav felt that pain in her chest again. She loved Leonardo more than words could ever convey. More than life itself.

She was afraid he didn’t love her anymore.

Leo sat in his room, candles lit, deep in meditation. He was trying to find himself; trying to find his center. What had happened tonight between he and Lavinia had surprised him.

He hadn’t meant to attack her the way he had. He had scared her and hurt her, he knew it from the look on her face, and how quiet she was the rest of the night.

What he’d said was unforgiveable, not just the words, but the fact that he’d said them at all. And worse, he’d felt some small measure of satisfaction at having stung her so badly.

She’d given him a fright and she’d disobeyed him, but that was no excuse for what he did. He had to be a better leader than that; he had to have more honor than that. None of them was perfect and he couldn’t expect more from her than anyone else. That wouldn’t be fair.

They all had their flaws and weaknesses. Raphael had his temper and that positive assurance that a straight on frontal attack was always the best option. Mikey refused to take things seriously enough, wouldn’t put his full effort into his ninjitsu. Donny turned recluse frequently, letting his science and his toys control his life.

Leo worked too hard. He knew this about himself and was unable to control the need to be the best – the best fighter, the best with the katana, the best leader. He worked hard to maintain his edge against Raph, the ultimate warrior. He worked hard because when Mikey tried even a little, he could walk all over his brothers. He worked hard because Don needed him to watch his back while he worked his science arts.

Lav didn’t consider consequences. She was stubborn and sometimes reckless, her gifts giving her the illusion of invincibility. She could be hurt, she could be killed; had in fact almost died in front of them. That event hadn’t quelled her incessant risk taking.

The minor skirmishes they’d had with Foot ninja after the rooftop battle was proof of that. Leo could tell her to stay back, could ask her not to be seen, but if they had to engage the enemy, Lav would be right in the thick of things. To make matters worse, she would choose to fight the fiercest opponent, almost as though trying to prove something.

If she had listened to him, if she hadn’t insisted on going out with them on supply runs, Karai would probably think their woman was dead. And all of this worry would be moot.

Lav wouldn’t have any of that either. Hence her following them tonight. He knew someone was in the junk yard with them and his katana was in his hand when he discovered her hiding inside a rusted van. He could have killed her by accident just because she had used a verbal loophole to circumvent his intent.
Leo found that tendency to be infuriating as well. At least with Raph the disobedience was outright and the fight about it was out in the open. Lavinia didn’t disobey in that manner and the mental battles could be somehow more tiring. Having to be sure everything was worded absolutely right; making sure to dot the I’s and cross the T’s made Leo feel like he needed to start reading the dictionary.

It was just a matter of time.

That thought appeared unbidden in Leo’s head. He caught it as it tried to slip away, determined to understand what it meant.

Just a matter of time. Someone would get hurt again, so what? Someone in their family was always hurt, that was the reality of their lives. They had made it for nineteen years under the most extreme conditions; they were a streamlined team, inured to the dangers.

Lav was trying too hard to fit into that team; she was trying too hard to prove herself. She wouldn’t go slowly; since the night Casey and Raph had nearly died she was positive that none of them would come back alive if she wasn’t with them. Lav was becoming obsessive about it.

That was the gist, the core of his problem. She was too willing to make that ultimate sacrifice. If she died, Leo would have failed Master Splinter. He would have failed Master Yoshi. Failed. Leonardo would have failed.

He shifted a bit, uncomfortable as always with the thought of failure. The Ancient One had spent many hours with Leonardo helping him to understand this part of himself. A loss was not a failure if one truly tried to do their best.

Was this the best he could do for Lavinia? This life they offered her meant she could never be truly safe. She would always live half in one world and half in another. Was that selfish of them to ask of her?

And was he being completely altruistic or was something else bothering him? There was still, even in this deepest of trances, a trace of something elusive, something about himself lying in a well at the bottom of his soul and he couldn’t reach it. Maybe he didn’t want to reach it.

What he did finally reach was a decision. It didn’t make him happy and it wouldn’t make anyone else happy either. He would talk to Master Splinter about this; it was a duty and a courtesy only, because the decision was made. He would tell his brothers and they would fight him, but he knew how to get around them. Leo knew what arguments he would need to use to make them agree with his decision.

He was going to send Lavinia away.

==================================

Master Splinter stood before his photo of Master Yoshi and sighed. The photo had been saved from the fire in their old lair by some miracle, and although the edges were curled a bit, it was still very clear. Beside it, hanging on the wall, was the sketch Michelangelo had done of Lavinia, dressed in a kimono and kneeling in a garden.

He was waiting for Leonardo. Master Splinter knew he would come soon and he also had a very good idea of what his son meant to discuss with him. Their sensei was not lost to the current troubles, nor was he lost to Leonardo’s inner torment.
A tap at his door and he turned to call, “Enter.”

Leonardo slid the door open to step inside, closing it carefully behind himself. He bowed deeply and asked, “May I speak to you, Master Splinter?”

“Yes my son. Please kneel.” Master Splinter watched Leonardo’s face as his eldest crossed the room to kneel before him. He did not say another word, waiting for his son.

Leo came straight to the point. “Master Splinter, I have made a decision which I feel I need to share with you.”

His father nodded. “Then please do so.”

“I have thought hard about this situation with Karai and her pursuit of Lavinia. Karai has become completely ruthless and I’m afraid it is just a matter of time before she finds proof that Lav is a part of our clan. Lavinia herself has become less than circumspect and appears heedless of the consequences of her actions, despite my best efforts.”

“She is a stubborn woman,” Master Splinter interjected.

Leo looked hard at him for a moment before continuing. “In addition to that, Bishop has begun hiring mercenaries to hunt for us and now knows there is a woman assisting us. And Lin Zhu has come to suspect that Lavinia has certain friends, namely us, who have been making his life difficult. He has begun to hire street thugs to watch for us. Lavinia is no longer safe.”

“Safe from them, or safe to be with, Leonardo?” Master Splinter asked mildly.

A bit startled, Leo answered quickly, “Safe from harm.”

“What do you propose to do about this situation?” His father questioned.

“I have decided to send Lavinia away.” As Leo said the words out loud he could almost see them hang in the air, bloated and dark. He watched as Master Splinter closed his eyes and drew a deep breath, the tip of his tail twitching.

When his father finally spoke, it was with the same mild voice. “That is what Master Yoshi chose to do as well.”

Leo jumped at the words. “Yes, and it proved to be a wise choice. She is alive today because of that decision.”

“At what cost to her, Leonardo?” his father asked, lifting a brow.

Leo shook his head, ready for that question. “I can’t think of that in order to reach the best decision for her. If I allow that emotion to come into play, I will be sealing her doom.”

His father’s tail tapped the floor lightly. “And what if she does not accept your decision?”

Leo’s mouth straightened into a thin line. “She doesn’t have a choice in the matter.”

Master Splinter’s tail stopped moving. His son was resolute and almost . . . angry. Was he angry with Lavinia or with himself? Master Splinter was sure of only one thing; Leonardo did not know, and he would have to discover the answer on his own.

“What of your brothers?” Master Splinter finally asked softly.
“I will speak to them next, father. Lavinia went with Casey to the market and that will give me time to make them understand.”

“Make them . . . .” Master Splinter prompted him.

Leo frowned. “Give them my reasoning. They’ll understand.”

“Do you understand my son? You should know where this decision comes from before you make this choice.”

“I have thought it through completely, Master Splinter. I can’t find any other way,” Leo explained.

“This is what you believe will make her completely safe from harm?” Master Splinter pressed.

“Yes.” Leonardo grimaced. “She knows how to avoid danger on her own; she knows how to deal with threats. She has been doing it far longer than we have. Without us to worry about she’ll take care of herself.”

‘Take care of herself’. Yes, Master Splinter understood a little better now. Leonardo was carrying a great weight, and he was still so young.

Sadness moved heavily through his aged body as he contemplated his oldest son. This path was going to be painful, and Leonardo was going to have to walk most of the way alone.

Master Splinter bowed to him then and said, “It is your decision to make, Leonardo. You are the leader of this clan now and I will support any decision you choose.”

Leonardo stood up, bowed to his father and moved towards the door. Pausing there, he glanced back to say, “I’m sorry Sensei. She is your sister.”

“Yes. She has no other family,” Master Splinter answered simply and watched Leonardo depart.

Leonardo had meant to find his brothers immediately upon leaving Master Splinter, but his Sensei’s parting words stopped him.

“She has no other family”.

That was what had brought them all together initially – family. Lavinia had been adopted by Master Yoshi and had taken his name. Tang Shen’s death and the departure of the Utroms to New York had placed the small Hamato clan in mortal danger, and Master Yoshi had made Lavinia leave him.

She was about seventeen at the time, with only hardship behind and in front of her. Somehow she had adapted and made her way in the world, using her gifts, making powerful friends, and becoming quite wealthy in the process.

To all appearances, a content woman. But not a happy one. In her entire life, the only time she had been truly happy was a short four year period when she had a stable home and a family.

And this last year, when she had regained her family and fallen in love. With all four of the
Now Leonardo needed to strip that away from her again. He didn’t want to he told himself once more, it was just that he needed to.

Raph was wrapping tape around his punching bag, a bucket half full of sand near his feet, and Mikey was seated on the floor nearby, making an adjustment on the wheels of his skateboard. Leo interrupted their conversation to tell them they needed to have a family conference and turned away from their puzzled looks to head into Don’s lab.

Donny had his music turned up and was staring at something under his microscope when they all invaded his lab. He looked up as Leo flipped the switch on the disc player.

He glanced at Leo, then over to Raph. Raph shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

Mikey plopped onto a stool and said, “What’s up bro’?”

Leo said, “I need to talk to you guys about something before Lav gets back.”

Mikey leaned over, closed an eye and then tilted back again, holding himself up by his grip on the seat. “Looking serious dude. You thinking ‘bout buying her a wedding ring?”

Raph snorted and flicked his finger against the back of Mikey’s head. He received a wide grin for his trouble.

Don recognized the look on Leo’s face, and asked seriously, “What’s wrong, Leo?”

“Guys, I’ve reached a decision on the best way to deal with the danger Lav’s in. The danger she’s in because of us.” He stressed those words, catching Raph’s eye.

Raphael’s narrowed in response. He really didn’t need to be reminded.

Mikey stopped goofing around immediately. He didn’t like the tone of Leo’s voice and he sure didn’t like the look on his face. Neither did he like the way Raph’s face froze when Leo brought up that night on the rooftop again, bringing it home to the hot head that his actions had begun the domino effect that had almost gotten himself and Lav killed.

Mikey was a little irked at Leo for that. Raph could feel guilty enough on his own and Leo was supposed to let that episode fade into the past. So why was he rubbing salt in old wounds?

“What kind of decision?” Don’s question was slow and measured as he studied Leo intently.

Leo looked around at his brothers and lifted his head high as he answered. “Master Splinter and I have agreed our only option is to send Lavinia away.”

Dead silence, until Mikey spluttered, “No. No way dude. Ain’t gonna happen. Figure something else out.”

Leo responded quickly, before the other two could join in. “We don’t have an alternative, Michelangelo. She can’t keep straddling both worlds, this one with us and the one on the surface. Keeping the two separate is becoming impossible and it’s only a matter of time before she gets hurt because of it. Lav won’t slow down and she won’t be cautious.”

“You mean she won’t go into hiding. Duh, maybe that’s because she thinks she’s one of
us? Sorta the way she’s meant to be?” Mikey snapped sarcastically.

“She isn’t meant to die because she’s one of us, either. Mikey, we have Karai actively investigating her, Bishop trying to capture us, and Lin Zhu pursuing her. He wouldn’t be interested anymore if we hadn’t lit a few fires under him, and the other two are our sworn enemies. They’ll just use her to get to us, and as such, she’s expendable to them. We have no other choice than to push her as far from us as possible.”

Mikey looked at his other two brothers. Neither had said a word and Mikey felt his stomach drop.

“Come on guys, you know this is wrong. We’ve gotten into plenty of tough situations and managed to hang together to get out of them. Shell, hanging together is what got us out of them,” Mikey argued.

“Those were different circumstances, Mikey. We don’t have to function topside the way she does. We don’t have to worry about running into Karai at a fundraiser, or meeting Bishop at a political rally. The danger she’s in just doubles because of that.”

“I hate this,” Raph growled, his voice low. “But . . . but maybe he’s right Mikey. If Bishop somehow got his hands on Lav . . . .”

Don sat down in his chair, his feet unwilling to hold him upright. “God, Leo, are you sure?”

Leo was calmly assertive. “I’m sure. I’ve been thinking about this for a week. We can’t protect her; we don’t have the resources. She has to appear to have nothing to do with mutated turtles and the only way that can happen is if she has nothing to do with us.”

“That’s bullshit!” Mikey lunged to his feet, face furious. “That’s just an excuse for doing something that isn’t right. How can you even think about sending her away?”

“No.” Mikey leaned into his face. “I don’t wanna hear that crap again. We all face death every time we walk out of the lair and I deal with that. I love you guys and don’t want you to die, but I deal with that. With Lav around we don’t gotta worry so much. I don’t want anything to happen to her, I don’t want her to die, but I’m not gonna kick her out thinking that’s the right thing to do, ’cause it’s not.”

None of them had ever seen Mike so angry. His face was flushed and his hands clenched into fists, his body taut and trembling. He was right up against Leo now, plastron to plastron and he had pulled himself up to this full height to stare down at his oldest brother.

Don started to wonder then. Was this the right thing to do? Leo sounded so logical; he sounded so sure, but Mike had amazing insight.

“I know it hurts, Mike. We’re all hurting, but you know Karai won’t stop. We’ve become a danger to Lav. I love her enough to let her go,” Leo said as he tried to calm his little brother.

“That’s manipulative,” Mikey fumed. “You’re just trying to say I wanna hold onto her ’cause I’m selfish. Well I’m not. Not with this. I love her enough to give her what she needs, not what I think I need. If you take away her family it’s just gonna kill her, Leo.”

Mikey was shaking now, unhappy and emotional. Leo put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed.
“Master Yoshi was her family too, Mike. He made this same decision and I’m trying to honor him by making sure she stays alive. Those were his wishes.”

Mikey yanked his shoulder out of Leo’s hand and stepped back.

“I can’t believe you’d stoop to that as an argument. Master Yoshi gave her a family ‘cause that’s what he wanted her to have. They separated ‘cause he didn’t have any other option. We do.”

“Family is no good to the dead,” Leo said flatly.

“Yeah, well Master Yoshi is dead, and here you are claiming you’re still honoring him.” Mikey was nasty in his sarcasm. Spinning to take in Raph and Don, he challenged, “And you two, going along with this . . . this load of shit. I heard the same things you did and I don’t buy it, so why do you? ‘Cause its Leo saying it?”

Raph jumped up, thoroughly angry. “Master Splinter gave his blessing. I guess if her own brother thinks this is the right thing ta do then how come ya’ think ya’ know best?”

“You think ‘cause I’m the youngest I don’t understand the stuff going on around me? Well, kiss my ass Raphael. You’re still wallowing in guilt over almost getting her killed, Don isn’t gonna think the lair is secure enough until he passes out from exhaustion. Master Splinter is going along with Leo’s decision ‘cause he doesn’t wanna interfere. And Leo . . . .”

He spun back on his brother. The look on his face almost made Leo step back.

“You got something eating you from the inside and you think this is gonna put that straight. You wait, Leo. You do this and that thing inside of you is gonna grow. You can’t escape yourself, bro’, no matter how fast you run or how far out to the wolves you throw Lavinia.” Mikey was vitriolic in his anger.

“Shut up, Mikey,” Raph warned; his voice low and dangerous.

“Can’t stand the truth, Raph? You know what? All of you can kiss my ass. I’m not staying here while you do this. I’m not gonna be a part of it.”

Mikey jerked open the lab door and stormed out. Within seconds he had completely exited the lair, heading off into the labyrinth of sewer tunnels.

None of them said anything for a few minutes after Mikey left. The air was heavy, stifling, and the pain too sharp.

Finally, Leonardo sighed and rubbed a hand across his face. Looking up, he saw Raph staring at him, and Don studying his own feet, his face miserable.

“You guys don’t have to be there when I do this,” Leo told him gently.

“What kinda bastards do ya’ think we are? If we gotta do this, then we’ll do it together,” Raph growled.

“Tonight Leo, we’re doing it tonight?” Don’s voice cracked at little, and he cleared it. “I didn’t, I mean . . . .” He stopped.

“It’s no good to put it off, Don. A swift, clean break is the best way. It will be over by the time Mikey gets home and we can help him deal with it,” Leo said.
Don nodded; his eyes still down. Damn, last night he had made love to Lavinia; he had told her he loved her. What would she think of him?

And then a thought, followed by a quick glance at his brother. Had Leo been planning this for a while now? Was that why he hadn’t been with Lav in over a week?

He had been quiet and reserved since Lav’s meeting with Karai. Lavinia had noticed the change; had commented on it to Don the night before. He had told her not to worry about it, that it was Leo’s way of working through a problem.

Don didn’t know then what Leo’s solution was going to be. Mikey was right; this was going to break her heart.

The silence was broken at that moment by a very loud Casey Jones, escorting Lav back to the lair.

“Yo, guys! How come I’m hauling groceries by myself here?” he yelled.

Raph gave Leo a somewhat distraught look and hurried out of the lab. Casey did not need to be here tonight.

Don was slow to rise and he couldn’t look at Leo when he did get up. As he made his way to the door, Leo grabbed him and pulled him into a tight embrace.

“I’m sorry Don,” Leo whispered against his neck.

“Me too,” Don answered, his eyes misting over. Lavinia was theirs; their sister, their lover, their woman; she was their family. With all his heart, he didn’t want to do this.

But he would, because it was their only alternative. Don would cling to that.

Raph had chased Casey off by the time they joined him. Neither asked what he’d said to their friend to get rid of him; he’d not had enough time to explain the situation. That would have to come later, when they met with April to tell her why she couldn’t see her friend anymore.

Raph’s face looked as ravaged as Don’s insides felt. They could hear Lav in the kitchen, putting things away and humming to herself. That just made them feel worse. Probably none of them would be able to eat that food now.

Lav was wearing a smile as she strolled out of the kitchen, drying her hands on a dish towel.

“Since the fish is so fresh, that’s what we’re having for dinner,” she informed them.

Don heart did a flip. Lav looked so happy and carefree.

“Lav, could you come sit with us?” Leo asked.

Lav’s smile faded at the look on Leo’s face. “Okay,” she said quietly and followed them into the television room.

The room was dark and still. Lav felt a sudden sense of foreboding as she sat down on a chair and looked at Leo, Don, and Raph.

“Where’s Mikey?” Lav asked, starting to get scared.
“He’s out right now, Lav. He’s okay. He just needed some air,” Don told her.

Again that strange feeling, this time it twined its way through her chest. “Why?”

Raph shifted nervously. Leo sat on the edge of the table, opposite her, and Don moved to the couch.

“Lavinia.” Leo stopped and looked down at his hands.

The dread crept up her throat. Leo couldn’t look at her; none of them could look at her.

“Tell me,” she said softly. “Just . . . tell me.”

“The danger from Karai has gotten too bad. I’ve thought about it from every angle, trying to resolve the issue and keep you safe. There’s only one option available to us.” Leo forced himself to look into her eyes as he spoke.

“No,” Lav whispered, already knowing what he was going to say.

Leo shook his head. “Lavinia, we have no other choice. Karai is trying to find proof you’re with us. Lin Zhu has people all over the streets searching for signs that we’re together. The situation has gone too far out of our control.”

“Leo, please don’t.” She was pleading, hoping to stop him from saying the words she knew were coming.

Leo forced himself to be straight forward. “Lavinia, you can’t be with us anymore. You have to go away.”

Lav sat completely still and stared at him. Breathing made the pain in her chest hurt worse, so she stopped until her lungs screamed at her.

“Why are you punishing me for what Karai has done? I don’t understand. You said I wasn’t a burden; you said you had faith in me. Leo, don’t you remember? You told me you trusted me, you said . . . you said you believed in me.” Lav’s eyes were searching his face, begging him.

Leo closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “We ran out of time, Lavinia. The possibility has always been there that our enemies would get too close. What we have to do isn’t always an easy choice. You can’t stay with us.”

“Is it because I followed you? I won’t do it anymore, I swear. I’ll . . . I’ll stay in the lair and you won’t have to worry about me. I promise.” Her jaw quivered and she tightened it, determined to maintain control of her emotions.

Leo touched the back of one of her hands; then drew back. “That wouldn’t be fair to you. Please, Lavinia, just accept our decision. You need to leave now, right now.”

He stood up, his gesture dismissive. “Go and pack your things.”

Lavinia stood up slowly, her eyes never leaving his face. Don and Raph stayed silent, letting Leo do all of the talking for them.

A sharp stab of pain in her chest, then another. They traveled down to her gut and up into her throat, making her eyes water. Blinking, she saw that Leo was looking at her with no expression on his face at all.
“All right.” She walked past him, her mind numb.

When she’d gone a few feet, Leo stopped her. “Lavinia, one final thing.”

She turned carefully, afraid to trust her feet. Meeting his eyes, she stopped breathing again.

Leo said, “As the leader of the Hamato clan, I release you from your obligations. I release you from the clan.”

Lavinia started to shake then, and this time when she turned, she ran.

Once she was out of sight, Raph strode over to Leo angrily. “Why’d ya’ do that? Ya’ didn’t say ya’ was gonna do that, Leo.”

“That was too cruel, Leo,” Don agreed vehemently.

Leo looked at them, his face a mask. “It had to be done. She had to understand the break is permanent, otherwise she won’t get on with her life.”

“Makin’ it permanent for us too, right Leo?” Raph was scowling.

“Everyone should understand what we’re doing here, Raphael,” Leo said calmly.

Don watched him, worried. Raph was upset, Mikey was angry and upset, and Don was a little confused and definitely upset. Lavinia was hurt, scared, and upset. But Leo . . .

His big brother didn’t appear to be suffering from any emotions at all.

Lavinia reached her bedroom, slammed the door and fell back against it, sliding to the floor. All over, it was happening all over again. Large tears dropped from her eyes and her chest heaved.

This time was supposed to be different. She wasn’t supposed to be alone anymore. Love was supposed to fix everything.

Unless . . . unless she was the only one in love.

Lav bit her lip hard. Was that it, was that the problem? She put her head in her hands and squeezed her eyes shut to stop the stinging.

Too bad she couldn’t squeeze her heart to stop the pain. They really didn’t need her after all. They had survived just fine before she came along, and would continue to do so.

The brothers loved each other and she was just a diversion. The problems she was starting to bring into their lives made it so she was more of a pain than she was worth.

Time to toss the garbage out. Lavinia lifted her head and stood up. She still had a little pride. She didn’t need to be tossed out. If they didn’t want her, she’d leave as quickly as possible.

Dragging her bags from under the bed, Lavinia moved around the bedroom and gathered her belongings. Things had accumulated from the months she had been living in the lair, so she wasn’t as fast as she wanted to be, but eventually everything was packed.

She didn’t take the nightlight. Lavinia decided that some things were worse than the people
who came for you in the dark. It was the ones who lied to you in the light who did the most
damage.

Dragging the bags into the hallway, Lav stepped back into the room for one last quick
survey and suddenly she was seventeen again, scared out of her mind and feeling very small and
alone. The only mother she’d ever known was dead, murdered, and the man who was her father
was pushing her away.

Master Yoshi wasn’t calm and kind as he’d always been with her. He was harsh and brutal
as he shoved a stack of coins into her hand and told her to leave quickly. When she’d started to
protest, he’d silenced her with a sharp word. Then he told her he didn’t need her to follow him
around; she was grown enough to make her own way.

He’d told her to never speak of him or talk about herself to anyone. He’d told her it was her
destiny to be alone because her powers made it impossible for her to trust anyone.

Coming back to herself, Lav realized she’d been waiting for this to happen since she’d first
come to live with the Turtles. The greatest truth, she saw now, was that lies and broken promises
were all that could be counted on.

One last thing had to be left before she could completely shed this life. Lav certainly didn’t
need them anymore and they were now meaningless tokens.

Lavinia placed her tonfas on the bed and walked away from them.

The bags she’d put in the hall were gone when she stepped out of her room to find Leo
waiting for her.

“Raph and Don are taking your bags to your apartment. They’ll leave them in the dojo,”
Leo told her.

Lav nodded, saying nothing.

“There were some other things, in the lair and kitchen. We put them in a box and took them
out too,” Leo said.

“Could I . . . .” Lav cleared her throat. “May I say good-bye to Splinter?”

Leo stared at her a moment. “It won’t change my decision.”

Lav glanced at him, then away. “That wasn’t my intention. I’d just like to say good-bye to
my brother. I’m never going to see him again.”

Leo’s chest tightened and he tried to ignore it. “Just a couple of minutes.”

“Thank you.” Lav walked across the lair and tapped on Splinters shoji.

The rice paper door slid back and Splinter stood on the threshold, his eyes dark and sad.

Lavinia’s mouth twitched and she kneeled in front of him, taking the hand he offered her.
For a moment, the two simply looked at one another, and then Lav felt a tear leave her eye.

Splinter caught it with a finger before it could fall. “I am sorry, my sister.”

Lavinia shook her head. “Don’t be. I can manage on my own. You and Master Yoshi gave
me that.”
Splinter touched a hand to her cheek. “We wanted to give you more.”

“It wasn’t my destiny.” Lav stood up and released his hand. “Be well Splinter. Try to keep them safe.”

“Please find happiness, my sister,” Splinter called after her.

Lavinia looked back. “That isn’t in my destiny either.”

Both she and Leonardo were silent during the slider ride back to her apartment. The silence continued as they traversed the tunnels leading to the ladder which would take her to the street across from her building. She didn’t see Raphael or Donatello again and had not seen Michelangelo at all.

As she stood at the base of the ladder, Leo finally spoke.

“I’m sorry Lav,” he said in almost a whisper.

“For what, Leonardo?” A little piece of her pain broke off and turned to anger. “For lying to me or for breaking your promise? You said you would take care of me, you gave me your word.”

Leo felt the stab of her anger and its cut was deep. “I am taking care of you,” he murmured.

Her mouth snapped shut. Trying to make him see would be too much like begging and she wouldn’t beg anyone. She wouldn’t ever trust anyone again, either.

Lav stepped onto the ladder and began her climb. When she reached the top, she glanced back down. Leo was gone.
Leo was still trying to calm his mind enough to meditate when he heard Raphael return from wherever he’d been. The night was cold, rain turning to sleet, and cold was not their friend. He thought about speaking to Raph; but then he heard his brother go into Don’s lab and the sound of the door being firmly shut.

He rose and blew out the candles. There would be no meditation tonight, so he moved to replace the candles and matches and in so doing, found himself standing before the weapons wall. Lavinia’s tonfas hung there, inside the specially made holster, the old leather retaining the curved shape of Lavinia’s hips.

Mikey had discovered them lying on Lavinia’s bed.

When he’d finally come home, very late that night, he’d found his brothers waiting up for him.

Stopping in front of them, his hands curled into fists, Mikey asked, “Did you do it?”

It was Leo who told him softly, “Yes.”

Without another word, Mikey had turned on his heel and marched into Lavinia’s bedroom, slamming the door hard behind him.

“We gotta talk ta him,” Raph said.

“And say what?” Don asked, still too distraught himself to offer much comfort.

Then the sound came of her bedroom door being wrenched open again and Mikey’s racing footsteps. His face was scrunched up in a mask of both fury and pain as he screamed at them.

“What did you say to her? What did you do?” He held the tonfas out in front of him, directly in their faces.

The tonfas were the knife thrust that finally penetrated Leo’s heart. He had been working to control his feelings so he could be strong for his family. Now the hurt rushed in full force and his voice broke as he answered his little brother.

“I released her from the clan.”

“You bastard,” Mikey hissed at him, clutching her weapons to his chest. He turned his
glare on Raphael and Donatello, and they all saw the tears rolling from his beautiful blue eyes.

Mikey walked backwards away from them, making sure to stare with hateful accusation until the walls removed him from their view. His return to Lav’s room was quieter; quiet enough so they all heard the lock turn.

He spent most of his time in that room now. He did not share his thoughts, his company, or his laughter with his brothers. Mikey kept the lair clean and he worked out, lifting weights to build muscle, or running the sewers for hours on end.

Leo’s hand stretched out and he touched a finger to the worn leather, stroking across it, tracing the curve. It brought back memories of soft skin, warm touch, flowing hair, gentle laughter. His eyes closed and he could see sultry eyes gazing at him through half shut lids, moist lips slowly parting; the swell of full breasts pressing against his plastron.

He was frozen in that thought when Master Splinter touched his outstretched arm.

Leo blinked his eyes open and lowered his hand before turning to bow to his Sensei.

“Good evening, Master Splinter.”

“A late one, my son. You appear to be deep in thought. Are you troubled?” His father’s voice was gentle with concern.


“Raphael and his late night wanderings?” Master Splinter asked.

“Yes, partly,” Leo returned.

Master Splinter nodded. “Donatello spends too much time in his lab or in the garage. And Michelangelo has distanced himself from this family.”

“He’s still . . . upset,” Leo explained.


Leo raised an eye ridge. “I’m fine Father.”

“No, you are not.” Master Splinter tapped his cane lightly against the floor. “You interact very little with your brothers. You have difficulty meditating yet I find you here, lost in thought before Lavinia’s tonfas. Seek my council Leonardo; it is why I am here.”

Leo’s head turned away, but to avoid his father’s gaze he had to look upon Lavinia’s tonfas. He would have left them in her room, but Mikey had marched out the day after her departure and brazenly hung them on the wall, staring at his brothers as if daring them to remove this reminder.

Leonardo’s question took Master Splinter by surprise.

“Father, why did you stop me from killing Karai?” The look he turned upon his father with that question was equally surprising. He was angry.

Master Splinter’s eyes narrowed and he answered the question with one of his own.

“Did you want to kill her?”
The amber eyes gleamed a moment, then turned normal. “Yes,” Leo answered truthfully.

“That is why I stopped you,” Master Splinter said.

“If she were dead, our family wouldn’t be split apart,” Leo burst out, unable to contain the tide building behind his calm exterior. He started to shake; then stopped himself, his self-control amazing as always.

Master Splinter knew his son well. After a moment, he told Leo, “You would have damaged yourself with the stroke of that sword, Leonardo. Killing should not be so easy a solution to a problem. Her death would have brought other difficulties into our lives and the outcome would likely be the same. As a living enemy, she cannot take your honor.”

Leonardo glanced away again, he eyes once more drawn to the tonfas hanging on the wall. Mikey knew exactly what he was doing when he placed them there.

“How do I make this up to Mikey?” Leo asked.

“You may not be able to do that, Leonardo.” Master Splinter leaned on his cane. “Getting him to speak to you would be an improvement. Perhaps you should discuss this with Raphael.”

“Father?” Leo looked at his Sensei again, clearly puzzled.

“Michelangelo has begun to speak to him again, just a little. He has made it clear he is not forgiving, but he has opened a small door in his wall of silence. You may be able to relay a message through that door.”

Leo nodded, once. “I will try.”

Don looked up when he heard the door open. He thought it might be Leo, coming to him as he did sometimes, searching for some warmth in their cold home. Don wasn’t turning away from his brother’s needs; he loved Leonardo deeply. But something was lacking when they were together, just as it was when he made love with Raphael. Their tightest bond had always been trust, and it felt like that was slipping from their grasp.

Raphael entered the lab with a purpose. Closing the door firmly, he took a moment to turn the lock. Being interrupted by Leo wasn’t something he needed right now.

Without preliminaries, he said, “Don, we gotta talk.”

Don set his soldering tools down carefully. Raph saw the guarded look that shuttered the genius’s face and he pressed on without giving Don an opening to protest.

“Look, I know ya’ don’t wanna talk about this . . . .” he began.

Don interrupted, “Actually, I do.”

Raph’s mouth snapped shut in surprise. Coming straight to Don after watching Lav cry, he was determined and ready for an argument. Don’s response sort of threw him off his stride.

“About Lav?” Raph asked.

“Yes. I think this has gone far enough. Don’t you?” Don questioned.
“Fuck yeah I do. I’ve been thinking that way for more than a month now. I’ve been thinking we shouldn’t have chucked her out into the open like we did, trying to pretend it was all for the best,” Raph said.

“So have I. Raph, what Leo said about that being our only alternative, well, it wasn’t. It isn’t. She’s spent her entire life being in danger and I’m fairly certain the only time she ever felt safe was when she was with us.”

Raph leaned against a table and crossed his arms. “So what do we do about it? I want her back. Period. Mikey does too, the few times he’s talked to me he’s made that real clear. Which side do ya’ fall on, Don? It’s time to choose.”

Don’s mouth drew down as he studied Raph. “I hate to think of it as choosing sides. But . . . I want her back. I want her here with us so we can work out a solution to the Karai situation. This other way leaves everything exactly the same as it was two months ago.”

Raph lifted a hand to point at Don. “I know ya’ don’t wanna call it choosing sides, Donny. But ya’ know it’s gonna end up being a fight with Leo. He’s got it drilled into his head that he did the right thing and getting him to let go of that notion is gonna be hard. Can ya’ stand up to him?”

“I won’t have to if he wants her back as badly as we do. And I think he does, Raph. You know his pride as well as any of us; I don’t believe he thinks he did the right thing anymore. I’ve tried talking to him about it, but he lowers that mask and refuses to discuss it.” Don was looking expectantly at Raphael.

Raph rose to the bait. “He ain’t gonna pull that shit on me. Dammit Don, ya’ wanna know what I been doin’ the last few weeks? I been watching Lav. I been goin’ out on the rooftops, dodgin’ Foot so I can make sure she gets home in one piece every night.”

Don was startled. He should have guessed. “That wasn’t very . . . prudent.”

Raph swiped at his nostrils and flung back, “Don’t give a fuck. We told her we’d keep her safe and that’s a promise I didn’t wanna break.”

Don leaned back in his chair and reached across to fiddle with a piece of metal on his worktable. With his face turned away from Raph, he said, “I’ve been watching her too.”

Raph jerked his head back, staring. “Ya’ ain’t hardly left the lair, Don. What’re ya’ talking about?”

“Cameras,” Don said. “They’re everywhere. The police have them mounted on traffic lights, banks have them at the entrances and ATM’s, the Department of Transportation has them at certain intersections, news channels use them, and all the hospitals have them inside and out. If you know how, from a personal computer you can tap into any camera that has an outside feed. There’s even one at the entrance to her apartment building. I’ve been keeping track of her since she left.”

Raph couldn’t help but grin. “Ya’ fuckin’ sneaky bastard. You’re a damn voyeur.”

Don’s return smile was slightly shy, the look he got when his brother teased him about his skills. Raph’s pulse jumped and began to race, longing pushing back the bitterness he’d been feeling. He stared at Don, unable to move as he would normally have done, frozen to indecisiveness by their current situation.

Don saw Raph’s dilemma and understood. They had all drawn so far into themselves that they were afraid to reach out to each other anymore for fear of rejection.
Donny stood up and approached Raph slowly, watching the hope fill his eyes. He pressed a hand to Raph’s plastron, leaning in close to nuzzle into the larger turtle’s neck, and he whispered, “No more tonight. Come to bed with me, Raphael.”

Raph followed Don meekly; his energy used up, he let Don take his hand and pull him out of the lab, up the stairs, and into Don’s room. Inside, Don removed his bo and set it aside and then turned to Raph.

Don began to remove Raph’s gear, saying nothing. Raph stood quietly, watching as Don kneeled to slide his knee pads off, reached up to remove the sais along with his belt, and then stood to work off the elbow and wrist guards. His fingers gently caressed Raph’s skin as he worked; his movements practiced and sure.

When he reached to untie Raph’s mask, Raph stopped his hands by grabbing his wrists. Don looked into his eyes then and Raph leaned into him, pressing his mouth to Don’s.

The kiss was slow and tender, just lips touching at first; then the kiss deepened until their tongues were grinding together. Don began to feel the heat come back into Raph’s skin and he moaned at the familiarity of it, moaned at the sheer passion of it.

Raph’s hands gripped Don’s biceps as he pulled his genius brother closer, their plastrons scraping together. He forgot the cold outside, forgot the sadness in their home with this moment of merciful bliss and his mouth opened wider to take as much from Don as he could.

Don traced his hands along Raph’s sides, touching and stroking his skin where it was exposed, enjoying the feel of his muscles. Reaching further around him, Don grabbed the edges of Raph’s shell and pushed back, urging him towards the bed.

Raph dragged Don with him and they both fell in a heap on the mattress, neither willing to break their kiss. Raph reached up and snatched the mask from Don’s head, wanting to see his entire face. Somehow Don’s hand found its way to Raph’s tail and he began stroking it, pulling none too gently until he felt Raph’s churr rumble through his chest.

With the sound of Raph’s arousal, Don leaned away from the kiss and pushed Raph onto his shell. Raph let Don take the lead, curious to know what Don was planning. Don was rarely the aggressor in their lovemaking and the rare change excited Raph.

Touching his lips to Raph’s neck, Don kissed his way downwards, licking the center frontline and drawing forth another slow, rumbling churr. Raph pressed a hand to his eyes, forcing himself to remain still, although his cock was struggling to get out.

Don’s mouth reached his lower plastron and his hot breath ghosted over Raph’s thighs. Placing his hands between Raph’s legs, he pushed them outwards until his brother was open enough for Don’s head to fit between them.

Raph groaned as he felt Donny’s tongue slide over his swollen slit, dipping into the opening and touching the head of Raph’s cock. Don’s hand pushed against his leg, encouraging him to open wider as he ducked in towards Raph’s hidden member, urging it into the open with his hot tongue.

Raph slipped free, sliding into Don’s wide open mouth.

“Oh, shell!” Raph moaned at the feeling of wet heat surrounding his shaft. Don licked along the underside of his cock and then slowly swallowed him, letting Raph’s dick completely
harden inside his mouth.

Don’s own erection slid free as he tasted his brother. Sucking lightly, he pulled back until only the head of Raph’s cock was still in his mouth and then played the tip of his tongue over the flushed skin.

Gathering up the pearly droplets of precome, Don rolled them over his tongue, savoring the taste. Raph was breathing shallowly and Don knew he was getting close to peaking.

Pulling back, Don grinned into Raph’s growl. “Hold on bro’, I have other plans.”

Leaning back, Don grinned into Raph’s growl. “Hold on bro’, I have other plans.”

Don grooped along the top of his nightstand until his fingers found the lubricant. His cock jutted straight out, stiff and leaking precome, and Raph’s hand closed over it.

“Ahhh . . . .” Don moaned lowly and then churred as Raph began pumping him. Up on his knees, he edged closer to Raph and popped open the lube. Spreading a liberal amount on one finger, he reached behind himself and pressed his slickened finger into his anus.

“Damn, Donny.” Raph’s cock twitched at the sight of Don prepping himself, his finger moving in and out to match the rhythm of Raph’s hand stroking along his shaft.

Don’s eyes were half closed; his face a work of concentrated pleasure as he loosened himself for his brother. When he was satisfied, he applied more lube to his hand and grasped Raph’s cock, pumping him with wet slurping sounds.

Raph finally grumbled through a thickening accent, “Enough already. Get your ass over here.”

Don chuckled over his impatience and crawled atop Raph, straddling him. Reaching down to wrap his hand around Raph’s dick, his guided the tip to his opening as he slowly lowered himself.

The feeling of his cock penetrating into Don’s tight ass sent shivers down Raph’s spine. He curbed his growing lust and waited while Don sank fully onto him, letting his brother have time to adjust to his giant organ.

Intense pleasure sang through Donatello’s system at the feeling of complete fullness, his brother’s cock hot and rock hard. Don could feel every vein, every throb and twist of Raph’s penis as it nestled inside his ass. When the initial sting was gone, Don began to move.

He lifted himself almost completely off and then drove back down, hard. Raph grunted his approval and his hand on Don’s cock began moving again, stroke for stroke matching Don’s movements as he rode Raph’s dick.

Don began to move faster as he felt the pressure building at the base of his cock. Shifting a bit, he slammed himself down harder against Raph, impaling himself, moving back and forth a bit each time until Raph’s cock hit his prostate.

“Raph, oh, Raph. There, oh, oh, oh,” Don cried in delight as the strike sent waves of pleasure through his system.

Raph began to lift his hips and thrust into Don with each fall, grinding against Don’s prostate again and again. Each strike made Don shudder and clench his ass tight around Raph’s cock.
“’S good Donny. J . . . just like that, ride m . . . m~e.” Raph’s grip tightened on Don’s cock, pumping hard and fast.

Don’s head fell back and his entire body shivered as the pressure in his cock broke and he climaxed, shooting come into Raph’s hand and across his plastron.

The muscles in his ass clamped down and Raph hit his own orgasm, spilling his hot seed deep into Don.

Gasping for air, they both remained perfectly still for several long minutes. Finally able to control his legs, Don rolled off of Raph and reached under the bed for one of the shop towels stacked there. He wiped himself down and handed the towel to Raph before tucking his cock back into his shell.

Raph swiped up the come on his plastron and hand, gave a quick pass over his spent dick and pushed it back into hiding. Tossing the towel in a high arc into a corner of the room, he signed contentedly and put his hands behind his head, closing his eyes.

Don wiggled closer to him until their sides were touching and shut his own eyes, weariness closing over him like a veil.

“Love you, Raph,” Don muttered, not sure Raph was awake to hear him.

Barely. Raph, drifting into sleep, murmured back, “Love ya’ too, Don.”

From the shadows at the edge of the dojo, Leo had watched his brother’s ascent into Don’s room. He had hoped for the comfort of his purple banded brother tonight, but his longing could not compete with Raph’s. Head down, he moved slowly through the lair, extinguishing lights as he went.

Leo paused at his door, one hand against the doorframe, and turned to look further down the hall. Silently, he moved to stand before the door to Lavinia’s old room and with his head ducked, he listened intently. He lifted a hand and placed his fingertips against the wood, leaning in further, but heard nothing. Resisting the urge to knock, Leo resigned himself to another night alone and tread softly back into his own room.

Mikey let out a slow breath from where he lay on Lav’s bed. He hadn’t heard Leo’s approach, but knew it was him all the same. Something in Leo’s resolve seemed to be slipping and that thought made Mikey smile into the dark.

The next day went pretty much the same as the previous ones. Practice was hell; Mikey was belligerent, Raph and Don alternated between staring at Mikey and staring at Leo, and Leo was just tired. He hadn’t been able to sleep much and his inability to meditate was making him feel a little on edge. Practice was called off fairly quickly.

Leo stayed away from the dojo during the afternoon so Mikey could work out. Raph was working off some aggression on his punching bag and the oldest brother was hoping Mikey might open up to Raph if no one else was around.

Raph had been thinking along similar lines, but his intentions for the conversation were a bit different from Leo’s.

Ostensibly beating the crap out of his bag, Raph eyed his little brother at the weight bench.
Mikey had gained some muscle during the last couple of months and his arms rippled as he lay back and grasped the bar.

Raph sauntered over, watching as Mikey went through his first rep. His bro’ was concentrating, his eyes focused as he lifted smoothly and without any jerks.

“Ya’ want a spotter?” Raph asked, stepping around to his head.

Mikey didn’t say anything for a minute, then lifted the bar one final time and as Raph grabbed under it, he said, “Sure.”

Together they reset it and Mikey sat up, rolling his shoulders. Raph leaned casually against the weight bar and told him, “Me and Don had a talk last night.”

Mikey lay back down and reached for the bar. “Good for you.”

Raph let it go. Mikey had added a little extra weight today, more than he was used to lifting, and a light film of sweat was starting to form on his sea green skin. That and the added muscle was making Raph hot. “Man”, he thought, “this family needs to get their shit together.”

He waited until Mikey was finished with this set of reps and helped him with the weights again.

“I was kinda hoping we could have a talk, too,” Raph said casually.

Mikey glanced at his face and then let his eyes slip down Raph’s body. He reached for his towel and rubbed it across his forehead and neck. “Depends on what you mean by talk.”


Mikey was on his back again, reaching for the bar. “Go ahead.”

Fuck, this was like pulling teeth. “I know how ya’ feel about what we did ta Lav. Don and me, we kinda been realizing we made a big mistake. We think we need ta fix it.” Mikey ran the towel across his head.

“Oh shit, Mikey. Ya’ know that kinda talk pisses me off,” Raph growled. Taking a deep breath, he continued. “We want ta bring Lavinia back. Okay?”

“Yeah, okay.” Mikey tossed the towel down and went back to the weights.

Raph looked down into his blue eyes as he lifted and realized how much he’d been missing the old Mikey; full of laughter, carefree, kind of a pain in the butt. Because Mikey didn’t let them take themselves too seriously and they needed that, otherwise they would end up the way they were now.

“Don’s been watchin’ Lav this whole time,” Raph blurted out.

The weights paused partway down, then Mikey finished. He didn’t sit back up after he reseated them; he met Raph’s eyes past the bar.
“How?” he asked.

“Cameras. Apparently this city is covered in ‘em. Brainiac figured out how ta access the ones at the hospital and her apartment so he can watch her come ‘n go.”

Mikey scratched a spot on his neck. “Why’d he wanna do that? Thought you guys bought into the whole ‘let her go’ thing.”

“Maybe we didn’t so much after a while. After it kinda sunk in what we did. Mikey, I . . . .” Raph trailed off, debating with himself over making this next admission, and decided to go ahead. “I’ve been watching her too, pretty much every night for the last six weeks.”

Mikey sat up slowly, his eyes never leaving Raph’s. “How’s she look?”

“Fuckin’ beautiful,” Raph breathed out sharply, “and pretty fuckin’ unhappy. Damn, Mikey, last night she was standing at that big picture window and crying. I could see those tears rolling down her face and it was all I could do not ta jump across, go inside and just hold her. Ya’ know?”

“Maybe you should have,” Mikey told him.

Raph threw his hands up. “Well, shit Mikey. Easy ta say if ya’ don’t think about what comes after. I been thinkin’ about that a lot. That’s why I came home n’ talked ta Donny. ‘Cause if the rest of this family ain’t on the same page, how the fuck are we supposed ta bring her home?”

Mikey stood up and stretched before walking across to grab a couple of free weights. Back at the bench, he sat down on the end, with his back to Raph.

“Why don’t you say Leo? If Leo isn’t on the same page how are we supposed to bring her home? You guys know damn well where I stand.” Mikey started doing shoulder presses.

“Fine, Leo then.” Raph walked around so he was facing Mikey. “It would probably help if ya’ was talkin’ ta him.”

“Nope.” Mikey set the weights on the floor. “I’ve said everything I’m gonna say. He didn’t listen to me the first time.”

Raph huffed. “Maybe if ya’ didn’t spend all your time locked in Lav’s room ya’ would have noticed Leo’s worried about somethin’. Could be the way this family’s actin’, or ya’ avoidin’ him, or maybe he’s missin’ Lav too. I think it’s a little of each. I think he needs a shove ta get him ta do the right thing.”

The weights came back up. “Don’t know . . . mmph . . . why you’re telling me. Shoving . . . mmph . . . Leo is . . . mmph . . . sorta your job.”

He lowered the weights and snatched up the towel. Carefully and slowly running the cloth over his face, neck, and arms he turned his bright eyes on Raphael.

“So why don’t you start shoving?”

Raph went out again that night. He made his way through the sewers so he could come up near Lav’s building and look for the van with Karai’s men inside. It was in a different spot, but it was still there. He resisted the urge to smash a window and drop a smoke pellet inside, and instead
move back through the sewers to come up a couple of blocks away.

Moving to the rooftops, he took a different route to reach a building that would give him a view into her apartment. This one was a little further away and another rooftop cut off part of the window from view, but it was better than perching in the same spot every night.

He settled down to wait. Sometimes she came in fairly early and some nights he’d sat until well after midnight waiting for her. He hated those nights because he’d start worrying and imagining things, and he’d be so jumpy by the time she got home he’d have to spend a couple of hours running off the anxiety.

At least it wasn’t sleeting tonight. It was freezing though, and if he kept this up he was going to catch a cold. Or worse.

The light snapped on and Raph breathed a sigh of relief. Straining to see, Raph spotted Lav moving to the window and taking up her post behind it. He was too far away to see if she was crying tonight, but it didn’t matter. The set of her shoulders and the way her head tilted to touch the glass was perfectly visible, and both told him she was unhappy.

He watched her for half an hour and then he’d had enough. This whole situation was ridiculous and since he’d already talked to Don and Mikey, only one brother remained to be dealt with; the one who’d started all this. And the mood Raph was in meant that brother was gonna fucking listen.

Driven by a purpose, Raph went straight back to the lair in search of Leo. No one was around as usual, and he didn’t hear anyone in the dojo, so he made his way to Leo’s room.

He wasn’t inside. Going back into the open area, Raph looked at the dojo and saw a faint light dancing through the open door. No sound meant Leo was probably meditating.

Raph strode over to the door and looked inside. His brother was standing in the middle of the room, his katana up, but he wasn’t moving. In fact he appeared to be frozen, his eyes open and knees bent, barely even breathing. Raph’s mouth drew into a thin line; he’d seen Leo do this a couple of times lately, his mind going off somewhere without his body, and Raph did not like it.

“What now, are ya’ practicin’ ta be a statue?” Raph stood in the doorway studying his brother.

Leo snapped out of his reverie and finished his movement with a precise double back kick and a downward slash of his sword. He slid his katana into the sheath and turned.

“You just get back?” he asked.

Raph took a step into the room and his eyes narrowed. “Yeah. In case you’re wonderin’, Karai’s got a van outside Lav’s apartment building. Ya’ can guess what’s inside.”

Leo stopped for just a second then continued toward the exit. Raph moved to block his path.

Pulling up short, Leo eyed Raphael. He didn’t appear to be angry, just determined.

“You aren’t supposed to be near Lav’s apartment,” Leo said mildly.

“Oh, huh. Maybe ya’ don’t care anymore ‘bout her, but some of the rest of us do,” Raph answered in an accusing tone.
Leo’s head came up, starting to feel just a little angry. “Are you going somewhere with this, Raphael? If I remember correctly, sending her away was a joint decision.”

Raph’s hands were curled into fists at his side and he lifted one to point at Leo. “That’s because ya’ played us, Leo. Ya’ knew how much guilt I had over Lav nearly dyin’, and ya’ played the leader card on Don. The only one ya’ couldn’t play was Mikey.”

“Since when have you two been mindless drones?” Leo couldn’t help but ask sarcastically.

It was obvious Raph was holding himself under tight control. “Mindless and bein’ scared for somebody are two different things. Don wasn’t sleepin’ what with tryin’ ta make his damn security fool proof an’ I was beatin’ myself up for rushin’ off without thinkin’ and almost gettin’ all of us killed. Ya’ saw a chance and ya’ got us. Okay, I’ll give ya’ that.”

“So now your mind has changed? She’s still in danger,” Leo told him.

“That’s right.” Raph took a step closer, his voice turning a little mean. “In danger and alone. I think we screwed up and I’ll take part of the blame. But ya’ gotta fix it and I think ya’ know that too. ‘Cause I been watchin’ ya’, Leo, and that little frozen in motion stunt ain’t the first time.”

Leo’s guts clenched. His brother had noticed his distraction and Leo hadn’t realized it.

“You talk to Don about this?” Leo asked quietly.

Raph’s hands opened slowly as he watched Leo, wary of some sort of trick. “I talked ta Don ‘n I talked ta Mikey. Ya’ know how Mike feels; he’s been pretty damn vocal over the whole thing. And pretty damn miserable for two months now. Once I got past the guilt I saw we were wrong. Ya’ just don’t do what we did ta someone in your family. Ta someone you’re supposed ta love.”

Leo looked past Raph’s shoulder and focused on the wall to give himself a break from the intensity of his brother’s gaze. Those gold eyes were trying to pierce him and he needed to process what Raph had just said.

This nameless thing that had been dragging at him since he’d sent Lav away was starting to take form. He didn’t like what he was seeing and he didn’t like what he was becoming because of it.

Eyes back to Raph, who was patiently waiting, staring with an unblinking gaze at Leo.

“I need time to think about this,” Leo murmured.

Raph’s look didn’t soften. “How much more time do ya’ need, Leo? It’s been two fuckin’ months. Ain’t nobody in this lair been happy in that time. And I can tell ya’, Lav ain’t been happy either.”

Leo’s head jerked up. “Is that a guess?”

Raph shook his head. He was tired of playing games. “I been watchin’ her this whole time.”

Anger flared. “You could have been seen, Raph. What were you thinking?”

Raph pushed his chest out, letting his own frustration flare up. “I was thinkin’ we fucked up and practically hand delivered her ta Karai. I was thinkin’ we fucked up and left her out there as shark bait for Lin Zhu. And ya’ know what, Leo? I should have done something about it sooner
instead of bein’ a son of a bitch and lettin’ my pride get in the way by tryin’ ta tell me I did the right thing.”

Leo stepped back, distancing himself from Raph’s overflow of emotion. He didn’t want to be caught in it; didn’t want to be reminded of how much he was losing because of his pride.

Raph watched Leo and kept telling himself to go slower. He had walked in to confront his brother so Leo would set things right. His anger and impatience warred with the burn in his chest as he remembered Lav’s face while she stared out her window, never knowing that Raph was observing her.

He would do anything to make that look of intense pain go away, and if that meant he needed to control his anger with Leo, he was damn well going to do that.

Raph shook his head and told Leo. “Ya’ know Mikey ain’t been with anybody since she left don’t ya? He let me hold him a couple times, but that’s it. And Don and me, well, we do what we gotta ta take the edge off, but it ain’t good like it used ta be. It’s like we’re tryin’ not ta love each other. Like we’re all afraid if we love too much somethin’ else is gonna give.”

Raph didn’t have to tell Leo this; he’d discovered it for himself. Mikey spoke to him when he had to and avoided being in the same room with his oldest brother. It had taken a couple of weeks before Don would share his bed, but he didn’t stay the night and he didn’t have much to say.

With Lav’s departure, all of the warmth seemed to have gone.

“All of that may be true, but that isn’t an excuse for walking straight into danger Raph. You have to know Karai is going to be looking for us around Lav’s home.”

Frustrated, Raph stared at Leo. “What the fuck do I care? Karai is looking for us everywhere and she ain’t gonna stop.”

“Why? We got somethin’ ta live for Leo? Huh? We got somethin’ ta look forward ta? This gonna be the sum total of our lives, livin’ in a stinkin’ hole, worryin’ about death so much we don’t get to live? Fuck that.” He emphasized his final words, placing his face inches from Leo’s.

Raph wasn’t angry, Leo realized with surprise. The words carried the weight but the tone was different. The tone crushed Leo, dissipating his own anger.

His hand shot out to grip Raph’s forearm. “Don’t say that, Raph! We have every reason to live. Just don’t go down that path.”

Raph shook his hand loose. “Then fix this, Leo. Figure it out and fix it. We need Lav and she needs us. It’s just that simple.”

“What if I can’t?” Leo asked in a softer voice.

Raph stared in surprise. First frozen and now doubtful.

“You’re as fucked up as the rest of us, ain’t ya’? Only difference is me and Don have figured out why we went along with your plan ‘n you’re still trying ta figure yourself out. Light a few more candles if ya’ have ta and sit your ass down. For once don’t worry ‘bout meditating and
Leo nodded, his eyes resting on Lav’s tonfas. “I haven’t been much of a leader lately, have I?”

Raph smirked. “We’ll just say ya’ been on vacation. It’s time ta go back ta work before I decide ta overthrow your government.”

Leo’s head snapped around and a corner of his mouth went up. “Like that’s going to ever happen.”

“Whatever.” Raph turned towards the door, pausing before he left the dojo. “Just so ya’ know, Don’s been watchin’ Lav too. He tapped into some cameras so he could keep an eye on her. She’s unhappy and she’s workin’ way too hard, but she’s still here, Leo. She didn’t run away this time. That’s kinda important, don’t ya’ think?”

With that, Raph left. Leo stared after him, his mind in turmoil. His brother suggested he sit and think and forget about meditating, but meditating was how Leo worked through difficult problems.

So he lit a few more candles and settled himself, determined to find his answers tonight, no matter how long it took.
Chapter Summary

Master Splinter had been deeply asleep when a dread pulled him awake. Looking around his room; the elderly rat could find nothing out of place.

Rising slowly, he let his senses take him out of his own room and into the lair. Head down, eyes closed, he breathed deeply and then moved towards the dojo.

The door was slightly ajar and he silently slid into the training area.

Leo knelt on the floor, his head down and eyes closed. Two candles affixed in ledges on the wall had nearly burned themselves out.

Master Splinter looked over his oldest son. His hands were on his thighs, the fingers curled tightly into the palms of his hands. He was not relaxed; his father had only to glance at his face to see the lines etched there.

The last time Leonardo had worn this look his father had to send him to the Ancient One to be healed.

Determined to hold what was left of his family together, the father moved to stand before the son.

"Leonardo."

Leo’s eyes opened. "Sensei." He bowed low and Master Splinter felt the wave of doubt that moved with his son.

"Why are you here alone in the dark my son?" his father asked gently.

"Master Splinter. I . . . I think I’ve made a mistake." Leo teeth clashed together, ashamed to admit this to his Sensei.

"Only a true leader would recognize such a thing, Leonardo. Only a great one would admit it. You do not need to sit in darkness and admit it alone. I have turned this responsibility over to you while I still live in order that you may avail yourself of my counsel."

Leo ground his fists against his thighs before saying, "I shouldn’t have sent Lavinia away."

His father nodded slowly. "You are correct."
Leo looked at his father in surprise. “I thought you agreed with my action.”

Master Splinter touched his shoulder lightly; then drew his hand back. “I agreed it was your decision to make. Do you remember what I said to you?”

Leo frowned. “You said I should know where the decision came from. At the time, I was sure I was putting my heart aside and making the decision logically.”

“How now sit in the dark and question your own mind,” Master Splinter said.

Leo flipped up a hand, the action betraying the emotions wrestling inside of him. “I question why I made my choice. The path my mind took at the time seemed selfless; I was convinced that I chose to send her away because of my love and desire to protect her.”

Master Splinter watched his son fight with something deeper inside of him. Once again his hand found Leonardo’s shoulder and this time he left it there.

The touch gave Leo the courage to admit what he now believed to be true. “I truly did want to protect her from harm, but it was my own fear that made me act rashly. I was afraid Sensei . . .” Leo’s voice trailed away.

His father squeezed his shoulder. “Finish it,” he urged.

Taking a deep breath, Leo admitted, “It was the fear that I would witness her death and that I would be responsible. It was fear of the feeling I had when we almost lost her to Karai before. I have been acknowledging my brothers pain and helping them to deal with their fears while ignoring my own.”

“Yes, all of that is true, Leonardo. Holding it inside of you made it much worse; it colored all your future actions and decisions.”

“I have torn our family apart and placed her in worse danger. Now she does not have us to help protect her from an enemy that is not hers.” Leo spoke harshly, berating himself.

“You say family and Lavinia in the same sentence, my son, and then say Karai is not her enemy. If Lavinia is family, then all our enemies are shared. It is unfair to hold your woman so far away from your burdens when it is her place to stand with you and face them. That is what women do, Leonardo, it is what they have always done. Lavinia did not want to be sheltered and pushed away; she wanted to fight beside you,” Master Splinter said.

Leo’s pain was evident as he asked his father, “How do I fix what I have done?”

Master Splinter answered with feeling, “The best way, I have found, is to take the first step and walk forward from there.”

Leo stood slowly and bowed to his father. “I must go to her.”

Master Splinter’s eyes crinkled with his smile. “Yes and quickly. None of you deserves to suffer any longer. Do not let this experience weigh you down, my son. It is often the ways of love to come upon a rocky path. When it does, you work to find or make a better one.”

“Thank you, father.” Leo bowed and jogged from the dojo.

Inside the lab, both Raph and Don heard Leo run past. Raph walked over to look through the open door and watched their leader leave the lair, moving fast and with a purpose. Turning his
head slightly, he spotted their father exiting the dojo. Their eyes met and Master Splinter lifted his brows, allowing a small smile to show on his usually passive face.

Excitedly, Raph looked back at Don, a wide grin on his face as he gave his brainiac brother the thumbs up sign.

The night was very dark, without even the smallest sliver of moon. It suited Leo as he ran the rooftops, watching for Foot patrols. He was driven with the need to see her now, to tell her he was wrong and to bring her back. He did not want the Foot or Karai to interrupt what needed to be done.

Raphael had been correct; there were no more spies on the rooftops. He was careful to check for surveillance equipment, for anything out of place on the familiar adjoining buildings. Certain there was nothing, Leo jumped across to Lavinia’s roof, crouching low as he scurried to her door.

He wasn’t sure how he would enter if she had removed his handprint from the access panel. Leo didn’t believe she would have thought to do that, and when he pressed his palm to the thermal scanner, he found he was correct. The lock snapped back audibly and Leo pushed his way into the darkness of Lav’s apartment.

The smell of her instantly touched his nostrils and he inhaled deeply, letting the scent fill his lungs. Moving further into the apartment, he could sense her aura where it lingered most; near the bookcases, at the table, against the windows. It was dark and sad, unlike her in every way, and it struck him how she must have suffered these two months.

Leo resolved to make this right quickly and then to spend the rest of his very long life making up for his error.

It only took moments to ascertain that she wasn’t home. He could have checked on her whereabouts with Donny before he left the lair, but Leo hadn’t wanted to talk to anyone else while his mind was intently focused on his mission.

With a resigned sigh, Leo took a seat on a chair in a dark corner and settled down to wait.

Detective Sandoval had come to Lavinia early that morning at her office. Cynthia had buzzed on the intercom and breathlessly announced his presence, wanting to know what to do. She was obviously expecting the worst; and Lav, not knowing what to expect, asked her assistant to send him in.

Lav crossed the room with an outstretched hand to greet him politely. He took hers just as politely, his hand dry and firm as they exchanged good days. The last time they had seen each other, Sandoval was informing her of the destruction of a blood cult and subsequent arrests. He had also relayed the information that the man who was stalking her appeared to be dead.

That hadn’t been true until sometime later, when Leo had cut off the man’s head. But Sandoval knew nothing about that.

He was a relatively young man for his position, probably in his early thirties; tall and slender with broad shoulders, dark hair and eyes, wide lips and a slightly cocky attitude, even when serious.

He was serious now, she could see. Knowing of absolutely nothing she could have done to
earn this visit, she urged him to a seat on the couch in her conversation area and smoothed her skirt as she sat in a chair opposite him.

“Ms. Daniel, I know we didn’t part on the best of terms the last time we saw each other,” he told her without preliminaries, “so you have every right to toss me out on my ear. I’ve come to ask a favor of you.”

Lav cocked her head to study him. He appeared determined, and the emotion she read said he was, so she replied, “I can always say no.”

A flash of white teeth showed before he said, “Of course. I need expert help with a child. You’re an expert; one of the best I’ve been told. The situation is pretty critical and I need the best.”

He wasn’t spreading butter; he was being sincere, so Lav said, “Tell me.”

Sandoval spread his hands, moving them as he talked; an expressive man. “The little girl is eight and her foster parents brought her to the hospital last night with a story about how she was hurt by a neighborhood kid. She was beaten up, cuts and bruises and a broken arm. The foster parents wanted her patched up quickly so they could leave, but the on-duty doctor found something wrong with their story, so he did a pelvic exam. She isn’t intact.”

Lav found his choice of words sensitive and appreciated the delicacy.

“Did the doctor speak to her foster parents?” she asked.

“Yes. They swear they know nothing and were pretty incensed when he informed them the police needed to be called. That set off his radar, which is how I wound up with the case. These people foster quite a few young children. I went there first thing this morning and talked to them. They insist that whatever was done to the little girl is the fault of a bad neighborhood kid.”

He cleared his throat before proceeding, a hint of color high on his cheekbones told her of remembered anger.

“That little girl shows signs of continuous abuse, not a one-time attack. I’ve done this long enough to know the physical manifestations. Those people are lying. But the girl won’t say anything. We’ve got social workers going to the residence; they can move faster than our getting a search warrant, but I’ll lay odds they find nothing.” Sandoval looked hard at Lavinia.

“Like I said, I’ve been doing this awhile,” he said.

The look was compelling; a mixture of hard reality, pain, and stoicism. It touched her.

“What can I do?” Lav asked.

“Come have a look at her. Talk to her. The hospital staff says children are drawn to you; that you understand them and they know it. Anything she can tell us will help us get to the bottom of what really happened to her. She’s afraid.”

Lav stood up and told him, “Let’s go now.”

She went with him in his car, telling Cynthia she didn’t know when she’d return and not to worry. Her assistant and friend would worry anyway.

The staff greeted her when she arrived with Sandoval in the children’s hospital wing. Her first stop was at the nurses’ station, where she acquired the girl’s chart and glanced over it quickly.
Sandoval was right, her injuries were severe and some of the trauma was old, healed over scar
tissue that was easily read by practiced eyes.

The little girl had been raped, on more than one occasion.

Lav closed her eyes and drew in a shaky breath. She hated these cases most of all and it
took her a minute to find her center and calm herself enough to do her job. Sandoval watched her,
his face compassionate and patient.

“I’ll talk to her in the game room. There’s a little window you can watch from,” Lavinia
told him.

“I know; been down this road a few times,” Sandoval said.

As they walked together, Lav said, “The exam shows anal scarring as well as vaginal
trauma. She’s been pretty thoroughly abused, and over a period of time. Tell me how they get away
with this.”

Sandoval shrugged, trying not to sound hardened. “No one will say anything.”

A nurse in pink walked towards them, pushing a wheelchair holding a frail Hispanic girl.
Sandoval quickly moved around the corner out of sight.

Lav kneeled in front of the chair as they came to a halt in front of the game room, smiling
gently and keeping her hands to herself.

“Hello,” she told the girl. The girl’s expression was blank as she looked back at Lav, so
Lavinia tried again. “¡Hola.”

The girl smiled a little and said in a small voice, “¡Hola.”

“Mi nombre es Lavinia. Y tú? Como te llamas?”

“Mmm, Elana.”

Lav asked, “Elana, le gustaría ver a la sala de juegos?”

Elana’s eyes lit up. “Si.”

At her look, the nurse left them and Lav pushed the wheelchair into the game room. She
moved the chair around the room slowly, allowing Elana time to see everything before stopping at
a child’s table covered with craft items. The little girl looked up at her, eyes bright, and Lav
continued in Spanish.

“Go ahead and make something. May I sit with you while you work?”

The little head bobbed up and down as she reached with one good hand to draw crayons and
colored paper towards her. Working as best she could with just the one hand, Elana began to draw,
her little tongue caught between her teeth.

After almost ten minutes, Lav started talking softly to her about random things, until Elana
was completely relaxed in her presence. Lav didn’t ask any direct questions, but hovered around
the edges of what she wanted to know. Bit by bit the girl revealed things, and Lav continued to dip
here and there, pressing gently when she sensed fear and then moving away quickly.

They stayed in the room together for over an hour. Lav brought her juice from the small
refrigerator and admired her drawings. Elana signed her name to one and gave it to Lav; it was a self-portrait. In the picture, Elana was smiling a big toothy grin and Lav’s heart skipped a beat.

The crucial piece of information came suddenly and without thought, slipping unnoticed from Elana’s mouth. Lav let it lay and moved on to something else; then came back to it, eliciting a little more information, apparently everything the child had.

Lavinia touched her then, letting her hand rest on the thin, frail arm. She pushed her energy into the girl, the green glow visible to no one other than herself and the only other mutants she knew.

“Gracias Elana. Necesitas que descansar,” Lav told her, pressing the button to call the nurse.

“Bien,” Elana said, looking up with a smile as Lav stood. The nurse came in and wheeled the chair from the room.

As soon as she was gone, Sandoval stepped into the room.

“You heard?” Lav asked him.

He nodded. “Didn’t know you spoke Spanish. So they have a storage unit; that shouldn’t be too hard to track down. I wonder what kind of wonderful things they have hidden there.”

Lav grimaced. “I don’t. My imagination and Elana’s description were enough. I guess a public stoning is out of the question?”

Sandoval laughed quietly. “I’m afraid so. I’ll settle for enough evidence to put them away for good. When she started talking about a cold metal table, my skin crawled.”

“It made me feel a little . . . .” The room started to spin suddenly, and Lav’s vision crawled sideways.

Panicked she looked around and saw bright white walls, a desk covered with medical equipment, and a large metal table in the center of the room. Thick leather straps lay open and waiting and Lav heard a young voice screaming, screaming . . . it was hers.

“Down, sit down.” A strong voice and hands on her arms brought her back.

Blinking hard, Lav was back in the game room, seated with her head between her legs. Nausea rolled over her in waves and she fought it back, feeling the sweat drip from her face and neck.

“Oh God,” she muttered, shaking.

Sandoval grabbed some paper towels and a water bottle from the refrigerator, wetting the towels from that and pressing them to her neck. After a minute, she nodded and reached for them, blotting her face and sitting up.

The detective squatted in front of her and searched her face. “Are you okay?”

“Yes,” she said softly. “Sorry, delayed reaction.”

“No, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have asked that of you,” he said regretfully.

With a tremulous smile, Lav told him, “You’re forgiven if I can have some of that water.”
He twisted the top off and handed her the bottle. Lav took a sip, swished it around her mouth a little; then let it trickle down her throat. After a deeper drink she felt better.

“I was fostered as a kid.” The information burst out of her.

“Crap. I didn’t know. I wouldn’t have asked . . . .” he started to say.

“No. Don’t go soft on me now,” she interrupted. “I can deal with my demons better if you go out and capture them.”

His smile was grim. “I will, I promise.”

Lav started to rise and Sandoval put an arm around her to help. She pulled away from him quickly and then reddened a little at her abruptness. He pretended not too notice.

“Can I at least buy you lunch to pay you back for all your help?” he asked her.

Lav started to decline and then thought better of it. She didn’t want him to feel beholden to her. Better to be done with this now and separate from him.

“The cafeteria here is actually pretty good,” she told him.

That’s where they went. Lav managed half a sandwich and two cups of strong tea while he downed a burger and fries. He was a good listener and she found herself telling him just a little about her time in Japan with her foster family, going nowhere near the time before and after that, and not elaborating at all. He didn’t question her about any of it and she was grateful for that.

He drove her back to her office in companionable silence. Before she could get out of the car though, he stopped her.

“Lavinia,” he began, looking intently at her. She had made him stop calling her Ms. Daniel halfway through lunch. “You haven’t said anything about your personal life so I’m going to ask and you can just tell me to go to hell.”

Lav stiffened at his words. This was a reminder she didn’t need, but she was going to have to learn to deal with it eventually.

“What do you want to know?” she asked calmly enough.

“Is there . . . do you have . . . .” He stopped again, and then laughed in embarrassment. “Do you have a boyfriend?”

Lav’s nails dug into her palms, though outwardly she gave no sign. “No Tomas. I don’t have a boyfriend. I don’t date.” She hoped that statement was definitive enough.

It wasn’t. Sandoval wasn’t a quitter and she certainly had proof enough of that from the last time they’d run across each other.

“You should try it sometime. I could tell you everything you need to know over dinner tonight.” He smiled again; white teeth against dark skin.

He was a handsome man and a confident one. Lavinia had no interest in him whatsoever.

“Thank you, no. My focus is my work. I have no time or inclination for anything else.” She opened the door quickly and hopped out.
Before she could close it, he asked, “Do you want me to let you know what comes of our investigation?”

Lav knew he was trying to keep the lines of communication open and wanted to tell him no, but she couldn’t. She did want to know what was happening with this case, feeling a personal connection to that little girl, Elana.

She leaned in and gave him her eyes. “I would, thank you. Whatever you feel comfortable telling me.”

“No problem. I’ll call you later,” he promised and she shut the car door.

When he called, as she knew he would, he told her they had found the storage facility and gotten a search warrant. The couple’s house was clean as a whistle, but the storage space was a gold mine of evidence. The foster parents had even taped themselves and others having sex with children, and more people were being rounded up.

Lavinia was disgusted and sickened by the extent of their perversion, and happy that she’d help stop them. The children would have years of counseling ahead of them and have to endure being shuffled to yet another home. Lavinia would help with that, she decided. She knew of some really good places, places where Elana could live without fear.

Before he hung up, Sandoval asked her out again. She had to smile at his persistence, unwanted as it was. He was a good man and she was polite but firm with her no.

It was late, nearly ten, when she quit working for the night. The nightmarish events of the day and the sideways slip of her memory cap were tiring enough alone, and Lav had pushed other work on top in the vain hope that she might fall easily into sleep tonight.

When she came through the door at her apartment building, the night doorman called to her.

“Miss Lavinia, a messenger brought these for you.”

Moving to his desk, Lav saw a large bouquet of flowers in a simple white vase.

“Thank you Douglas.” She reached for the card as he moved away.

It read, “Thank you for everything. Tomas Sandoval.”

Lav sighed as she replaced the card. She was going to have to think of a better word than persistent to describe the detective.

She juggled the vase as she dug for her apartment keys. The flowers tickled her nose and she inhaled the scent of one, enjoying the gift despite its future ramifications.

Kicking the door shut behind her, Lav dropped her purse and laptop on the foyer table before sliding her shoes off. With the vase in her hands, she entered the living room so she could set it down, and then realized she wasn’t alone.

Lav’s spine stiffened. She had been expecting someone to successfully break into her apartment since the first attempt had met with failure. She didn’t expect they would stay and wait for her.

Placing the vase on the coffee table, Lav tried to appear unaware of her intruder. If she could get to the kitchen, an ample supply of weapons would be easily at hand.
Before she could move though, a familiar voice cut through the silence.

“Don’t be alarmed, Lav. It’s just me.” Leo rose from his seat in the shadows and moved towards her.

Lav’s heart nearly jumped out of her chest. Eyes wide with fear, she barely squeaked out, “Who? Who’s hurt? How bad is it?”

Damn. He should have realized his sudden appearance would trigger this kind of panic.

“No, no. It’s okay, no one is hurt,” Leo assured her quickly. Seeing she was still shaking badly, he moved closer. “Lavinia, really, no one is hurt. They’re all just fine. I’m sorry I shouldn’t have sprung out at you like that.”

Lav wrapped her arms around herself and tried to control the aftermath of the wild rush of adrenaline. It took her a minute to calm down; the day had already been too much and this coming on top was . . .

Why was Leo here if no one was injured?

Her shaking stopped and Lav stared at Leo, unable to comprehend his presence. She didn’t owe them anything and they owed her nothing. The break was supposed to be clean.

So she asked, “What are you doing here?”

And he answered simply, “I came to bring you back.”

A myriad of emotions rushed to fill her, each vying for dominance. Intense pain climbed up near the top, grappling with anger; until they were both so bunched together she couldn’t tell the difference.

All she could manage to say was, “No.”

Leo stopped to study her when she said that. She looked a little tired, and the scare he had given her was still obvious on her face. But she was still the most beautiful woman he’d ever known and he was forced to acknowledge his longing.

He also had to acknowledge her stubbornness. Leo knew her well enough to tell by the set of her mouth and the tilt of her head that she had made her mind up about something and wasn’t going to be shaken loose. He was afraid he knew what that something was.

Lav could tell Leo was studying her; it was obvious at his silence when she said no. Did he think that the hurt and betrayal she felt could so easily be dismissed? That thought angered her more, the sheer callousness of his assumption that she was willing to come back after being treated so poorly.

“Lavinia, will you at least talk to me about this? I can understand your anger; it’s very fair considering what happened. We did think . . . I did think that we were doing the right thing.”

“Yes, I know what you told me. You were sending me away because of the danger to me and to your brothers. So tell me, Leonardo, what has changed in two months? There is still danger and I’m still the same person I was when you got rid of me.” Her voice was bitter, her choice of words severe.

“We weren’t trying to get rid of you.” Leo moved in front of her, almost within arm’s
reach. “Lav, mistakes were made and I’ve come to set things right. Having you come home with me is a good start.”

“Do you think that’s what I want?” Lav shot at him.

Leo was taken aback for a moment. “Isn’t it? Isn’t that what you’ve always wanted, Lav? A family and a place to belong?”

“Families trust each other. Families work through their problems and don’t try to find easy shortcuts,” Lav choked out. “Families who really care about each other don’t disown someone for things completely out of their control.”

“You could have been more cautious,” he snapped at her then was instantly sorry.

It was too late. She shook her head at him, saying, “I really don’t know why you’re here. If you want me to own that, I do. I was careless and I apologized for it. I told you I’d find a way to deal with my fear of something happening to you. You found the way for me. Now the only thing I have to worry about is myself. So, thank you. Thank you and goodbye.”

She started to walk away. Leo darted forward to grab her arm.

“Lavinia, can we start over please? Maybe the best thing to do is to set all those old words aside and start fresh again.”

Lav pulled her arm free. “It may be easy for you to forget what was said and done but it’s not that easy for me. It took me two months to come to terms with my changed existence and now I’ve moved on. One thing this life has taught me is I should never look back.”

“If you never look back, Lav, how will you learn?” Leo asked.

She shook her head. “That may be a good theory for battle, but I’m not in one. I’m just trying to survive and come out with a little piece of me intact. I’ve already given enough of myself to you; I’m not giving any more.”

With that she turned on her heel and strode from the room, shoulders back and head up. Leo wasn’t expecting such a summary dismissal and it tweaked his pride.

“Lavinia, come back here.” His tone was a little harsh but it didn’t matter. She disappeared around the corner going towards her bedroom and didn’t even look back at him.

Leo stood in the middle of the room, frustrated and more than a little angry with himself. All the words he wanted to say; all the words he meant to say were still bottled up inside of him. Somehow her stubborn disinterest had struck a nerve, as she probably knew it would, and his own pride had responded.

He should have said he was sorry. He should have told her that he acted without thought. He should have admitted that he had been afraid. He should have told her he loved her.

Maybe the best thing to do would be to follow her and say those things now. Leo took a couple of steps in that direction when his eyes noticed the card protruding out of the bouquet of flowers she’d carried into the room. He’d taken it for granted she’d bought them for herself; women did that, she used to do that sometimes at the lair.

These were a gift. His steps faltered and he stood stock still. Someone had given Lavinia flowers. Someone had given his Lavinia flowers.
He glanced in the direction of her bedroom and then snatched the card out of the bouquet. Flipping open the tiny envelope he pulled the card out and read it.

“Thank you for everything. Tomas Sandoval.”

Leo held the card up and stared at it for several moments without moving. A simple card and some flowers didn’t mean anything, he told himself.

“Now I’ve moved on”. She said that and now he wondered. Moved on to what? Another life, another man?

Shell no. That wasn’t Lavinia. She’d lived most of her life without that kind of personal interaction. She’d never even had a relationship until she met the Turtles. Until Leo took her virginity.

He didn’t like where his mind was going and decided to stop those thoughts immediately. But he knew he couldn’t talk to her right now either. He wouldn’t say the right things.

Leo unconsciously shoved the card into his belt as he turned toward the roof access door. When she had time to calm down he would try again.

On the roof, Leonardo inhaled deeply of the night air. He would try again when he had calmed down, too.

Lavinia sat on the edge of her bed staring with unseeing eyes at the floor. Leo had come to get her and she had told him to leave. There were so many nights in the last two months when she had fantasized about that; his coming to tell her they had been wrong and they needed her and they hurt without her.

He hadn’t said any of that, just that he’d come to bring her back. Like he was reciting some script written down for him by someone else. Not a word about loving her, not even an ‘I’m sorry’. He’d certainly taken the opportunity to snap at her again about her carelessness. Why the hell would he show up after nine long weeks if he just wanted to remind her of her failures?

Lav couldn’t forget even if she’d wanted to. His opening up old wounds and then telling her to forget what had been said because that suited his convenience was more than she could take.

He ordered her back when she walked away. Ordered her. Snapping off commands and expecting her to obey like nothing had happened between them.

The worst was that he didn’t follow her. Lav bit her lip and tears welled up and over her lower lids. How stupid and hysterically female that was. Walk away and make him follow you, Lav, make him whimper and cry and tell you how you mean everything to him and he’s so sorry he hurt you. Make him say he’ll never take your love for granted again and make him hold you so tight you can’t breathe before you forgive him.

He didn’t though. Leonardo had just left. Duty done, probably to appease Splinter. Now he could go home and tell them all she wouldn’t talk to him and she’d said she was done with them for good. He would tell Splinter she was fine without them and he needn’t worry about her.

With a shaking hand she wiped at the tears on her face and laughed at herself. Use the worst possible words and see how bad you can make yourself feel, Lavinia.
Part of her wanted to sit on the bed and remain numb and unmoving for the rest of the night. Another part of her wanted to scream and run, just run, until all her energy was gone and she could collapse.

Neither of those mattered much, because they weren’t the thing her heart wanted most. Her heart wanted four mutant Turtles and she just wasn’t willing to give in to her heart anymore.

Leonardo didn’t know his brothers had watched him leave the lair to go to Lavinia. He was only a little surprised though, to find Raph and Don seated at the kitchen table waiting for him to get back. He was more surprised to find Mikey there as well.

“You’re alone.” Raph blurted out.

Leo’s nerves were already ragged and didn’t need Raph’s special brand of cynicism. He also didn’t feel like being coy.

“Did Master Splinter tell you where I was going?” Leo asked, arms crossed and feet planted firmly.

Raph took in his stance and knew it hadn’t gone well.

“We figured it out for ourselves when ya’ went runnin’ outta here,” Raph said. “What happened?”

Leo glanced at Mikey, then quickly away. His brother was looking at him expectantly, and Leo desperately wanted to say something encouraging, but he knew he couldn’t lie.

“She’s not . . . happy with us,” Leo answered.

Don sat up straighter in his chair. “We shouldn’t expect her to be.” He eyed Leo, knowing he was holding something back. “What exactly did she say?”

Once again, Leo’s eyes flicked to Mikey. This was the longest his little brother had spent in the same room with him, not counting practice, in over two months.

“She said she doesn’t want to look back; that she’s accepted what happened and she’s moved on. I asked her to come back with me and she said no,” Leo told them truthfully.

“Did you tell her you were sorry and you love her?” Mikey asked him directly.

Leo’s arms came down and so did his shoulders. It struck him how easily Mikey could find the right words; could always find the right words. Unless it was a fight, Leo had a much harder time expressing himself.

“You didn’t, did you?” Mikey answered himself. “Geez, Leo, did you think all you had to do was say ‘Hey Lav, come back to the lair with me’ and she was gonna smile and all would be forgiven?”

“I meant to tell her all of those things, Mikey.” Leo’s hands slapped against his sides in aggravation. “The wrong words came out and she was mad. I expected her to be upset; I didn’t know she’d be so angry.”

“So ya’ just left,” Raph said.
“She went to her room. I didn’t have a choice,” Leo explained.

Don huffed lightly. “You could have followed her. She probably wanted you to.”

Leo blinked and looked away from them. He didn’t want them to know what had stopped him from doing just that.

“Give her time to cool down. I’ll try again,” Leo promised. “I won’t give up; I know she still cares about us.”

He turned to leave and a small white rectangular paper dropped from his belt, dislodged by his earlier motion. Raph pounced on it.

“What’s this?” he asked, holding it up and spotting Lav’s name scrawled across the front.

Leo turned and quickly grabbed for it. Raph snatched it away and his eyes narrowed.

“Somethin’ ya’ ain’t telling us Leo?” Raph growled.

“It isn’t anything Raph. Give it to me.” Leo moved for it again and Raph swung his shell around to hold Leo off.

Raph pulled the card from the envelope and read it quickly. His face, which had been fairly calm, started to cloud over as he read the little card again.

“What the fuck is this?” Waving the card in Leo’s face, Raph turned angry.

“Don’t take it the wrong way, Raph. It’s just a card that came with some flowers,” Leo said, trying to calm him.

“You took it?” Don was incredulous. “If it’s not important, why did you take it? Raph, what does it say?”

Raph handed the card to Don without taking his eyes off Leo. Mikey got up and leaned over Don’s shoulder to read.

Raph took a step towards Leo. “Thanks for what, Leo? What’s he thankin’ her for? Goin’ out with him; fuckin’ his lights out? What? Is that why ya’ came back without her?”

“Lav’s not like that,” Leo snapped.

“Oh ho! Ya’ think she’s waiting for ya’, gonna wait forever, huh? Never gonna be with another man if she can’t have ya’?” Raph snarled.

“What do you want me to do, Raph? I’m trying to get her back but she’s shutting me out,” Leo shot back, his fists clenching.

“Let me go,” Don interrupted them, trying to avoid the inevitable fight. “Let me talk to her. Maybe a different approach will work better and I’ll be able to reach her.”
Raph’s eyes didn’t leave Leo. “How ‘bout I go instead? Then I can find out about this card.”

“Nuh uh,” Mikey broke in. “No way Raph. You don’t need to ask about the card; it’ll just upset her more. Don has always been able to talk to Lav and get her to do stuff. He can find out about the damn card without pissing her off.”

They all turned to look at Mike as he said that. His look was determined, his voice strong. They had not listened to him before when he’d told them not to send Lavinia away, but he was going to do his level best to make them listen now.

Leo forgot about Raph and his anger in favor of trying to make peace with Michelangelo.

“You’re right Mikey. Don, maybe tomorrow night? I don’t think she’ll want to talk to anyone else tonight. I didn’t handle it very well.” The admission was painful, but he decided to take the responsibility.

It was all Mikey wanted to hear. For the first time in two months, Mikey smiled at him.

Don let himself into Lav’s apartment without a preliminary knock. From the way she had left it with Leo, he didn’t think she would open the door for him.

He had waited to leave the lair until the cameras outside her building showed her coming home for the evening. Leo had told him she hadn’t reprogrammed the doors, but he’d brought his bag just in case he had to break in. Don was determined not to be shut out as Leo had been.

He spotted the flowers sitting on the coffee table. It was a pretty big bouquet he noticed darkly.

There was one light burning in the foyer, leaving the rest of the apartment in total darkness. A hint of a frown touched Don’s face, not at the darkness; Lav had been home for over an hour, but at the feeling in the air. Something was off.

He saw her coat lying haphazardly across the back of the couch. Moving further into the room, he found what had bothered him.

Lav lay on the floor behind the couch.

Don ran swiftly over to her still form and knelt next to her. She appeared to be breathing regularly, so he touched a finger to her neck to check her pulse. It was strong and with a sigh of relief, he realized what had happened.

She had overextended her powers and barely made it home before collapsing from exhaustion.

The pain that welled up in his heart was almost unbearable. How many times had she done this since she’d left them?

Reaching beneath her Don lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bedroom. Placing her carefully on the mattress, Don pulled the blankets down out of the way, and bent over to remove her shoes.

Lav felt someone touch her and her eyes opened slightly. It took a moment to focus through
the fatigue.

It was Donatello.

“Don?” she whispered, sure she was imagining things.

The figure quickly moved closer, leaning over her face and brushing her hair back from her forehead. His face swam into her view and then became solid.


“Why . . . ?” she managed to ask.

He shook his head, gently running his thumb across her forehead. “Later.” His calm, insistent voice sent her into a deep sleep.

Hours later, Lav woke up. She was still groggy and unsure as to how long she’d been out. She was equally unsure if she had imagined Don in her apartment.

Turning her head to glance at the windows, Lav saw only darkness. Her bedside clock registered the time as eight. The clock reminded her that she was in her bed, though she didn’t remember making it this far. Indeed, the last thing she remembered was a last ditch effort to get into the apartment and get the door shut.

Eight? Lav moaned; she was sure she’d left the hospital at ten-thirty. Had she slept through an entire day?

Lav moved an arm to lift it from the blankets and realized she wasn’t clothed. There was no way she’d had enough energy to get undressed.

Her bedroom door opened and she turned towards the sound. Donatello walked in, carrying a tray.

A sharp pain stabbed her chest suddenly at the sight of him.

“Hey,” he said, his mild voice washing soothingly over her distraught nerves.

“Hey,” Lav responded, striving to keep her voice neutral.

He set the tray on the bed next to her and with a small smile said, “I thought you might be hungry. It’s just soup; shouldn’t be too hard on the digestion.”

She didn’t look at the bowl, although the smell attracted her stomach. Her eyes followed him as he walked around to the side of the bed closest to where she lay. He kneeled next to her.

Somehow his hand found hers and grasped it tightly.

“You gave me a scare,” Don confessed in a hushed voice.

“How did you find me?” Lav asked; her tone even.

Don looked down at their hands and then back to catch her eyes. “I was coming to talk to you. I . . . I’ve been watching the cameras at the entrance to the building so I’d know when you were home.”

With a sigh, Lav turned to face the ceiling and told him, “Pointless.”
He waited for a minute to see if she’d elaborate. When she said nothing else, he said, “I
don’t agree. If I hadn’t come, you’d still be lying on the floor in the living room.”

She shrugged, saying nothing. Don gripped her hand tighter.

“How often, Lav? How many times has this happened since you left us?”

Her head snapped around. “I didn’t leave you,” Lav said fiercely.

Don grimaced. “I know; I’m sorry. Poor choice of words. Please, can you just talk to me?”

“We have nothing to say to each other,” she said flatly, her head turning away.

Don’s throat caught. He waited a minute before trying to speak again. “Lavinia. I’m sorry;
all of us are sorry. We made a big mistake. Please give us the chance to make it up to you.”

Her lips pressed tight. Don could see a light film gather over her eyes and then she blinked it away.

Lav let herself breathe deeply for a few minutes, feeling Don’s soft, dark eyes glued to her
face. She needed to be stalwart so she dragged up her reserves before turning to face him again.

“Fool me once . . . .” she trailed off, closing her eyes and compressing her mouth.

Don pulled her hand to his chest. “No, no Lav, it’s not like that. I love you, I didn’t lie. I
didn’t . . . .” He moved his face closer to hers, insistent, trying to will her to look at him.

Her face was a mask again when she did turn back to meet his gaze.

“Donatello,” Lav said; voice mild and emotionless, “go home.”

Don stared at her. Her words hurt, as she no doubt intended.

“I’m not leaving you like this,” Don insisted. “Damn it, Lavinia! Are you trying to kill
yourself?”

Her eyes opened wide in amazement. “You like yourself a lot, don’t you, Don? What I do
isn’t your concern and it certainly isn’t about you. If I work too hard it’s because I choose to, not
because I can’t live without you guys.”

Don was embarrassed. He didn’t mean for his words to sound as though he were
questioning her motivations.

“I didn’t mean it that way, Lav. I was just . . . scared. When I found you, I had a horrible
thought that I’d lost you and you’d never know what you mean to me; that I’d never get the chance
to tell you.”

“No you’ve told me.” Lav’s voice was grim. “Don’t let me keep you.”

Donatello shook his head. “I know you better than that. You’re trying to be clinical so you
can detach yourself from your emotions. If you hate me now then yell at me; curse me, tell me
what you think. This other way of dealing isn’t healthy.”

Lav could feel her emotions start to roil in her gut. For two months she’d swallowed them,
their taste bitter and cold and she didn’t want them coming back up.
“No,” she hissed. “I said everything I needed to say to Leo. I don’t owe any of you anything, least of all an explanation as to how I feel.”

She wanted to say more but stopped herself quickly; afraid once the floodgate opened she wouldn’t be able to control the flow. Lav was trembling and breathing in short, hard gasps, working to push her feelings back into her internal box and snap it closed.

Don watched her struggle, still holding her hand to his chest. His heart was beating fast, his mind racing to find the right words so she wouldn’t shut down.

Leaning close to her face, Don husked, “I’ve missed you so.”

Lav’s eyes closed and she shuddered, feeling his breath on her cheek. A tear crept past her eyelid, rolling over her temple, and she felt Don’s mouth touch it.

“Don’t . . . do that,” she pleaded in barely a whisper.

Don nuzzled his beak into her hair, the tone of her voice making him shake. His chest felt so tight, making every breath difficult, and forced a rasp into his voice. “Lavinia. Come back. Come home.”

His low sob drew one from her as well. Home. She didn’t know what that was anymore, all she knew was that the stabbing pain in her chest was worse, and so was the feeling of loss. Lav couldn’t take that hopeless, empty, discarded feeling anymore. She never wanted to experience it again and she certainly wasn’t going to open herself up a third time.

It took all of her strength to pull away from Don and sit up. Carefully and slowly, she withdrew her hand from his and forced the shutters down over her face.

“I’m sorry Donatello. I don’t go back. I’m done with that life, all of it; ninjitsu, clan, family, honor, it’s all for someone else. Could you leave, please?”

Don stared at her, a hard knot forming in his throat and the sting of tears barely contained hovered behind his eyes. He stood up slowly, taking in her determination and another piece of his heart broke off.

“Lavinia . . . .” he started to say before she interrupted.

“Don’t come back,” she told him flatly.

Don didn’t move. He couldn’t leave until he knew about those flowers though he thought she might be angry at the question; it would eat at him until he knew if they meant something to her.

Clearing his throat, he asked, “Is there someone else, Lav? The flowers . . . .”

A short, sharp laugh cut him off. “I wondered where the card went. That was a thank you for helping Detective Sandoval with a child rape case. Nothing more. You can go report back now that I chose to decline your invitation on my own, and not because I’m unduly influenced by a new man.”

Don nodded, not taking his eyes off her. “That question sounded bad, I know. I’m trying to understand, Lavinia, I really am. Can you shut us out like that? Can you just say you don’t want to be hurt again and turn that part of yourself off? Because I can’t; I haven’t stopped hurting since we made you leave. It hurt worse when I realized how stupid we were. So tell me no part of you wants
to come back with me, though I won’t believe you.”

Lav’s brows lifted; her expression disdainful. “Then what would be the point in telling you anything? Believe anything you want, Donatello. Just do your believing somewhere else.”

“That’s petulant.” Don flipped a hand over. “I would like to discuss this as adults.”

“I don’t want to discuss this at all,” Lav snapped. “Why is that so hard to understand?”

“Because I don’t want to,” he snapped back. Drawing in a shaky breath, Don calmed himself. “I don’t want to, Lavinia. I love you and I know you love me. Shouldn’t that be enough to put the pieces back together?”

Lav tried to avoid looking into his eyes. Don’s dark brown eyes were so expressive; soft, rich, and soulful and she would drown in them if she could. But that would take her back down the road she swore never to set foot on again.

“No,” Lav answered him, steady once more. “No, Don. I’ve never been in love before, but I don’t think it’s supposed to hurt this much. I don’t think that if someone truly loves you they would try to hurt you so much.”

She pulled the covers back from her legs, nearly tipping over the tray holding the now cold bowl of soup. Swinging her legs over the side, she started to get up.

Don darted towards her but her hand came out, palm flat, holding him back.

“You shouldn’t get up. You’re too weak,” Don fussed.

“That don’t make me.” She straightened, her head swimming dangerously. Eyes shut; Lav let the floor stop rolling before attempting to look at him. The concern on his face almost caused her to lose her balance.

He tried to move to her again, but her hand came up once more. “No. Don, I don’t want to try to walk. But if you don’t leave, I will. I’ll crawl if I have to and I’ll lock myself in the bathroom or the closet; I don’t care which, until you are gone. Are you leaving?”

The stubborn look was on her face, a look he knew all too well. She would do it. As far as she was concerned, the discussion was over.

“I’m going,” he told her gently.

When he reached her bedroom door, she was sitting on the bed again, her head down and her eyes closed. Once more he felt the sharp stab in his chest and a cold tendril of dread ran up his spine.

“I’m going, but I’m not giving up. I won’t ever give up on you, Lavinia,” Don said and left her apartment.
Don had called to tell them that he’d found Lav passed out, and that he would stay with her until she recovered. Leo hadn’t taken the news well; Lavinia was driving herself too hard and he knew she was doing it to try to forget them. He spent most of the day in the dojo driving himself in return; a self-imposed punishment.

Mikey took Don’s extended stay as a good sign and his effervescent personality returned for a few hours, lightening the mood for Raph and Master Splinter.

When the clock started crawling the second night, and they hadn’t heard from Don, the mood diminished somewhat. Mikey went to Lav’s room early, but he did bid them a goodnight, something he hadn’t done in a while.

There was no point in going out to watch over Lav since Don was at her apartment. Raph prowled the lair before deciding it wouldn’t hurt to turn in early himself.

He couldn’t go to sleep. Comfortable in his hammock, he was still restless and worried. His body was screaming at him to do something; anything, to put things back the way they were two months ago. When he asked himself what he should do, he couldn’t come up with an answer that wasn’t already being done, by someone who could talk a shell of a lot better than he could.

At least Don’s being in her apartment was a good sign that Lav didn’t have a boyfriend. No way would he be able to stay if some random guy might wander in at any moment.

Raph started thinking about Mikey, down in Lav’s room. What did he do all those hours he spent in there? Was he lying on her bed, smelling her scent which lingered on the pillows and thinking about her? Thinking about being with her?

He sure as shell wasn’t with any of them. Raph missed Mikey’s presence fiercely, not that he’d ever tell the chuckle head. Mikey had a way of getting under his skin, making him happy when he didn’t want to be, breaking him loose from the most sullen mood.

He was entertaining too; his imagination could come up with the damned goofiest things and he’d find a way to drag the rest of them in kicking and screaming if need be. His imagination worked over time in the sex department too, and Raph was really missing that part of Mikey as well.

Raph shifted on the hammock, an uncomfortable pressure in his lower shell making its presence felt. How the fuck could Mikey go so long without sex? One thing was damn sure; he had
to be taking care of himself.

Yeah, Raph was sure of that. Mikey was lying on Lav’s bed, smelling Lav’s smell, and jerking off big time. That was the only reasonable explanation Raph could come up with for Mikey’s ability to hold out for so long.

Thinking about that, Raph reached into his pillowcase and withdrew Lav’s thong, the one he’d stolen from her a couple of months ago. He touched it to his nostrils and inhaled; the scent of her sex still rich and strong on the tiny wisp of fabric. Let Mikey have the pillows, this was much better.

He thought about what Mikey might look like, lying on Lav’s bed pleasuring himself. Covered in sweat, eyes shut, his hand working feverishly on hot, hard flesh. The other hand pressing a lightly scented pillow close to his face, remembering – remembering . . . .

**********

At the farm, the first time they took Lavinia there. A month, they were going to spend a month teaching her about trust and teamwork, and about themselves.

She learned the first day about their rewards and punishment system, and a failure had earned her a bare ass spanking from Leonardo. And then Mikey, who had bested her, crawled between her legs while Leo kept her pinned and fucked her hard.

Lav accepted it willingly; just as she accepted her punishment the next day. Don’s rope fetish became her second lesson and he used her while she was tied and helpless.

That night they had initiated group sex with Lavinia, pushing her to take all four of them simultaneously. She had met the challenge, giving Raph one of the best memories of his life.

His hand ran down the front of his plastron slowly, the thong still pressed to his face. He stroked his thighs and then spread his legs to dip between them. His tail was already engorged and sensitive; stroking it brought a deep churr up from his chest.

The competition and the challenge on the third day. Shell, he didn’t even fuckin’ remember what it was, just that it was some kind of relay race. Mikey won, beating Lav, but the way it was structured was goofy, and Lav ended up defeating Raphael.

Leo told Mikey he had control of Lav for the day. But then he told Lav that she had control of Raph. For the entire day.

Mikey’s eyes darted into the corner where the chains were kept before Leo even finished his announcement.

“Yeah, yeah, gotcha Leo. No problem, Lav’s mine and Raph’s butt belongs to her. I think we can figure out what to do from here.” Mikey was growing impatient, a sure sign that he already had a master plan.

Leo’s smirk showed just how well he knew his brother.

“Come on, Don,” Leo called. Then he turned and looked at Lav. “What do you want Raph to do?”

The half-smile that curved Lavinia’s lips was wicked. In a sultry voice, she said, “He can stay right here.”
Glancing back at her, Don missed a step and almost fell. The look on her face and that
voice had him wishing he was Raphael right about now.

It didn’t help that Raph looked smug, his arms crossed over his plastron. Mikey however,
was already pulling chains from the pile and laying them in lengths along the barn floor.

From a box on a shelf Mikey pulled out several small locks and checked that the keys still
turned in them. With a satisfied grunt, he chose the lengths of chain with the smallest loops and
dragged them to a spot where two horse stalls took up space along a side wall.

He quickly looped a chain over a support beam on one side; then another chain was
attached to a support beam across from the first. Mikey tossed two padlocks on the ground next to
the ends.

While he was dashing about, Lav and Raphael stood and stared at each other. The wicked
look hadn’t left her face and Raph was starting to worry just a little. None of them had experienced
a ‘punishment’ from Lav; this would be a first.

Mikey was kicking around a pile of metal and plastic pipes piled near the chains. With a
satisfied cry, he dove down and yanked out a heavy plastic pipe. Each end had a forged eye nut
screwed into it and Mikey took his smallest, most delicate lengths of chain and passed them
through each of the eyes.

Satisfied with his preparations, Mikey turned his eyes on Lavinia. They were brilliantly
blue, a big smile painted across his face.

“Take your clothes off, Lav,” Mikey told her.

Lav looked at Raph. “Raphael will do it.” Her voice was low and seductive, caressing his
name. “Fast or slow?” she asked Mikey without taking her eyes from Raph’s.

“S . . . slow,” Mikey stuttered.

This was a side of Lav he’d never seen; clearly enjoying her dominance over the usually
aggressive turtle that moved towards her with a gleam in his gold eyes.

Just as his hands touched her shirt, Lav said, “Just the clothes, Raphael. You aren’t to touch
anything else.”

Raph paused, his fingers looped into fabric. Their eyes locked and her head went up, the
sultry, evil smile growing just slightly.

Dry swallowing, Raph tugged her shirt up slowly, the constricting nature of the sport
material caressing her skin as it was removed. Lav’s breasts bounced from their confines as he
lifted the top past them and Lav raised her arms, making her tits arch toward Raph’s plastron.

Raph had to concentrate to get the shirt over her head and arms as her nipples hardened
under his gaze.

His eyes couldn’t leave her tits as he kneeled and worked first one, then the other shoe from
Lav’s feet. His hands found the waistband on her shorts and cautiously pulled it away from her
skin, careful not to touch any part of her body. These too were tight and he drew them down as
slowly as possible so they wouldn’t bunch or roll.

Now his eyes were drawn to the mound between her legs, barely concealed by the tiny
panties she was wearing. His fingers were not built for such delicate maneuvers, but somehow he managed to catch enough fabric to twist them away from her body and pull them off of her.

He stayed on his knees, his eyes riveted to the patch of golden hair covering her vulva and the treasure hidden there.

“Oh, damn, that was hot,” Mikey muttered, standing just behind Lavinia.

His hands came around her and stroked down from her breasts to the flat of her stomach, then down to her thighs. A little applied pressure separated her legs, letting Mikey’s hands slide across inner thigh, just grazing her vulva.

All of this inches from Raph’s face.

He started to move and Lav snapped, “Stay there.”

Her eyes were watchful as he obeyed her command, remaining on his knees. Lav pressed the palms of her hands against the backs of Mikey’s as he continued to rub back and forth on the soft insides of her legs, drifting higher with each stroke until he was sliding his hands inside her folds.

Lav’s hands moved with his, pushing lightly to guide his movements, and her head fell back to rest against his shoulder. Mikey churred as his hands began to dampen, the smell of her arousal making his cock twitch.

Raph could smell her too and he growled lowly, his dick beginning to harden as he watched her juices flow across Mikey’s fingers.

“Come with m . . . me,” Mikey drawled, pulling his hands away from her sex and placing an arm around her waist. He guided her to a spot between the hanging chains and stopped her.

“Don’t move babe,” he instructed, grabbing the end of one of the chains.

He carefully looped the chain around her forearm and wrist, twisting it back into itself so her arm was secure, and fastened the end with one of the padlocks. He tested it to make sure her arm couldn’t slide loose and repeated the process with her other arm. Then he grabbed the portion of chain hanging over the support beam and pulled it until Lav’s arm was stretched up and away from her body, locking it in place before moving over to the other.

Her arms secured, Mikey grabbed the pipe and knelt next to her feet. He wrapped the chains that had been threaded through the eye rings around her ankles, spreading her legs fully open. The chains on her arms had pulled her up on the balls of her feet and the makeshift spreader bar caused her rear to push back just a little.

Lav pulled slightly against the chains, the cool metal warming with the contact on her skin. The chains pinched a little where they looped into each other, the pain adding another layer of eroticism to their play. She felt air from a window blow across her most intimate parts and realized how vulnerable she was.

Mikey stepped back to admire his handy work, rubbing a hand across his face. That action brought the smell of her arousal back to him and he churred again, the head of his cock peeking out from its slit.

“God Lav . . . .” The sight of her bound in chains and unable to move made him clench his toes hard to keep his cock from sliding free completely.
He walked behind her and placed a kiss on first one shoulder, then the other. The green of her eyes began to deepen and her head tipped back, but she never stopped watching Raph.

“Raph~ael,” she called to him as Mikey pressed his mouth to her neck. It was the hypnotic voice she used sometimes, filled with a desire that echoed in Raph’s head.

Mikey’s hands stole around to cup her breasts and lift them, squeezing the flesh as he pressed against her back.

“Stand up Raphael,” Lav told him, raising her head to capture him with her eyes.

As Raph rose to his feet, Mikey moved back to grab the last bit of chain he had prepared. It was about three feet in length, with rounded links that shone in the sunlight streaming through the windows.

“Come closer,” Lav instructed Raphael. When he was within arm’s reach of her she stopped him.

“Stay there and keep your arms to your side. Don’t touch me and don’t touch yourself,” she directed him.

With a low groan, Raph pressed his palms flat against his thighs. Mikey moved back behind Lavinia then and pulled the chain across her breasts, holding an end in each hand.

Slowly he sawed the chain back and forth, pulling it down a fraction with each movement. Then chain rubbed against Lav’s tits, then the links caught her hardened nubs and she gasped. Mikey kept them there, pulling back a little harder and pressing the chain into her skin; the links moving from side to side sometimes touching her nipples, sometimes allowing them to spring forward and peep through an opening.

“Ahh!” Lav moaned and shuddered, her pussy clenching in response to the friction on her sensitive nipples.

Mikey moved closer to her body, bending his knees a little in order to press his lower plastron against her ass. His cock could no longer be contained. At the touch of her skin, it sprang free and was fully erect in seconds. Mikey swiveled his hips and rubbed his dick against her backside while he continued to tease her nipples with the chain.

“Mmm, Lavinia, oh babe that’s beautiful.” Mikey leaned over her shoulder to watch the play of metal on skin and his cock jumped and throbbed against her ass.

Raph’s hands gripped his own thighs painfully, trying to keep from reaching for Lav. His eyes followed the back and forth movement of the chain as it teased Lav’s nipples, turning them a darker red and causing them to stand straight out. The urge to touch them, to wrap his mouth around one, was so strong Raph’s tongue came out to dart across his lips.

Lav saw the movement and arched her back further, causing her tits to quiver under the onslaught of Mikey’s chain, further tempting Raph.

Raphael’s cock dropped down, fully hard and reaching out to her.

“Ye~s,” she hissed at the sight of his massive organ, straining up towards her, head flushed and damp with precome.

“Lavinia.” A low warning rumble came up from Raph’s chest, followed by an
Mikey grinned and licked her skin, making her shiver. Then he began pulling down on the chain again, continuing the back and forth motion as he slid the metal across her taut abdomen, down past her hip bones and over the bush covering her vulva.

Raph’s eyes followed the chain as it moved down and his fingers trembled when the chain moved across the damp hair between her legs. Mikey let it linger there, wrapping it around her so he could play the ends between the cheeks of her ass.

“Mikey . . .” Her moan trailed off as he moved the twin ends further down and pushed them between her legs.

Kneeling behind her, Mikey pushed the links into her entrance and watched, mesmerized as her juices slicked the metal. Lav’s entire body shook and Mikey kissed her butt cheeks as he pushed more of the chain into her.

Raph could see everything Mikey was doing. His cock jumped when Lav yanked on the chains holding her arms up, her head falling forward as she tried to shift her legs.

Then Mikey pulled the chain links out of her vagina and pulled the chain off of her body. He moved to stand next to her, leaning in to lift her chin and press a deep kiss to her mouth, letting his tongue wander. Lav pushed into the kiss, completely aroused, her pussy clenching and unclenching spasmodically.

When he pulled back from the kiss, Lavinia groaned and turned her lust filled eyes onto Raphael. Her gaze raked his body, lingering on his hard cock, until Mikey placed the chain between her legs. Lav’s head turned as Mikey grabbed the ends of the chain, one in front of her, the other behind, and slid the links back and forth across the length of her sex.

Lav jerked against her bindings when the chain stroked across her clitoris.

“Damn, Mikey~y!” Lav shrieked, hips working as he grinned and brushed against her clit again and again.

Lav’s entire body was trembling, the chain on her swollen and sensitive flesh driving wicked pleasure into her core. Unable to move or resist Mikey’s onslaught, Lav reached out with her eyes to Raphael.

The muscular form before her shook as well, every ounce of self-control used to maintain his distance from her, as ordered. His cock was leaking precome heavily, and his breathing was harsh and irregular. Raph met her eyes, and hers darkened to a deep green in response to his need.

She couldn’t hold back any longer. The chain in Mikey’s hands brought her to shaking, moaning climax.

“Oh, M . . . Mikey!” Lav called, rolling her head as her body tightened and the orgasm ripped through her womb.

The power of her climax surged up the chain and into Mikey’s hands. He dropped it immediately, his cock jumping in reaction, and darted back behind Lav. Grabbing her hips, he thrust into her pussy, driving his dick into her forcefully.

Moist, tight heat all around his cock, squeezing him as he pushed in, gripping him as he pulled back. Her mutant power coursed through her body and electrified Mikey, making his need
painful as he rocked into her as fast and hard as he could.

Raph hadn’t moved, stoically holding still as he watched Lavinia climax and Mikey begin pumping his cock into her. Her breasts jumped as Mikey rammed her body and the emerald green light behind her eyes spilled over, rolling like smoke over her quivering form.

She looked up and whispered, “Raph-ael, touch yourself.”

His hand grasped his hard cock before the words had completely left her mouth. He was painfully engorged; needing release as he stepped closer to her, his hand pumping his cock quickly.

Raph purred in a low, dark voice, “I’m gonna come all over ya’, little wild cat. Ya’ like that? My c . . . come all over your t . . . tits.”

His head fell back and he growled, deeply and fiercely, his hand moving faster as the pressure built.

Raphael came with a loud grunt, spraying across Lav’s chest and stomach.

Mikey moaned, fingers digging into her hips, “Raphie, oh yes, yes. Cover her.”

Raphael touched his cock to her stomach and milked the last of his come across her belly, sticky stripes painted in a crisscross pattern until he was dry.

With a satisfied chuckle, he stepped back. And then Mikey came.

“OH Shell YES!” Mikey yelled as his cock expanded and then exploded inside of Lav.

Minutes passed before Mikey was able to shakily pull his cock out of Lavinia. Raph’s semen had already been absorbed by her skin, her mutant power making use of the energy in his come. Her head was down as she drew deep breaths; her hands gripped the chains that held her arms.

Mikey walked around in front of her and put a finger under her chin, forcing her head up. She smiled at him and Mikey pressed his lips to hers, winding his arms around her suspended body as the kiss deepened and his tongue lingered on hers.

Stepping back, Mikey ran the tip of one finger between her breasts and down her abdomen. Her skin was dry and very soft, all traces of Raph’s spunk completely gone.

Mikey looked into her eyes and told her, “I want to paint you.”

Lav looked puzzled. “Paint me? Like a portrait?”

Mikey shook his head. Ran a finger over her smooth skin as the thought took hold. “No, paint you; your body. I want to paint on your body.”

Raph snorted. “Ya’ wanna do what?” he asked.

Mikey’s head whipped around to look Raph in the eye. “Her body is a beautiful canvass and I wanna paint on it.”

“Paint what?” Raph wanted to know.

Intent on his idea, Mikey began to remove Lavinia’s restraints. Kneeling, he released the chains from her ankles and tossed the spreader bar back against the wall. Lav pulled her legs
together to ease the pressure on the balls of her feet and Mikey worked the lock on the first set of chains holding her arms.

“Birds,” he said emphatically, rubbing her arm as he freed it and then moving on to the other.

“You’re fuckin’ weird,” Raph said, watching as Mikey caught the freed woman, who leaned against him while waiting for the crawling sensation in her arms and legs to disappear.

Ignoring him, Mikey told Lav, “First we’re gonna take a bath, so my canvass is nice and clean.”

Lav’s eyes sparkled as she looked at him. “That sounds nice.”

Tipping his head toward his brother, Mikey asked, “Whatcha gonna do with Raphie boy?”

Lav’s lips pursed as she looked over at Raphael. The look made his heart flutter; she wasn’t done with him by a long shot.

“Hmmm. Towel boy? Scrub our backs?” Lav responded.

Mikey laughed and picked her up, heading for the door and the house. “No point in putting your clothes back on.”

Raphael ended up drawing their bath, even adding bubbles at Lav’s request. Then he was told to back away and stand against the wall as Mikey fucked Lav in the tub, splashing water everywhere. His own erection went unsatisfied, as Lav once again forbade him the use of his hands.

It took a while for the blood to recede and his erection to go limp enough so that he could tuck himself back in. Then Lav had him help Mikey gather paint cans from the barn and set about stirring them so they could be used. Mikey had an eye for color; mixing different ones together gave him a nice large pallet to work with.

They put everything in the room April usually stayed in. The windows were opened to let in light, and while Raph cleaned some brushes Mikey had found in a kitchen drawer, Mikey twirled Lav’s hair into a tight bun at the back of her head.

Finally satisfied, Mikey picked up his first paintbrush and had Lav stand perfectly still while he walked around her, making his decisions on where he would place each bird. He’d asked Lav while they were bathing which birds she liked and those were the ones he was going to paint on her. All over her. He just needed to determine exact placement to make sure they’d all fit.

Before he began, he told Lav to chase Raph out of the room.

Raph grumbled a bit at the expulsion and went downstairs to grab some lunch. Leo and Don were in the kitchen when he drifted in, the former sharpening a stack of kitchen knives (Leo and knives, go figure), and Don was munching on a sandwich while he watched.

Both looked up as he entered.

“Finished already?” Don asked.

Raph grabbed some sandwich meat out of the fridge. “Nah. Mikey decided he wanted ta paint Lav; they’re up in April’s room. I guess I ain’t ‘artistic’ enough for them.”
He started slapping meat onto bread and Leo asked, “Mikey is doing what to Lav?”

Raph pulled out a chair and sat down. He took a bite of his sandwich and talked around it as he chewed. “Mikey mixed up a bunch of paint and he’s painting birds all over her body.”

He chuckled at the looks his brothers were giving him.

Don eyed him suspiciously. “You’re not making that up are you?”

“Why would I? Shit, that’s exactly the kinda thing Mikey would do on a day he’s got Lav all to himself.” He chugged down a bottle of orange juice and added, “He already fucked her twice.”

Leo had a smug expression on his face, and Raph gave him a dirty look. “What?”

“You watched?” Leo asked.

“Yeah, I watched. What of it?” Raph’s tone was belligerent.

Leo’s shrug was nonchalant. “We were just curious what Lav was doing to you.”

Raph’s chair scraped back as he got up, depositing his empty bottle in the garbage bin. “She ain’t doin’ nothin’ ta me.”

“Except making you watch Mikey and her,” Don chimed in gleefully.

“So?” Raph leaned back against the edge of the sink and crossed his arms.

“What did you do with your boner?” Don asked with a big grin on his face.

“Who said I had one?” Raph’s eyes narrowed dangerously.

Don wasn’t intimidated. “Puh-leeze! Sell that story elsewhere. I’ll bet Mikey trussed her up in chains as soon as we were out of the barn. Tell me you stood there and watched and didn’t have a hard-on.”

Raph shifted against the sink and Leo snorted.

“Fuck ya’ both. Least I was there,” Raph said.

“With a boner.” Don was laughing. Raph shuffled again and Leo noticed the pained way he moved.

“Did you, um . . . get to do anything about your little problem?” Leo asked.

Don started laughing harder and Raph growled. “Little ain’t got nothin’ ta do with me. An’ no, for your wise ass information. The first time I jerked off and the second time she said I couldn’t touch myself. Ya’ happy now? Ya’ got the whole story.”

“Remind me not to lose to Lavinia,” Don finally managed to cough out.

“Whatever.” Raph left the kitchen without a backwards glance. Leo and Don looked at each other and started laughing again.

It was nearly three hours later before any of them heard from Mikey or Lavinia. The three remaining brothers were in the yard tossing a football around when Mikey burst out of the house, a
triumphant look on his face.

“My masterpiece!” he shouted and his brothers turned to stare. Mikey waved towards the door and Lavinia emerged from the house.

Donny dropped the football and Leo gasped. Raph’s breathless “Oh fuck” punctuated what they all felt at that moment.

Lav was completely nude and covered in painted birds. A large blue heron covered her midsection; its downy underbelly concealed the patch of hair in Lav’s pelvic region. Its legs were painted down the front of her own, and its thin neck ran up between her breasts, its head covering her right breast, one eye painted over her nipple.

A brightly colored hummingbird flitted across her other breast, feeding off a long stemmed flower which had been painted all over her left arm and up across the shoulder down to her collar bone and the base of her neck.

Smaller, just as brightly colored hummingbirds were painted amongst the flowers on her cheeks and forehead.

Her right arm sported an elongated kingfisher, swooping down at a pond of vivid orange and silver fish.

Mikey was grinning broadly at his brothers. Leo finally found his voice.

“Wow, Mikey. That’s . . . amazing!”

“That's not all, dudes. Lav, turn around,” Mikey excitedly told her.

Obediently, their woman turned and presented her back for viewing. A snowy egret in flight was displayed across her lower back, its out flung wings stretching across the cheeks of her rear. A roadrunner lifted its head to look at them from the back of her left leg, its prey, a large brown colored rattlesnake stretched along the back of her right.

Facing each other on opposite shoulder blades, a bright red cardinal seemed to taunt a boldly colored blue jay. A mockingbird flew up from the center of her back, seemingly to act as referee.

Don walked up on the porch and leaned over to survey the workmanship.

“Incredible, Mikey. How did you keep the paint from drying and cracking?” Don asked, moving a finger to touch the jay.

Mikey’s hand snapped out faster than light and caught him. “Nuh, uh. No touching the merchandise, dude. I’m gonna take pictures soon as I can find the camera I left here. I think it’s in the cellar. In the meantime,” he said, looking at all three of his brothers significantly, “nobody had better mess up this paint job. Nobody, or else. Is that clear?”

None of them had to ask what would happen if they did. Mikey’s wrath was famous in their home and his paybacks were less than pleasurable.

He and Lav went back inside. None of the Turtles caught the look Lav gave Raphael as she followed Mikey into the house.

Mikey still hadn’t found his camera an hour later when Raph came in to wash up. He
dashed up the stairs two at a time, listening to Mikey’s curse as something downstairs toppled over. Raph assumed Lav was down there with him, being kept safely out of harm’s way.

Therefore he was surprised when he stepped out of the bathroom to find her standing in the hallway staring at him.

“Uh, Lav?” Raph asked at the strange look on her face. It was half smile, half something else, and it sent a little warning curl up the back of his neck.

“I was wondering when you were going to come back inside,” she cooed, approaching him slowly.

“If ya’ wanted me ya’ could have called,” he told her, somewhat disconcerted by the stalking nature of her approach.

“What would be the fun of that?” Lav countered, stepping quite close, but without touching him.

Rising on her toes, she brought her face near his and crooned, “I need you, Raphael.”

Raph’s head began to swim. She was using that damn voice on him, the one that sent a shock wave down the middle of his back, stiffened his tail and made his cock start to unfurl.

“Lavinia . . . .” he growled, reaching for her.

With a giggle, she danced out of his reach. “Don’t touch, remember? Mikey wouldn’t like it if you mess up this pretty paint job.”

Raph took a step towards her and then willed his feet to stop. “Shit, Lav,” he snarled, completely frustrated.

Her hand came up and she beckoned him with one finger, turning and heading into an empty room. Lav didn’t even look back to make sure he was following.

Raph didn’t think twice about following. He couldn’t have stopped himself if he tried.

Once he crossed the threshold, Lav shut and locked the door behind him. Coming close again, she placed the palms of her hands, the only unpainted portion of them, against his scutes and leaned in close.

“Strip for me, Raph~ael,” she trilled.

As she stepped backwards, Raph moved his hands around to take his sais from his belt. Setting them carefully on the floor, he removed his belt, then his knee pads. Next the wrist and elbow guards came off, his eyes never leaving Lavinia.

She in turn watched him with rapt attention, her mouth opening to allow her pink tongue to touch her upper lip as he removed his mask.

“So nice,” she purred as she approached him again, stepping lightly on the balls of her feet.

Palms again, stroking his face as her body pressed within a hairs breadth of his, her painted nipples nearly touching his plastron.

“So~o nice,” Lavinia repeated as her hands stroked lower to sweep across his broad shoulders and down his muscular biceps. Her eyes followed the movement of her hands and Raph
tipped his head forward to touch the hair atop her head, rubbing his cheek into the sweet, clean
smell.

Her hands moved over his forearms, then his hands and fingers. They continued to glide
down, past his fingertips and onto his thighs. Raph’s head went back and he gasped as her palms
slid across his skin and dipped back in to caress his inner thighs.

A deep low churl rolled up from his chest. Raph’s hands ached to touch her; her shoulders
were so close, but the painted birds mocked him.

“Spread your legs, Raphael,” she told him, looking up with a glint in her eye.

His feet moved away from each other and the space between his burly thighs widened,
allowing her hands to wander in further without fear of smearing the paint on her arms. With a
satisfied hum, Lav dragged her fingers down the underside of Raph’s stiff tail.

“Lavinia,” Raph husked in a dangerous tone.

Raph’s thighs quivered and his fingers curled as she fondled his tail with the pads of her
fingers. The slit hiding his cock bulged outward as his member began to swell.

“Don’t move,” Lavinia warned him and then rubbed her fingers over his slit.

“Fuck,” Raphael hissed, eyes squeezing tight as he fought for control.

“R~aphael,” Lav sang, “don’t hide from me.” Her fingers pushed against the bulge and
spread his slit open, catching the head of his cock with a fingertip.

A hard shudder ran from Raph’s head to his toes and his cock slid free. Gritting his teeth,
Raph looked down at Lavinia and groaned. She grasped the underside of his shaft and slid her
palm forward, repeating the maneuver with the other, going from base to tip continuously until he
was completely erect.

With a low hum, Lavinia murmured, “Mmm, perfect.”

She released his cock and stepped away from him, making his cock jump at the sudden
loss.

“Damn Lav, stop fuckin’ teasin’ me,” he warned, taking a step towards her. His cock still
ached from the earlier torment; the blood was thrumming through his penis and making him
lightheaded.

“Lie down, Raphael”, Lav directed him, her eyes widening as she looked him over hungrily.

He looked around the room which was devoid of any furniture.

“On the floor,” Lav said, catching her bottom lip with her teeth as she smiled cruelly.

The look reminded Raph of something. He tried to think what it was as he slowly lowered
himself to the ground, positioning his carapace as comfortably as the hard wooden floor would
allow.

His cock jutted up, nearly arrow straight and throbbing with need. “Just sit on me now”
played through his mind while he watched her circle him.

Lav stopped near his head and stared at Raph’s rigid staff as it jumped and pulsed. The
sight made her stomach tighten and her pussy clench. Looking down at him, she stepped forward and planted a foot on the floor on either side of his face.

“Mmm. The sight of your cock is making me really hot, Raphael. In fact, it’s making me really wet and hot. That just won’t do. If I get too wet I’ll mess up the paint on my inner thighs. Is there any way I can possibly solve this problem?” she taunted him.

Raph stared up at her pussy, glistening above him. Yeah, she was wet alright. Raph licked his lips and started to sit up.

Lav planted one of her feet on his plastron quickly, keeping him down. “Naughty, naughty, big guy. You know the rules. No touching. If you smear Mikey’s paint job he’ll be very pissed. We wouldn’t want to upset an artist, now would we?”

Raph groaned and pressed his hands into the floor, trying to ground himself. “I ain’t all that worried about the little nut ball right now,” he growled.

“Well, maybe you’re not, but I am,” Lav scolded him.

Deeming it safe again, she moved back to her position over Raph’s face, appreciating the jump his cock took as she spread herself wide for him to see.

With an evil smile, Lav reached between her legs and parted her folds.

“Crap, Lav! How much do ya’ think I can take?” Raph snarled, pushing at the floor hard to keep from reaching for her.

“I really don’t know,” she responded, choosing to take the question literally. “If I lower myself, do you think you can keep your hands off of me?”

His moan was cut short by a choked, “Yes.”

Lav stretched her legs to the side, sliding into a split as her pussy sank closer to Raph’s waiting mouth.

When she was low enough, Raph’s long, wide tongue darted out of his mouth and licked across her labia. With a shudder, Lav moved down another inch and stopped.

“Damn,” Raph breathed out and let his tongue taste her again. If he could just move his hands . . .

He knew how fast she could jump if his hands so much as twitched, so he kept them as still as possible. Lifting his head a little put his mouth over her vulva, and he nuzzled into her sex, rubbing his face against her muff and flicking his tongue against her clitoris.

“Ohh,” she hummed, feeling a wave of pleasure shoot through her womb.

Encouraged and slightly smug, Raph pressed harder against her clit, rubbing in a circular motion with his thick tongue. As a sign he was doing a good job, her opening got much wetter, and her breathing turned to panting.

“Umm, Raph. You do know how to treat a girl,” Lav praised him enthusiastically.

Raph churred and moved his tongue over her inner labia, lapping at the heavy flow coming from inside her. He loved the taste of her as much as the feel of her.
Lavinia decided he was altogether too complacent. She was the one in control here, not Raphael. Her eyes fell on his cock, standing up proud and hard, precome leaking from the tip.

Stretching a hand across his body, Lav leaned forward enough to grasp his dick.

“Baby!” He choked, her touch sending shock waves through the lower half of his body. “S... stroke me,” Raph called.

“Finish your job,” Lav ordered, voice low and sultry.

His tongue began to move in her again and as it did, she pumped his cock, keeping perfect time with the rhythm of his mouth.

Lavinia had to take care the precome leaking from Raph’s cock wouldn’t slick the back of her hand, where the paint was. As she worked his shaft, she periodically lifted her hand and rubbed at the head, wiping the precome down and over his hardened member; then caught him again to resume pumping.

Each time she did this, Raph’s hips jumped, the sensation sending another roll of pleasure through his already overloaded system.

He in turn, pleased her sex with his practiced tongue, stroking over her labia and flattening against her clitoris, pressing firmly against her love button until she moaned, swirling his tongue in circles to stimulate her.

His strong tongue was sending sparks through her and her vagina began to spasm uncontrollably at the pressure that was building there. Raph could feel her stiffening and he thrust his tongue up inside her suddenly, pleased when she yipped at the surprise of it, and then her breath caught.

That was the giveaway he needed. Pushing his tongue deeper, he swirled it then pulled out to lick her clit before thrusting back in again. Twice more was all it took.

Time froze as one hard knot formed in her womb then blew wide open. “Ah~mmm, Raphael!” Lavinia screamed her ecstasy, only her incredible balance keeping her from tipping forward onto him.

Raph’s toes were curling uncontrollably, his hips thrusting into Lav’s tightened hand as she stopped pumping him, being petrified by her orgasm. The pressure of his own climax was building to the point where the damn was about to burst when Lav came back to herself.

“Don’t move, Raphael,” Lav ordered, loosening her grip on his cock.

“Oh fuck, Lavinia, n~o...” Raph’s hands pressed the floor; eyes squeezed shut as he perched on the edge of his orgasm, hips still working and unable to obey the command.

Lav’s hand shot to the base of his cock and she gripped him. Although her hand couldn’t go around his entire manhood, her mutant energy could, and she released a ring of it to cock block him.

“SHIT!” Raph yelled, loud enough to rattle the windows.

The mutant power in her climax coursed through Raphael, sending bolts into his dick and thrice she had stopped his release. His body quivered and shook; sweat rolling off his emerald green skin.
Carefully, Lav lifted herself away from Raph’s head, never loosening the ring around his penis. She crept around him with slow mincing steps and his fogged mind finally found the answer to his earlier thought; her movements, the flicking of tongue across teeth, the hungry look all reminded him of a wild cat.

She was playing with him, the way a cat plays with mice; the way Klunk played with the ones he caught. He groaned, watching her move between his spread legs, her dark green eyes concentrated on his cock.

“Lav, Lav, come on babe,” Raph husked, close to pleading. He was struggling to maintain control of himself, the pain in his dick nearly overwhelming him, and she was smiling at his torture.

“Fuck, Lavinia, do something baby, please . . . .” This time he did beg, his low voice cracking as his nails dug at the floor.

Placing a foot on either side of his outer thighs, Lav slid into another split to avoid creasing the paint behind her legs. Once she was down far enough, she leaned her mouth over Raph’s cock and blew lightly on the head, then the tip of her tongue touched his slit.

Raph’s hips shot upwards and Lav jerked her head away.

Catching his eyes, she threatened, “If you move, I’ll stop.”

The sound from Raph’s chest was part groan, part whimper as he acquiesced; using every skill he’d ever learned to hold himself still.

Assured he wouldn’t move, Lav’s head dipped down again. Forming an O with her mouth, she surrounded the head of his penis with moist warmth, pushing the foreskin back with her lips. Then her tongue came out to flick all over the sensitive tip, into the slit and along the edges of the foreskin. Finally she lapped up his precome and leaned back to swallow it with a satisfied slurp.

Raph’s entire body was shaking and he was breathing in short, sharp gasps. His gold eyes wide, he watched her face avidly, looking for some sign that she would end the torture soon. She gave him nothing but a broad smile, although the light behind her eyes fluoresced.

“How long can you stay this way?” Lav asked him lazily, her power ring tightening at the base of his cock.

Raph’s skin glistened with sweat, his face a mask of agony. He was never, ever going to lose to her again.

“Lav, baby . . . just f . . . finish me. Fuck, Lav, j . . . just . . . ohh f~fuckin’ hell . . . .” His moan was followed by a thud as he banged the back of his head against the floor.

Her mouth descending completely over his cock shocked his head back up. She deep throated him with one smooth move and simultaneously took her hand and the ring off the base of his cock.

No actual thought passed through Raph’s brain in that single exquisite moment. His orgasm was brutal, a torrential outpouring of his essence that lasted longer than any climax he’d ever experienced.

Lavinia’s throat opened to accept the deluge, her eyes closed as she concentrated on holding completely still until his deposit was complete. When he was done, she pulled back slowly, her lips
tight along his deflating shaft to clean up any spillage. The end of his cock slipped from her mouth with a wet pop and her tongue passed over her lips to catch any stray traces of his seed.

Raph lay nearly unconscious on the floor, completely boneless and thoroughly exhausted.

“Hmmm,” Lavinia hummed deeply in her chest, close to a purr at the sight of Raphael undone at her hands. Then she turned and left the room, closing the door softly as she went in search of Mikey to help with his elusive camera hunt.

With a wicked smile, Lav ducked into the hall closet and retrieved the camera from its hiding spot.

**********

Raph’s hand blurred on his cock as the memory of her domination swept across his mind’s eye. With the thong pressed hard against his nostrils and her scent filling him, he orgasmed, splattering his plastron, hand, and thighs.

Gasping, Raph slowly relaxed into the hammock. Don would get her back. Leave it to Don with his soft spoken voice and brown soulful eyes. Donny was smart; he would talk her into coming home.

Raphael fell asleep.

=================================

Donatello couldn’t go back to the lair just yet. He had failed in his mission, and he was both confused and hurt. He needed time to think and thinking at the lair would be impossible once his brothers pounced on him.

Thinking this through would be easier if his hands were busy. Going to the junkyard would have helped; his mind would be free to wander as his hands searched through piles of refuse, but Leo had strictly forbidden loan journeys.

Sometimes Don resented the assumption that he couldn’t take care of himself. Leo said it wasn’t that, it was just that he tended to be easily distracted. The night Bishop trapped Don and Lavinia in the junkyard, Don had done just fine getting the both of them out safely, thank you very much.

Don stayed underground tonight, walking to a drainage intersection point where useful things were sometimes washed downstream to pile into corners. He poked around in a desultory manner for a bit then sat down to think.

Something didn’t make sense. Lavinia had to know how deeply they cared about her. She had to know he was sincere; one of her powers gave her the ability to read emotions. Her single tear told Don how deeply she was feeling the separation from them. So what was holding her back?

That tear, in response to his emotions. His emotions feeding hers. Don squinted in concentration. Yes, something there.

It was something to do with Leo, Don was sure of it. Something in his emotions had triggered Lavinia’s current response.

He wasn’t guessing; Lav had always responded on a deeper level to Leo than any of them.
He was her Master; he was the one who took her virginity.

Don knew she loved them equally, but Leo could always reach some part of her that no one else could touch.

In order to reach Lav, Don was going to have to reach Leo. Inside Leo was the secret to this whole mess and Don wasn’t sure if Leo even understood his original motivations. He wasn’t sure if Leo had faced what had driven him to make his initial decision. If he didn’t face that, then Lav was going to feel he didn’t really want her back.

Getting inside Leo’s head was not going to be easy. Leo tended to brood rather than share. Don was going to have to find a way to get Leo to walk through every step along the path to his decision to send Lavinia away.

Don had gone along with that decision and he finally thought he understood his own motivations. He was tired, stressed, worried, and not thinking straight after Karai started to go after Lav.

Don had grasped at Leo’s decision as a last straw. Leonardo was a big part of Don’s world; the person he most leaned on when in need or in doubt. His faith in Leonardo was such that he very rarely in his life questioned anything Leo said.

Following Leo was such an ingrained part of him that he could offer only a token “are you sure?” before acquiescing to his brother, never actually realizing the permanence of the decision.

Because that was really it; when they’d done this thing to Lav, somewhere in the back of Don’s head he’d thought, ‘only for a little while, then she’ll be back’. He was sure a couple of weeks would shake Karai loose and they would tell Lav to come home.

He hadn’t even thought about how deeply she would be hurt and he certainly hadn’t known Leo was going to release her from her clan obligations. That was the twist of the knife. In the days that followed, a creeping dread had finally overtaken Don and he started to wonder if he’d ever see Lavinia again.

He couldn’t live with that. Mikey was the only one of them who had understood exactly what they were doing and he fought and protested, trying to get them to see, but they wouldn’t.

And Michelangelo, as unhappy as he was with the decision, was as bound by it as the rest of them. Master Splinter had explained to them all that Leonardo was their leader and they were to adhere to his word. To do otherwise would render their clan defenseless.

Don was pretty sure Mikey would have made contact with Lavinia if Master Splinter hadn’t laid down the law.

That infuriated Mikey as much as anything else and now they had no Lav and no Mikey.

Don tossed a pebble into the water and watched the ripples swirl outwards. Cause and effect.
Overload

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 11,262
Chapter pairing: Raph/Lav, Leo/Don
Chapter Rating: NC-17
Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, angst, physical altercation, Tcest, language

Chapter Summary: Raph thinks it's time for a 'tough love' approach. Don and Leo have an eye opening conversation. Lin Zhu makes a re-appearance. Mikey convinces his brothers to listen to him.

“She said what?” Raph was staring at him and Don sighed.

It was morning and the four brothers were in the kitchen. Breakfast sat on the table untouched, although it was the first time in weeks that Mikey had cooked for them. The food would probably be delicious, if they were up for tasting it.

Rubbing his eyes, Don repeated, “She says she’s done with us, with this life. She says she’s not looking back.”

“You’re sure it ain’t some man?” Raph insisted; his accent heavier this morning.

Don’s headache was getting worse. He didn’t sleep at all the night before; had in fact had very little sleep in the last forty-eight hours. In Lav’s apartment he had dozed a little on the couch, but had been afraid to fall into too deep a sleep in case she needed him.

Raph was being purposely obtuse. “I’m sure, Raph. The flowers don’t mean anything. I don’t think she’s really in the mood for a man in her life right now, considering how everything turned out with us.” Don’s weariness made him bitter and a little mean.

Mikey was looking down at his hands, folded together on the table. He hadn’t said much since Don came in to admit his failure with Lavinia.

He wasn’t completely surprised. That was another difference between him and his brothers; he understood how being dumped by them might affect her.

“She spent her whole life keeping her feelings locked up you guys, and she’s only let ‘em out two times,” Mikey said softly, still watching his hands. “Both times they got stepped on. Did you think she’d give you a chance to make it three?”

His brothers were staring at him when he finally looked up.

Leo leaned towards him. “That will never happen again Mikey, I promise you. The mistake I made was reprehensible but I’ll get her back.”

“I’ll get her back.” Raph reached over and grabbed the platter of scrambled eggs, scooping a large portion on to his plate. He set the platter down and looked around at them. “The two of ya’ already had your shot and obviously the nice approach ain’t cuttin’ it. Tonight it’s my turn.” He started forking eggs into his mouth.
Don swiped a hand over his face and frowned. He wished he could be sure of that, but the conversation with her still played in his head. Glancing at Leo, who was watching Raph eat, he felt again what he’d thought last night. The only one who was going to truly break Lav was going to be Leo and his big brother hadn’t found what he needed inside himself yet to be able to achieve that goal.

So let Raph have his chance. He accepted some eggs from Leo and forced himself to eat them because his older brother had that worried ‘Don’s not eating’ look on his face. They seriously needed to talk, but maybe later. When Don’s head didn’t hurt so much.

= = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

“Honey, maybe you should go home early tonight, you look a little beat.”

Lav sat up, taking her head off her arms. Cynthia stood next to her desk, looking down at her with concern in her big, dark eyes. Leaning back in her chair, Lav blinked a few times to clear the grogginess.

“I’m okay. Just a couple more things and I’ll head out,” Lavinia told her.

Cynthia didn’t move other than to place a hand on her hip. “Uh, huh. Over to the hospital or one of the clinics instead of home and bed which is where you need to be.”

“Too much to do.” Lav pushed back from the desk to stand and stretch. God her muscles were tight.

“There’s always too much to do,” Cynthia scolded her. “Driving yourself this hard is counterproductive. You know you signed the Phillips contract twice and forgot to sign the flooring change orders. You have got to get some serious sleep, Lavinia. Make up with your boyfriend and get laid. Do something that doesn’t involve work.”

Lav stopped mid-stretch to gawk at her assistant. “What makes you think I have a boyfriend?”

Cynthia waved a hand in the air. “Please, girl. How long have I worked for you? I knew it the minute your work patterns started changing and then you started showing up with that little ‘I had some good sex’ mince in your step.”

Lavinia closed her laptop and began to shove papers into her briefcase. “I don’t have a boyfriend, Cynthia.”

“Didn’t I just say you need to make up with him? After all this time, don’t I know you? Years you’ve gone without so much as looking at a man, God knows enough have looked you over, and you think I can’t tell when one finally hooked you? He must be something too, getting past your ‘do not enter’ roadblock.”

“What a lot of nonsense, Cyn.” Lavinia flushed, hoping she hadn’t really been that obvious.

“Keep lying to yourself, then.” Cynthia snorted. “When you’re old and gray you can open up your closet of regrets and let him fall out. Won’t keep all those years in between nearly as warm as having him in your bed.”

“Doing just fine without a man in my bed, Cynthia.” Lavinia grabbed her jacket and slipped her arms inside.
Her friend walked over to her and planted herself firmly in front of Lav. “Last word on the subject then. When a woman is as miserable as you’ve been for the last two months, it means she lost something important to her. If you get a chance to get it back, you should.”

Lav smiled at her. “Okay, thank you for the advice. I think I will go straight home tonight and try to get in a workout.”

“And some sleep?” Cynthia insisted, the concern once again in her dark, expressive eyes. They reminded her of Donatello’s. Lav closed her eyes tight and swallowed. Opening them again, she told Cynthia, “Yes, Cyn, I will get some sleep.”

Her apartment was dark, drab, and unappealing to Lav when she walked in, and she couldn’t face trying to sleep. She decided to brave the dojo for some exercise; the memories in there were painful, but she was determined to stop avoiding them.

Lav had no intention of doing anything other than running a couple of miles on the treadmill and a little light lifting with her free weights. But somehow she found herself going through the soothing motions of Tai Chi and that led to her running through her katas.

It felt good to her body, too long immobile, and she decided that it didn’t mean anything to her other than another form of exercise.

“You’re a liar.”

Lav spun around mid-kata to see Raphael standing near the door.

“What are you doing here?” she demanded.

“Don told me ya’ said ya’ was done with ninjitsu and here ya’ are goin’ through katas. Ya’ lie about not wanting ta come home too?” Raph asked.

“Leave me alone, Raph.” Lav grabbed a towel off the floor and touched it to her face and neck.

“No. Don was too soft on ya’. I ain’t gonna be that easy. I want ya’ ta stop this nonsense and come home with me now,” he ordered, moving towards her.

She stepped back. “The lair is not my home anymore. A decision was made and I’ve accepted it.”

Raph growled, low. “That’s another lie.”

She turned her coldest look on him. “You’ve called me that twice. Don’t do it again.”

“Or what?” Raph challenged.

Lav pushed past him, going for the door. Raph jumped in front of her to block her path.

“Don asked nice. I’m asking nice, for now. We want ya’ back, what more do ya’ need?”

She closed her eyes and pressed her lips together tightly. Turning from him, she marched towards the kitchen. Raph’s hand on her arm stopped her.

“Let go,” Lav said quietly.
“No,” Raph said and then repeated, “What more Lav? Say it.”

“I don’t need anything,” Lav insisted, refusing to look at him.

“Ya’ gave Don a story when ya’ sent him away, don’t I get one?” Raph asked.

“I told him what he needed to hear so he’d leave,” Lav said. “What do you need to hear, Raph?”

“How ‘bout the truth? How ‘bout ya’ tell me what you’re really feelin’? Are ya’ mad and don’t know what ta do about it? Do ya’ need ta hit somethin’? Hit me, go ahead, get it outta your system. I deserve it; we all do for putting ya’ through this.” Raph’s eyes searched hers, looking for a spark to show he was getting through.

“What’s done is done, Raph. I don’t forgive broken promises and I don’t go back and take the chance it might happen again.” Lav’s mouth snapped shut and she pulled her arm free of his grip.

“What, ya’ ain’t never made a mistake in your whole life? You’re perfect?” Raph loomed over her.

“I’ve made my share. Just not when it comes to my word of honor!” Lavinia practically shouted at him, the hurt and anger beginning to show despite her best efforts.

“We’re tryin’ ta make that right, if you’ll let us. Damn it, Lav. We love ya’ and need ya’ ta come back. Me and Don have told ya’ that, do ya’ wanna hear it from Mikey too? Ya’ want me ta send him ta tell ya’ himself?” Raph stepped closer to her, his expression earnest.

“No. It doesn’t work that way. Not for us . . . .” she trailed off, biting her lip.

Raph’s eyes narrowed, a familiar tug pulling at his gut. “It’s Leo ain’t it? Always been him, huh?”

“He’s the leader, he sent me away. I can’t go against his wishes,” Lav insisted.

“Ya’ ain’t in the clan no more.” Raph was brutal in his honesty. “You’re just a woman now and ya’ don’t have ta answer ta nobody but yourself. If ya’ wanna be with us then be with us.”

“I won’t,” Lav snapped. “I won’t be treated like a throw away; I won’t spend the rest of my life waiting for the other shoe to fall. After all I went through to make sure you knew you could trust me, to have my trust broken is shameful.”

“Ain’t ya’ bein’ a little melodramatic?” Raph sneered.

Flaring, Lav pushed a finger towards his chest. “How dare you belittle my feelings! I am not a piece of meat! What I think and what I feel are important.”

“Geez, temper! I never said they wasn’t.” He pushed his plastron against her finger, becoming aggressive as his anger skyrocketed. “It’s okay ta be proud, but don’t take it ta the level where it becomes one of the seven deadly sins.”

Lav pulled her finger back as though it had been burnt. “You think this is about my pride?” she asked incredulously. “Does that make it easier for you to accept if you can put it off on me? If that’s what you need to tell yourself, then so be it. I won’t come back because you wounded my pride. There, are you happy now? Can you leave me alone now?”
“Fuck no!” Raph stepped forward, completely invading her space and she recoiled. Before she could move further, both his hands shot forward and gripped her biceps.

“You’re hurting me.” She pulled, trying to escape his grip.

“Sometimes I want ta hurt ya’. Ya’ can make me so mad sometimes I want ta wring your neck. Ya’ crawl under m . . . my skin,” his stutter stopped him and he took a deep breath.

Lav was staring up at him, eyes wide. The color had deepened by just the smallest amount, but Raph noticed.

The way he was looking into her eyes sent a chill through Lav’s body, and not from fear. He was being overly rough, even antagonistic, obviously wound up for a fight and she was playing right into that. Lav couldn’t help herself, her empathic powers fed off emotions and his were strong, robust; insistent.

“Let me go,” Lav ground her teeth as she pushed out the order.

“No.” He brought his face close to hers. “No.” Raph’s breath washed over her skin. “Ain’t ever gonna let ya’ go.”

The pain flared and stabbed her chest. “You said that before. It was a lie then too.”

“Does this feel like a lie?” Raph released her biceps so that he could wrap his arms around her body. His mouth close to hers, he demanded, “Read me.”

Lav didn’t have to try, her whole body was singing in reaction to his feelings. A flush crept onto her cheeks and she shut her eyes, turning her head so he wouldn’t see how she was responding.

Raph didn’t have to see into her eyes to know what was happening to her. The high color on her cheekbones told him everything and her body was getting warmer against him, the familiar feeling making him ache with need. His cock twitched and Raph groaned.

Raphael churred, the sensation and sound of her nails on his scutes making his lust skyrocket. His cock was filling, the tip reaching out to taste the air and her pheromones.

Lav turned her head to the other side, trying to shake loose the fog of desire that was swimming around and drowning her brain. Her pussy twinged as he licked his way up to the side of her neck, relishing the taste of the salt from her sweat.

Lavinia leaned away as much as possible against his tight grip, trying to pull her neck loose. Raph slid a hand up her back and flattened it between her shoulder blades, pushing her closer. He leaned in even more, his mouth sucking at the skin below her earlobe.

“No~o,” she whispered in one long note, more to remind herself than to tell him.
Lav’s head tipped back as far as she could go to let him know she didn’t want this, but Raph took it as an invitation instead, rolling his tongue on her delicate neck just below her chin.

Her eyes were half shut and she’d begun to pant and moan. Raph moved slowly upwards, his mouth covering her chin, his gold eyes fixed on her lips.

Lav felt her vaginal muscles clench and her insides heat up, the juices beginning to flow heavily in preparation as her body begged her to release her brains restraint. She did want this, wanted to feel Raph penetrate her and take her and make her his again.

As she felt his lips move over hers, Lav’s mind grabbed control again. *Not a throw away, not a piece of meat . . . .

His mouth touched the soft skin of her lips. Raph shifted, pressing down, easing his legs to let his erection slide out. He needed her now, as rough and brutal as their lovemaking could get; needed it to wash away two months of pain and longing. His churr rolled from deep in his chest as he tasted her mouth again, the sweetness of it attracting his tongue.

Lav wrenched her lips free with a sudden twist of her head and her eyes snapped completely open.

“Stop!” Lav flattened her palms on his plastron and pushed with all her strength, using the power in her legs to help break his grip. She was off balance and didn’t care how she looked when she stumbled backwards and nearly fell.

Lav was crouching, her legs splayed and one hand on the floor, breathing hard. Her head came up as Raph moved for her, coming in fast, his cock half hard and bobbing between his thighs.

No arguing now, no logic or pleading. Raph was beyond words; eyes glazed over in lust and desire, a high buzz sounding in his ears. He dove for her, intent on taking her down and finishing what he’d started.

As he lunged, Lav jumped aside, springing on tense leg muscles she hit the floor running. She heard him shift direction with lightning reflexes and made her legs move as fast as they could, a touch of panic in her spine knowing how quick he was.

She almost didn’t make it. Lav could practically feel his hot breath as they raced, sensed his hand reaching for her as she turned the corner past the kitchenette. With a final adrenalin laced leap, she flung herself into the bathroom and slammed the door, snapping the lock a millisecond before his muscled form smashed into it.

The door shuddered but held. It was reinforced metal, set in a frame of like material, designed specifically as a safe room. She stepped back anyway when he crashed into the door again, pulling in air in frantic gulps, trying to control her heartbeat.

“Lavinia!” Raph yelled at her, then drove a fist into the door.

“Go away!” she screamed as loudly as she could, tearing her throat.

Silence. Lav was shaking as her body dealt with the adrenalin, the fear, and the desire.

Raph took a deep, long breath, held it and let it go. The sound of hysteria in the voice of the woman he loved cut through his lust and his eyes cleared along with his mind. He placed a palm on the door and leaned in to touch his forehead there as well, smelling the air covered in her scent.
“I’m sorry,” he managed to say, loud enough to carry through the metal panel.

Lavinia stared at the door, her shoulders lifting and lowering with her struggle to catch her breath. She didn’t know what to say to that, so she remained silent.

“Lavinia. Please. Tell me ya’ forgive me.” Raph’s voice caught and he swallowed the sharp spike wedged in his throat. He felt hot tears leaking over his lower lids as he rubbed his palm up and down on the door, trying to soothe Lav through the metal.

Lav’s eyes burned as a sharp rod of hurt plunged into her chest and moved into her belly. She could feel him through the door. All his pain and longing, all his desire and sorrow. It was a white hot coal growing in her, urging her to make Raph whole again, because she loved him so much.

“I love ya’, babe.” An echo of her thoughts, his strained voice hit her again, driving her back against the sink. She bent double at the pain, her hand on her stomach, and then she dropped to her knees.

“Tell me what ta do.” Raph’s voice shook as he said, “I don’t want us ta be like this. I love ya’ .”

Raph’s hand continued to stroke the door, his mask soaked by the continuous slow slide of tears. Why couldn’t he control himself? He felt like an animal, he was an animal. How she had ever come to love him he didn’t know. Raph had only felt joy that she told him she did. He’d never hear that again. Throwing his head back, Raph howled.

His long, slow tortured cry bit into her skin like a thousand knives, slashing and peeling her. Lav fell to her side and curled into a ball, trying desperately to go into herself, to the place she’d discovered as a child that made the pain of abuse disappear, at least for a little while.

Hours later, Lavinia jerked awake. Somehow she’d fallen asleep, probably in the shielded compartment in her mind, safely away from her pain and Raphael’s.

She groaned as she sat up. Lav hadn’t had to go to that place in years. The side effects left her groggy, hot, and flustered.

Rising slowly, Lav used the wall to hold herself up as she made her way to the shower. She turned the water on and stripped while sitting on the edge of the tub, dizzy and disoriented.

Spinning while seated, Lav stood up carefully under the stream of water and let it wash over her. She had no idea what time it was. She had no idea if Raphael still waited outside her door. All she could think of was to stand under the warm water and shake loose the instability that had its grip on her.

After a while, her mind started to clear and she turned the water off, stepping out on steadier legs. She dried herself vigorously while listening for any sound, but felt no safer for hearing nothing. He was a ninja after all.

Flushing again, Lav pulled into her clothes and revved up her determination. She wasn’t going to spend her life hiding in bathrooms to avoid anyone, including Raphael. It wasn’t fair for her to have to; she had accepted their decision without an argument, they should accept hers.

Nevertheless, caution commanded that she open the door slowly. He wasn’t outside the bathroom any longer; nor was he in the hallway. Stepping with care, she saw that the dojo was empty, and light was streaming in through the high windows. He had left before the dawn could
catch him.

That’s when she saw the note. A sheet torn from her notepad and left sitting on the kitchen counter. It was Raph’s distinctive scrawl and read “I’m sorry. I love you.”

Her eyes remained dry as she crumpled the note and tossed it into the garbage.

Don and Leo lay curled together in Don’s bed. The sound of Raph’s late night return woke both of them. He was loud, cursing and overturning things in the dojo.

Leo looked at the ceiling for a moment without moving. Don sat up, looked towards the door, and then slowly down at his brother.

“She told him no too,” Don said quietly.

Leo grabbed an edge of the blanket, preparing to rise, but Don’s hand came down on his plastron.

“Leave him alone. He needs to work it out himself. If you go down you two will fight and that won’t solve anything,” Don told him.

“He should know I care.” Leo looked up at Don with a pained expression.

Don’s heart skipped and he stroked Leo’s scutes soothingly. Leo was finally acknowledging his emotions and that was a good thing.

“He knows Leo. We all know how much you care about us. Raph’s hurting but so are you and you never let us take care of you, so I don’t want you to run away from me right now, okay? Just stay here for a bit longer,” Don whispered to him gently.

Leo let himself relax, watching Don’s face as his brother stroked his plastron. Earlier that evening, Don had come into the dojo where Leo was practicing. Raph had gone to Lavinia, determined to bring her back, and Leo was pretty sure he wouldn’t be successful.

Leo was surprised when his genius brother walked over, pulled his bo, and began to spar with him.

Don was tired still, Leo could see that, but he was also determined and more focused than he’d been in a long time. He batted Leo’s katanas aside easily, moving fast with his bo and staying out of Leo’s range.

His attacks were well thought out and expertly executed, the bo in his hands moving faster than most people could react to, sweeping out and back without a single pause.

Don pushed him off his feet twice. Leo was ecstatic; this was the kind of challenge he needed, had been needing, and Don was giving it to him.

God, how he loved Donatello.

He had finally gotten past the bo and swept Don’s feet from under him, leaping on him before he could get back up and holding his katana at Don’s neck. Instead of yielding Don had lifted a slow hand, carefully pushed the blade aside, and sat up enough to touch his mouth to Leo’s.

The katana fell, forgotten, as Leo desperately lunged into that kiss. It was a lifeline to his
lost soul, and Leo poured his entire being into it; hot, hungry, and searching. Don knew somehow exactly what Leo needed and pulled Leo to his feet without breaking their kiss.

When Don led him from the dojo, Leo expected they would go to Leo’s room. Don hadn’t wanted to spend the night with him, with anyone, since they had sent Lav away. They would share an intense physical coupling and then Don would leave.

Tonight, Leo was led upstairs and into Don’s room. He didn’t want to ask why, didn’t want to break the spell.

They stripped each other as they lay across Don’s bed, barely breaking from their kiss to pull away the pieces of cloth and leather that served as the whole of their wardrobe. Leo rolled Don onto his carapace, touching every part of Don’s body with his hands and his mouth, until they were both in pain from their need.

He entered Don’s body slowly, savoring every inch of feeling as they joined. Don’s face was beautiful in its passion and Leo stared at his brother while he pushed into him.

Each thrust was dictated by Don, the tempo was dictated by Don, everything was for Don and nothing felt more perfect. Leo groaned and churred and watched his brothers face. Leo’s hand held Don’s erection and pumped it rhythmically, letting Don’s face tell him what to do there as well.

When Don came with a wonderfully breathless cry, Leo thrust harder and faster to reach his own peak, so they could climax together. They shuddered and panted together, then slowly sank down from their highs and drifted peacefully against each other.

Leo had been dozing lightly when Don turned on his side to face him. Suddenly alert Leo tensed, knowing his brother was going to speak, afraid he was going to be asked to leave.

Instead, Don placed a settling hand on Leo’s hip and told him, “Leo, you know I love you, right?”

Leo’s eyes focused on Don’s dark orbs. “Of course, Donny. I love you, too.”

“Is it okay if we talk a bit? I don’t want to ruin the mood, but I have something on my mind,” Don confessed.

A tiny thread of hurt stung at Leo’s heart, fearful that this entire night had been completely planned with the intent to make Leo pliable. But then he remembered that this was Donny, and Don never sank to that kind of subterfuge.

“Aren’t you turning into a fussy old maiden?” Leo said with a small smile.

“Kinda. But you’ve always been that way, so I’ll forgive you.” Don returned the smile.
Leo kept his eyes on Don’s as he asked, “So did you find your answers?”

“Well, maybe not completely,” Don admitted, “but I think I got pretty close. I was thinking about you and Lavinia, and why she won’t come back.”

“Since you linked us in the same sentence, I’m guessing that you’ve concluded I may be to blame. Hate to break it to you, Don, but I could have told you that.” Leo grimaced.

Don shook his head. “No, I don’t think you could have. I mean, I know you feel responsible because you made the decision to send her away, but I don’t think you really understand why you made that decision.”

Leo raised an eye ridge. “I told you guys how I came to make that decision.”

“You told us the reasoning behind it, the justification you came up with. I think you came up with that after you decided to send her away. I think the initial decision was based on something else, and you won’t admit to it yet.” Don was watching him intently.

Leo huffed a little before he said, “You think I don’t know my own mind?”

Don stopped him before he could go further in his denial. “I think you do. Leo, I think Mikey was right when he said something was eating at you ever since Hun almost killed Lav. And I think it’s still in there and you’re still trying to ignore it. You’ve come this far by admitting we need to bring her back. Come a little further with me and let’s get to the core of the problem together, okay? Can you do that for me?”

“Why would it matter, Don? If I know I made a mistake and I’m trying to fix it, does that other part make any kind of difference?” Leo didn’t want to dig at that scab, but Don wasn’t letting him off the hook.

“It makes a difference because Lav can sense it inside of you and that’s why she won’t come home,” Don stated bluntly.

Leo was startled. He had always been good at hiding things; thought he’d been good at hiding this even from himself.

“Go on,” he told Don, in spite of his misgivings.

“How many times have you almost been killed, Leo?” Don asked, seemingly off topic.

Surprised, Leo said, “I don’t know, a few I guess.”


“I hate that name,” Leo replied. No one was without fear and Raph gave him that label as a challenge.

“But you do have a fear and we all know what it is, Leo. You’re afraid to fail. You’re afraid that you won’t be good enough and that you’ll fail. It drove you to form an alliance with Karai that first time because killing Shredder plunged the city into war and you felt like you were to blame. That killing him failed to do any good. And our stopping his space ship on its way to the Utrom home world almost got us all killed and you took that on as a personal failure, even though it all worked out. Tell me if I’m wrong.” Don’s gaze was intense.
Leo stirred, uncomfortable with where this was going. “No. I spent time with the Ancient One to work through that, Don. I changed.”

“No one can completely change who they are, Leo.” Don was adamant. “That need to avoid failure is part of the reason you are the best leader. You understand the consequences of failure better than any of us. After Lav was almost killed, you started doing it again, beating yourself up, but this time you pushed it down and denied it because you thought you shouldn’t feel that way anymore.”

“I pushed it away because it didn’t solve any problems. That feeling is counterproductive Don,” Leo said.

“It doesn’t need to be,” Don explained, his eyes never leaving Leo’s. “It can be a good tool for analyzing what’s going on in your head. Please, can you go back to that moment, back to when you were about to surrender to Karai? I know it’s not a pleasant memory, but try to walk me through your thought processes.”

The look in Don’s deep, dark eyes stopped Leo’s protest. Maybe it would be good to do this, to talk it through as he would have done with the Ancient One. Here with Don, who wouldn’t pass judgment, wouldn’t question or diminish his feelings, would simply listen.

Listen while Leo pulled back the scab and cleaned the festering wound.

“I was focused before Hun grabbed Lavinia,” Leo began, his eyes narrowed as he remembered. “I knew Raph was down and the Foot were overwhelming us, trying to push us away from each other. Somehow, I seemed to be resigned to the fact that Raph might have been dead; I suppose because I’ve prepared my whole life for that possible outcome.”

Don nodded, hurt but understanding. “The choices he makes.”

Leo grimaced, then went on, “When she came across that rooftop, expressly against my orders, I wasn’t ready for it. I should have been; I should have known she would be afraid for Raph as much as the rest of us were. I should have known that with her gift she would want to be there to save his life.”

“You were a little preoccupied with doing the same thing, Leo,” Don said.

A curt nod. “Maybe, but it doesn’t change the fact that I know her well enough to have prepared for that contingency. I remember a flash of annoyance at both of us; her for not listening to me and me for not knowing she wouldn’t.”

“But she saved Raph’s life,” Don cut in.

“I know that. I also knew if she saved him we might get off the rooftop alive. But then Hun grabbed her.” Leo stopped talking.

Don waited a moment before prompting him. “You shifted from leader to lover, didn’t you?” he asked quietly.

A terse nod. Another minute to collect himself, and Leo continued, “He said he’d kill her and I knew he would. He’d rape her first and make us watch, and then he’d kill her and Don I swear I was not prepared for that. I wasn’t equipped for that; the thought that they’d make us watch as they tortured and killed the woman I loved.”

“Yes.” It was all Don could manage. He had felt that too, the crush of those emotions; of
Raph face down and bleeding, of Hun’s hands on Lavinia and Karai’s evil laugh as she told them what she was prepared to let Hun do to Lav. Just so she could have them.

“It made me understand how inadequate I was,” Leo said, then stopped again.

Don moved a hand to his cheek. “No, Leo, you aren’t. Just because you didn’t completely understand the depth of their depravity doesn’t make you inadequate. It makes them more evil than any of us could have imagined, because that isn’t the way our minds work. That’s a good thing, bro’.”

“I was ready to die for her and she beat me to it,” Leo admitted.

“She knew you were going to do that. She made a desperate gamble to save us because she knew we’d figure out how to save her.” Don’s voice was soft.

“Maybe I should have been proud of her for that.” Leo closed, then opened his eyes again. “But I couldn’t let go of how scared I was at how quickly she took that chance. After that I concentrated on helping Raph get over his guilt and tried to stop dealing with what I was left with. That extra burden was too much but I didn’t want to admit I needed help, not after Master Splinter put so much trust in me.”

Don leaned down. “We’re your brothers Leo, you don’t have to be in control and totally stoic all the time. We’ve all seen you when you weren’t so you don’t have to worry about letting us down.”

“Don, I . . .” Leo stopped as realization dawned.

There it was, the elusive thing that destroyed his meditation and tainted his reasoning. He had come back from his time with the Ancient One feeling more enlightened and in touch with himself. But his time had been cut short, and he hadn’t finished his journey.

Don could see the truth on Leo’s face and watched in silence while his older brother delved into that recess where he’d hidden this thing from himself.

“I thought I was losing control of her,” Leo whispered.

“Yes, I know,” Don murmured, “and in consequence, she thought she was losing you. Lavinia read your fear and didn’t understand it Leo. She thought you were afraid for our lives and so she started taking chances to try to keep us from dying.”

“That made me angry with her because she wouldn’t do as I asked,” Leo admitted.

“And you wouldn’t talk to her, or touch her because you wanted her to see you as her Master, an authority figure. You were trying to regain control of her and it just caused her own feelings to spiral further down a self-destructive path.”

“Am I that petty, Don? Do I need to be in control that badly?” Leo asked desperately.

Don smiled and touched his cheek again. “No. You just forgot she loves you as a man, Leo, not as her Master. Because you are her Master, she’ll always do as you say. But as her man, she’s always going to try to ease your burdens. It’s something we all have to accept from her.”

“I couldn’t,” Leo confessed. “Every time Lavinia disobeyed a command to stay back, I felt my control over everything slipping. I couldn’t talk to her about it; I simply couldn’t find a way to slip between leader, lover, and Master. Every solution I came up with led to a dead end.” A tight,
humorless smile crossed his face. “It’s not as though we can pick up and relocate the way Lav can. Blending in with the general populace has certain advantages.”

Don returned the smile, his more understanding. “You were struggling with this the entire week after she met Karai, weren’t you?”

“Yes. I couldn’t think straight after a while, I just kept leaping straight to the thought that if she wasn’t with us, she’d be safe. I just didn’t want to deal with my worst fears so I took the easy route.”

“Is that why you stopped being with her?” Don asked. “She told me, Leo. She was upset and didn’t understand and I told her to give you time. I didn’t know what you were going through so I couldn’t help.”

“I felt like I was letting her down and I felt guilty I didn’t have enough honor to keep my promises. I didn’t think I deserved her; being close to her caused me too much pain. If I could push her away from any contact with me, I thought I could be strong enough to tell her to leave.”

A rush of intense emotion suddenly grabbed Leo’s guts and twisted. Everything he’d been trying to deny since Lav was nearly killed came at him just then and when his face contorted from the pain, Don was there to hold him.

“Don’t isolate yourself from us anymore Leo. I know the burden of leadership is yours alone, but we share everything and you can share some of the tough decisions, too,” Don murmured, his arms tightly locked around Leo.

They stayed in each other’s arms for a long time after that. Leo let the hurt wash over him in waves, facing and fighting his demon until it was completely gone. Don muttered calming words and gave Leo his strength, knowing how deep the anguish had collected around his soul.

When Leo finally pulled away, he was exhausted. The brothers lay facing each other, Don’s hand resting on Leo’s cheek, his thumb brushing over an eye ridge and across his temple.

“Are you okay?” Don asked him, seeing Leo’s thoughts seemed far away.

“I don’t know. Maybe not until I can fix this with Lav. I . . . I don’t know what to say now that I understand how much pain I caused her, how hurt she has to be. Don, she was doing everything because she loves us, and I completely minimalized her feelings. Could I possibly have done anything worse?” Leo’s face scrunched up again, his misery palpable.

Don held his eyes and said, “We did this, Leo, not just you and you aren’t allowed to take all the blame. If anyone can fix it, you can. Maybe Raph will bring her back and you can start in the morning. Okay? For now, let’s try to sleep.”

Somehow they’d both managed to slumber, until Raph’s loud homecoming jerked them awake. And because they both understood why Lav didn’t come back with Raph, Don was able to get Leo to ignore the display of temper downstairs and go back to sleep.

= = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

Master Splinter was awakened by Raphael as well and he rose from his bed to investigate. Leo could be leader, brother; rival, and lover, but he could not be father. Tonight his most passionate son needed his father.

When he entered the dojo, he saw the general disarray that came from someone tearing
through a room and overturning everything in his path. He found his son seated on the floor near the upside down weight bench. Raph’s head was in his hands and his body was racked by silent sobs.

Walking over to him, Master Splinter kneeled and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Raphael.” He waited, offering his strength through that light touch.

“She needed me Sensei. I been watchin’ her for weeks and I knew she needed me and I screwed it up,” Raph choked out, his anguish spilling over into his father’s view.

“You have done nothing that cannot be repaired, Raphael. Lavinia is in love with you,” Master Splinter assured him.

Raph lifted his tear streaked face. ‘Ya’ don’t know, Sensei. I turned into an animal and she ran from me. I scared her so bad she had ta lock herself in a room ta get away from me.’’

Master Splinter studied Raphael for a few moments. He was his most aggressive son, and his most sensitive one.

“Whatever you did, I am sure Lavinia will not hold it against you, my son. She understands you and with time, she will understand this as well.”

“But she won’t come back.” Raph took several quick, deep breaths, his hurt and guilt making his chest tight. “Three of us have tried and she just keeps sayin’ no.”

“Then let me try.” Both their heads turned and they saw Mikey in the doorway.

Stepping further into the room, Mikey said, “I’m the only one who didn’t want her to leave, so maybe I’m the one to bring her back.”

Raph groaned and rubbed at his eyes, embarrassed for his little brother to see him like this. Mikey walked over to him and put a hand out. After a minute, Raph took the hand and let Mikey help him to his feet.

Mikey pulled Raph into a tight embrace as Master Splinter stood and quietly watched them. Raph returned the hug, holding onto his brother like a lifeline.

This was the closest they’d been in two months, and Raph began to feel calmer, part of the night’s pain fading with the return of some closeness with his little brother.

Raph turned his face into Mikey’s neck and whispered, “Thanks bro’.”

Mikey tapped his head against Raph’s and told him, “No problemo dude. What are brothers for?”

= = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

“Well, I guess you followed my advice,” Cynthia said as Lavinia walked into her office around noon.

Lav blinked, her brain still a bit fogged from the night before and her altercation with Raphael.

“I’m sorry?” she asked, taking the handful of mail Cyn gave her.
“Making up with the boyfriend,” Cyn replied with a smirk.

Lav’s face was a complete blank. She hadn’t made up with her ‘boyfriend’ and Cynthia knew nothing about the Turtles anyway.

“What are you talking about?” Lavinia wanted to know.

“Oh hell, girl.” Cynthia got up from behind her desk and went to the door of Lav’s private office. Lavinia followed her, more puzzled than ever.

With a flourish, Cyn threw open the door. Lav stepped past her and froze.

Her office was full of flowers. Bouquets of all shapes and sizes sat on almost every available surface.

In slow motion, Lavinia walked inside and gawked. The flowers all crowded together in her office made for a heady aroma.

“Who sent these?” Lav asked.

She was sure of one thing, these did not come from Detective Sandoval, unless the pay scale for a New York City detective was a lot higher than she knew.

Cynthia stared at her, confused. “You really don’t know? The delivery people just started dropping them off and said there was no message and no card. Anonymous flowers usually mean boyfriend.”

Lav shook her head, still dazed by the sheer number of flowers. These could not have come from the Turtles, could they? It wasn’t as though they couldn’t come up with money when they needed to; Don sometimes fixed things salvaged from the junkyard that April then sold for him in her shop. That money mostly went to purchase food, medical supplies, and daily living essentials.

And they would have sent a card, because they knew she wasn’t all that fond of surprises.

The phone on Cynthia’s desk was ringing and she dashed out to answer it. Lavinia wandered from bouquet to bouquet, checking each for some clue as to the sender. There was nothing.

A quarter of an hour later, Cynthia was at her door.

“He’s on the phone,” Cynthia said, a little breathlessly.

Lav looked up from the contract she was reviewing. “Who?”

“The flower man. He won’t give me his name, but he knows all the details. Lav, it’s him and his voice sends chills down my back. If you don’t want him, can you throw him my way?”

Lav leaned back and laughed lightly. “Suppose he’s eighty-two and chain smokes stogies?”

“Not with that voice.” Cyn backed out, pulling the door with her.

Lav reached for the phone. “Lavinia Daniel speaking.”

“Miss Daniel, I hope my flowers were well received.”

The hair on the back of her neck stood up. The voice was indeed smooth, deep, and well-
educated, and she knew who it belonged to.

“Mr. Lin, the flowers are quite lovely, but I’m afraid you have me at something of a loss. To what do I attribute such a magnanimous gift?” Lav asked.

There was a satisfied smile in his voice. “I’m flattered that you recognize my voice after so many months. I rather hoped to pique your interest with my offering and possibly entice you into accepting a proposal to dine with me.”

Lav closed her eyes and tightened her grip on the receiver. Maintaining an even, well-modulated tone, she replied, “You shouldn’t have gone to such trouble. I am going to have to decline your offer. As I explained at our last meeting, I don’t engage in personal interactions with people I have or am doing business with. My policy helps to prevent misunderstandings.”

Lin Zhu chuckled. “Firstly, it was no trouble to send flowers to an intriguing woman; quite the contrary, I enjoyed the endeavor. And secondly, we never had a business relationship. You politely turned aside my inquiries with regards to your charity. Would it enable you to say yes to dinner if we called it a business meeting? My accountant tells me I am still in need of disbursing some money to a charitable cause and I would like to understand why yours should not be my first choice.”

“Perhaps it’s just idealistic of me,” Lav countered, “but I tend to prefer the money I receive come from people with a true philanthropic commitment to my cause. I did tell you at the time to petition our board of directors, they don’t mind receiving funds solely on the basis of a need for a tax write-off.”

“But the board of directors don’t fascinate me as you do. Donations and business aside, I have been unable to stop thinking about you, and rather hoped the flowers would show you I am serious,” Lin said.

“Mr. Lin, I appreciate your seriousness and your gesture, but I must continue to decline your offer. I don’t date. It is absolutely not personal; I simply do not have time for relationships and therefore do not form any,” Lavinia replied firmly.

“That of course leaves me all the more captivated. I am told that is a normal human characteristic, although I believe myself narcissistic enough to not wish to seem normal. You realize that those traits leave me no choice but to continue my pursuit?” His voice was suave.

“Please don’t.” Lavinia was blunt. “I hate to hurt anyone’s feelings, even one with such a mature understanding of himself, but I will continue to say no and it will simply become tiresome for both of us.”

“Then I will leave it alone for the moment and pursue my continuing business needs with your board. Believe it or not, I am not just interested in a solution for my tax burden; I do find myself drawn to your work with children.”

“That’s good to hear. You won’t mind then if I send the flowers to the children’s hospital? They will do much more to brighten moods there than sitting here in my usually empty office,” Lavinia said.

Once again a low chuckle. “If that is your wish, please do so. They were a gift and you may do with them as you see fit. Good day, Miss Daniel.”

“Good day to you Mr. Lin.” Lavinia disconnected the call. Rising swiftly, she strode across
the room and yanked open her door, startling Cynthia.

“Cyn, get a messenger over here as quickly as possible and have them take all of these blasted flowers to the kids at the hospital.” Before the thoroughly surprised Cynthia could say anything, Lav added, “And if any more arrive like this, send them back.”

Mikey was happily flipping through television channels when he and Raph informed their other two brothers of Raph’s failed attempt to get Lav to return. Neither went into great detail and it was deemed a safe idea to let what occurred be forgotten.

“We kinda decided to let Mikey have a shot at talking to Lav,” Raph said. Seated close to his little brother on the couch, he seemed disinclined to move.

“Yeah, ‘cause you guys kicked her out, not me,” Mikey said without a trace of his usual rancor. “No way can she refuse the Mikester.”

“Sure, Mikey, that sounds reasonable,” Leo agreed, glancing quickly at Don, then away.

Don understood. Mikey was whistling as he switched from program to program with rapid fire succession, before finally deciding to settle on one. It was only fair he have his chance to talk to Lavinia; they had taken him far too much for granted as it was.

Plus it gave him a purpose, and armed with such, he wasn’t inclined to lock himself away from them.

Mikey left for Lav’s apartment as soon as Don told him she was home. Raph clasped his hand as he left, giving him a hard, hopeful look and Mikey smiled. Don and Leo both wished him luck, honestly hoping he would succeed, but not really believing it.

Mikey was careful to wrap himself in his standard disguise before he left. Three of them had visited Lav on as many consecutive nights and he didn’t want to be quite as obvious as they’d been. If someone saw him on a roof, they might figure he was just another guy out sneaking a smoke.

The first thing he checked when he reached her address was the location of Karai’s surveillance van. It was parked a little further away than usual, but it was still there. Flattening a couple of tires would have been fun, but he was on a mission.

Before he had the chance to decide his route skyward, he saw Lavinia walk out the front door and cross the street to the park across from her building. She was bundled up against the cold and was moving briskly, head down, but he knew it was her from the way she walked.

Since it was nearly midnight Mikey frowned, confused by her action, so he started following her.

Lavinia was more than a little restless when she returned to her apartment for the night. The thing with Raph the night before kept her away from the dojo and her conversation with Lin Zhu that afternoon made her jumpy in her own home.

She needed to burn off some tension and decided to take a walk. That it was so late meant nothing to her; nor did she care overly much about the relative danger she’d be putting herself in, she just needed to be moving before she tore her own hair out.
Taking one precaution only, more for her satisfaction than anything else, she wrapped herself in an unrecognizable bundle of clothes, a scarf around her face. She wasn’t in the mood to be followed by Karai’s people.

She watched for them as she began her walk, pleased to note her unexpected action didn’t produce a tail. Or it might possibly be a result of the late hour, the cold, and a growing lack of interest on the part of her pursuers.

Lav walked for nearly an hour, thinking about nothing as much as possible. When it finally came to her that she could walk all night and her jitters wouldn’t go away, she turned back towards her home.

Lav saw the figure in the tree when she was twenty feet away from him. Her heart jumped and then settled, recognizing the shape but not who it was.

He jumped down and tipped back his hat covered head so a little illumination from the street lamp could touch his face. Michelangelo.

Mikey had a bulky coat wrapped around his body and had kept himself out of sight until she had gotten close enough to spot him. His smile was tentative.

“Hi,” he said.

Lav stopped and wrapped her arms around herself. “Hi. Why were you hiding in the trees?”

He chuckled. “Only place around here to hide. Why are you walking in the park at night?”

“Are you following me?” Lav asked.

“Not technically an answer, babe. If you wanna do one of those ‘quid pro quo’ things you gotta answer my question first.” He gave her one of his little half smiles.

Lav’s arms felt fluttery and she gripped them tighter. Mikey’s smiles were hard to ignore.

“I like to walk when there aren’t so many people around to bother you,” she finally said.

Mikey reached up to tilt his hat. “Yep. Mostly just the bad ones are left.”

Lav started to walk again, heading back to her apartment building. Mikey fell in step with her.

“You didn’t answer my question,” she told him, trying to ignore his solid and comforting presence.

“Hmm. Nah, I wasn’t following you so much as lying in wait for you. I wanted to talk. I was about to go to the roof when I saw you come out of the building and head into the park.”

Lav stopped and turned to look at him. “Have you been with me this entire time?”


Maybe it was the simplicity of the statement, or the fact that Mikey was so completely guileless, Lav suddenly felt like she couldn’t take another step. Seeing a nearby park bench, she willed her legs to carry her over to it and sank down.

Mikey sat next to her, leaning in to study her face, unworried that she tried to turn from him.
and keep her feelings to herself.

“You guys have got to leave me alone now,” Lav said in a voice barely above a whisper.

Mikey took off the hat, placed it on the bench behind him, and ran his hand over his head.

“I never wanted to leave you alone, Lav. I never wanted you to go in the first place.”

She took a chance and glanced at him out of the corner of her eye. He still had the same little half smile on his face and his eyes were very bright.

“I know.” She did whisper this time and turned to study her hands, now folded together on her lap.

“Then you know my bro’s have finally figured out what bone heads they were and need you to forgive them and come home,” Mikey explained, his eyes on her.

“I’m not . . . . “ She cleared her throat, wishing he wasn’t piercing her with his look. “I’m not going to do that. It doesn’t feel the same and probably never will. How could I live that way when I had the other?”

It took him a minute, but he started to understand. “You think they don’t love you?”

Lav didn’t say anything and remained motionless. She didn’t want to talk about any of this; she wanted it to be done for good. Even thinking about it hurt too much.

Mikey didn’t need her to say anything, though. He was stabbing in the dark and he was damn good at hitting targets that way.

“Not Don, nope, know you don’t think that about him. I know he told you he loves you even more than before and he was telling the truth; you know that about him.” Mikey continued to watch her as he talked.

“And it couldn’t be you’re worried about how Raph feels, even though he made a complete ass out of himself.” He hoped for a giggle or some acknowledgement of his humor, but she didn’t move. Not giving anything away, he saw.

“So he acted pretty normal and that’s gotta tell you he’s hopelessly in love with you. And I know you ain’t worried about me, ‘cause I was the lone voice of dissent which means my feelings, along with my good sense, never faltered.”

Lavinia was barely registering Mikey’s words. Whatever he might say, it didn’t take away from the facts. Those things she knew to be facts were what hurt the most.

“It’s Leo, isn’t it?” Bang, right on the nose.

Lav tried to keep her face from showing anything, she should have been able to do just that when she saw his slow crawl to the core of her problem. But she did let a small line float across her forehead when he actually said it, and of course, Michelangelo caught it.

“Leo came to get you and screwed it all up didn’t he?” Mikey asked with determination.

“Mikey, just let it go,” Lav breathed out in a hoarse whisper.

“Can’t do that babe. Not when everyone is so messed up and confused. If you think Leo doesn’t love you anymore, you couldn’t be further from the truth. He does, he just has a problem
with saying he’s sorry. He kinda has to work up to it.”

“That doesn’t matter, Mikey. Even if he said it, the things that were said before are what I have to live with. They wanted me gone and to have thought it was a good idea even the one time tells me everything I need to know.” Lav gripped her hands tighter, her nails digging into her skin. Controlling those few sentences was torture and she hoped she had given him enough so he’d let her alone.

Mikey knew when it was time to change tactics.

After a couple of minutes of silence, Mikey sighed. “Okay, so I’ve got something I wanna give you. It was supposed to be a Christmas present but, umm, Christmas sorta got messed up. So I’m gonna give it to you now.”

“Oh, Mikey no.” Lav gasped, unsure how much more she could take.

He ignored her to delve into the recesses of the large coat. Mikey pulled out a flat, square package, about the size of a book and set it in her hands.

The package was wrapped in green paper and tied off with a large orange bow.

With a smile, Mikey told her, “I went with orange on green ‘cause it’s sorta like I have my arms around you.”

Lav looked up quickly to touch his eyes with hers, and then she looked back at the package. Tentatively, she traced her fingers over the bow.

“Open it,” he urged her.

Holding her breath, Lavinia began to work the bow off of the package, careful not to damage it. For some reason, not breaking that orange ribbon seemed to be very important to her.

Carefully slipping it off the end, she pulled back the green paper and beheld her gift. It was a beautifully drawn sketch of all four Turtles, standing together with their arms around each other, smiling out at her.

That was when the dam broke. Everything Lav had been holding in welled up and spilled over and she found herself hugging the picture tightly to her chest and crying hard.

Mikey wrapped himself around her completely and held her in his strong arms while she sobbed against his neck. Her pain was so palpable he could feel it surge out to touch him and it joined with his own sorrow.

Rocking with her, Mikey let tears of his own roll silently across his mask.

The only time in her life Lav had ever cried so hard was when Tang Shen was killed. She hadn’t shed a tear when Master Yoshi had sent her away; all her feelings were numb at that point. Afterwards, she tucked it all away and refused to ever get close to anyone again.

Until last year, when she’d fallen hopelessly in love with four mutated turtles.

She cried harder at that thought, letting herself feel the complete loss for the first time. Her body shook with painful, racking sobs as she buried her face into Michelangelo’s neck. The feel of him all around her brought her to the edge of hysteria; wanting to throw her head back and scream that he never let her go.
Mikey kept rocking gently to and fro, making small shushing noises and rubbing her back softly.

“Why?” she hiccuped out. “Why c . . . couldn’t I stay? Why d . . . didn’t you want me anymore?”

Mikey pressed his face against her head. “It’s not like that Lav. We do want you; I want you. We just got confused and you know, mixed up.”

After a few long minutes, Lav managed to control her sobbing. Reaching blindly into a pocket, she extracted a tissue and pushed back from Mikey so she could clean her eyes and dab at her nose.

His arms were still around her so she pulled against them, trying to loosen his grip.

“I’m okay now, Mikey. Let me go.”

“Don’t want to,” he said. “Maybe . . . maybe I’m not okay.”

She looked into his eyes, saw the deep sadness in them and once more felt her heart ache with loss. This was just prolonging things and making it far worse for both of them.

“I have to go.” She stood up abruptly, managing to dislodge his hold in the process.

He jumped up too. “I’ll come with you. I can sneak into the building easy.”

“No.” She began to walk backwards slowly, her arm outstretched, the other still clinging to his gift. “Just let me go Mikey. Just stop thinking about me and go back to what you had before with your brothers.”

“How can I? Nothing is the same. Everybody hurts and no one wants to talk and it’s all messed up.” Something of his youth emerged in that statement, making her hurt all the more.

“You’ll find a way. You can bring them back together; that’s your gift. I was just a short part of your life and you guys can forget and put yourselves back together.”

“I don’t want to forget,” Mikey said with a touch of petulance. “It’s not fair that I have to lose you because of some stupid decision they made when they were scared.”

“What’s done is done,” Lav told him.

It was an idiotic, clichéd thing to say, but she couldn’t think of anything else. She hurt too badly right now, from head to toe; deep primal pain and she just wanted to run and run and run, until she managed to outrace the pain.

“Then why can’t we fix it?” he demanded, his blue eyes wide. “Tell us how to fix it and let’s start over.”

Lav was shaking her head before he finished speaking. “You can’t fix everything, Mikey.” She didn’t want to get into it, but she needed him to understand enough to accept her decision as final.

With a shaking hand, she pointed at some debris that had blown into the captivity of a nearby bush. “You see that, Mikey? Those are all things that people used and discarded. That’s how I feel.”
Stopping herself, she closed her eyes. Lav didn’t have to tell him any of this and she wouldn’t have, but he was right. It hadn’t been his choice; his was the lone voice of dissent and he deserved some truth, even if it was painful for her to say.

“I feel betrayed and used, Mikey. And I feel stupid for opening up and trusting someone after all this time. This is what it got me; a bunch of lies and broken promises. So I’m not doing it again. Ever.”

She turned her back on him and strode away. She heard him calling her, asking her not to run away and that only spurred her to go faster.

Lav realized she still held the sketch. She had meant to give it back to him; not wanting the constant reminder, but she’d forgotten. Now she’d have to keep it; going back to return it was not an option.

Neither could she bring herself to throw it away. She would have to pack it in something.

Crossing the street, Lav realized she’d made a decision. If they wouldn’t stop coming to her she would have to leave, and she’d have to leave now. Mikey brought her too close to giving up and she’d probably not stand well against another onslaught.

The world felt like it was closing in on her. The Turtles pushing at her resolve, Lin Zhu making advances, Karai breathing down her neck, the ever persistent Tomas Sandoval.

It was time to run.
The Others

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 6,824
Chapter pairing: Raph/Lav (non-graphic), Karai/???
Chapter Rating: NC-17 Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, voyeurism, Het sex, language
Chapter Summary: Bishop adjusts Ethel’s contract; Ethel desperately wants Raphael. Lin Zhu issues orders. Sandoval daydreams. Karai’s substitute for the night can’t take her mind off of Leonardo.

“Tell me about her again,” Bishop demanded for about the hundredth time since Ethel’s rooftop failure, almost eight months ago.

Ethel sighed wearily as she watched him pace back and forth behind his desk. There was nothing on the desk; nothing in the room save the desk, two chairs, and a potted plant in one corner, looking highly incongruous.

She was leaning on her crutches and he hadn’t asked her to sit, so she grabbed a chair and helped herself. Ethel was not an employee she was a paid contractor, and if he kept pissing her off, that relationship was going to end fairly quickly.

Ethel held on for two reasons. One was her reputation and the other was Raphael.

Patiently, Ethel retold her story of the incident on the roof; from their trapping Raphael and the mystery woman through to the end, which found Ethel lying on her back, arms and legs broken by that same strange woman.

What she did not tell Bishop, nor anyone else, was that the woman had mortally wounded her with a bladed weapon of some sort and had then proceeded to somehow heal her.

Maybe that was why he kept asking to hear the same story over and over again. He was scary deep and he frightened her a little.

Ethel wasn’t scared of anything or anyone; never had been. She’d been all over the world tracking, hunting, killing big game, deadly creatures, exotic specimens, and was quite famous for her bravery. She didn’t intimidate and she didn’t back down. But Bishop was unlike anything she’d ever encountered and she’d love to just be shut of him and his damn commission.

Since she couldn’t back out, she forced herself to meekly continue these meetings.

When she finished with her story, Bishop stopped pacing and came to lean across his desk, fingertips flat on the surface. He stared into her face and nodded once to himself.

“You’re keeping something back. I need to know everything.” His voice was flat and level.

Ethel sighed, growing impatient with his officiousness. “I told you everything, and I’ve told it several times over. What more do you think you’ll learn from me telling it again?”
“The truth.” Those two words were pronounced quietly, but they sent a chill up her back.

Ethel shook her head. “I haven’t told you a single lie, and furthermore, I’m growing tired of being summoned. I am still trying to track your Turtles for you, even though they’ve gotten more cautious since both of our failed attempts to capture one of them. There isn’t anyone better at this than me and you know it. Don’t think for one minute I don’t know you hired Davis and Reed before you gave me the commission. That got you what? A big fat nothing. At least I tracked and trapped one, even if I couldn’t contain him.”

Bishop stood up straight and stared at her over his dark glasses. “That is exactly why you still have this commission. I still want those Turtles, Miss Bugge. I want their rat father if possible and I want to know more about the woman you saw with the Turtle named Raphael.”

“She’s a woman.” Ethel bit back what she wanted to say.

The bitch had broken both her lower legs and they were still trying to heal. Eight fucking months. She’d broken Ethel’s left wrist, and her right ulna, and she hadn’t seemed to have to work all that hard to do it.

Bishop’s short laugh was harsh. “A woman who beat the crap out of you. I only know one other woman in this city skilled enough to do that and I guarantee it wasn’t she you met up with. That woman would have killed you. The only others possessed of the skill to break bones in a person of your size and strength are the Turtles, their Master, and me. Now you tell me a strange woman was with one of the Turtles and that she can fight. Do you really wonder that I want to know more?”

“If and when I know more, I’ll tell you.” Ethel pushed herself into a standing position, pissed again at having to rely on crutches. “Unless you want to cancel my contract.”

Bishop folded his arms. “I do not. But I want results. I am also suggesting we amend the contract to include that woman. Name your price. Something is there that I need to know about. In my experience, unexplained things have a tendency to spiral out of control. I want answers before that begins to happen.”

Ethel smirked. “I’ll think about that amendment. And the price. If you want to pay for some random woman who likes to run around with mutated Turtles, it’s your money. Unless you have something pertinent to discuss, I have surveillance tapes to review.”

She made it to the door before Bishop’s voice stopped her. “Miss Bugge. There is one last thing.”

Ethel turned only her head because the crutches were too damn much trouble. “What?”

“I’ll want that woman alive and in one piece. I’m sure that her being with Raphael may motivate you to zealousness, but you were hired as a professional. Let us try to keep it on that level.”

Ethel’s eyes narrowed. At no time had she ever indicated an undo interest in Raphael personally, but as she had reminded herself earlier, Bishop was deep.

“I always keep to my contracts, Mr. Bishop.” She flung at him before leaving the room.

Bishop continued to stare at the door after she left. He was becoming impatient and that was not a good thing. He had been around long enough to know that one rash act could destroy months, years of carefully laid plans.
Those Turtles had offered him plenty of setbacks. In fact, Bishop had lost track of just how many times those mutants had destroyed his plans. They would show up out of nowhere, wreck a scheme, and disappear back into the shadows. Ninjas. Mutated ninja turtles.

He had DNA samples from them at one time, but had used them all up trying to discover their secret. Their Master had been his prisoner for a while and he’d gotten some good samples from him until the Turtles had shown up. They had rescued the rat and destroyed Bishop’s lab along with all his work.

They had also managed to rescue the giant crocodile while they were at it; leaving Bishop with nothing.

Having nothing to show for the money funneled into his organization meant he might lose his funding. As it was, an oversight committee was watching his expenditures and he had to resort to hiring mercenaries and contract hunters. Like Ethel Bugge.

She was one of the best. Completely eccentric, possibly even a little crazy, but she was damn good. Catching Raphael on that rooftop was a brilliant piece of tracking and anticipation. It might have worked if he’d been alone.

Bishop walked over to the plant in the corner and began running his fingertips over the glossy leaves. A woman with him on that rooftop had changed the odds just enough for the Turtle to escape. A woman with Donatello in the junkyard had altered the equation enough for a sure capture to turn into a handful of nothing.

Who the hell was this woman and what was she to the Turtles?

There was definitely something Bugge was keeping from him. That certainty was why he kept making her repeat her story of that incident. Every time she did, she inadvertently let something else slip.

The one thing he still had in his arsenal that she knew nothing about was the dress Bugge had worn the night she got herself incapacitated. It was a hideous thing and Bugge had discarded it at the hospital while her bones were being reset. She didn’t know Bishop had found and taken it.

The thing was saturated with blood and a gash in the midsection appeared to have been made by a bladed weapon; certainly not large enough to be a katana as Leonardo used, nor the correct shape for a sai, which was Raphael’s favored weapon. It had to belong to the mystery woman.

Except that Ethel did not have a stab wound. Only broken bones. When Bishop ran tests on a sample of the blood, it turned out to belong to Bugge.

He held this trump card up his sleeve for later use. Right now, his persistent questioning was yielding information.

Tonight she had told him the woman had held back at the beginning of their fight; held back until Raphael ordered her to defend herself. That was interesting; her abilities, her hesitation in using them, and following orders from the Turtle. It was very interesting.

It also explained Bugge’s jealousy. Bishop snorted, so damn funny for the hunter to think she could keep her attraction to the mutated turtle Raphael a secret. It certainly wouldn’t be funny if Bugge killed that woman to keep Raphael for herself.

Bishop turned from the plant and left the room, thinking he needed to get Bugge’s contract.
Ethel sat behind a video monitor in the back of a large panel van and watched the footage from last night’s surveillance. It mostly gave her a fat lot of nothing, although she did catch some film of people dressed entirely in black crossing the rooftops at one point during the night. Interesting, but not what she was after.

Damn that Bishop all to hell. She did not like the man and seriously wanted to tell him to go fuck himself. If she was up for it, she’d like to yank one of his legs backwards and show him how to fuck himself.

Except she was afraid he was right and could break her in two. And then there was her commission. It was a sweet one, with very few limitations and very little oversight, if one didn’t count the number of meetings a failure brought about.

Ethel had the commission for a week before she spotted one of the Turtles. Bishop had given her all the data he had, or so he said, and she laid out a grid of the area of the city where they were most seen. Then she and her people settled down to watch, using night vision goggles and infrared cameras.

As fate would have it, the first Turtle they saw was the red-banded one, and Ethel was immediately smitten.

She understood why Bishop couldn’t provide better photos of her targets as soon as she saw him move. He was unbelievably fast, with the strength and agility of a cheetah.

Ethel had managed to follow him for a while, because tracking big game was what she was famous for. Dressed in her city camouflage fatigues, she blended into the skyline almost as well as he, her own powerful musculature aiding her as she leaped rooftops in an attempt to keep up.

The attempt was futile, of course. None of her people could stay with them and they fell way behind her in the pursuit, but it didn’t matter. That night she was simply reconnoitering and had no intention of trying to catch him. She was studying habits and terrain, just as any good hunter would.

He seemed to sense something because he stopped once, outlining himself against the moon, and she got her first good look at him. That was really all it took.

He was huge, powerful and fierce looking, a scowl on his face as he turned to survey the surroundings. He was part beast and part not, and the part of her that respected the beast rationalized away her misgivings by reminding her he was also probably part human.

Then he was gone, disappearing as fast as he’d appeared. When Ethel reported back to Bishop that night she told him she wanted to change their agreement. She would take less money in exchange for the Turtle of her choice, and she promised she could deliver all of the remaining Turtles to him. Ethel didn’t tell him she already knew which Turtle she wanted.

He didn’t fight her about it, which she found rather surprising. Nor did he ask what she wanted one of them for. He simply said three would serve his purposes just fine. Ethel had never met a more enigmatic man.

She was armed with a video camera the next time she saw the red banded Turtle. There was a woman with him and by the time Ethel got close enough to the pair, the Turtle’s mouth was...
swallowing the woman’s and Ethel forgot to turn the camera on as she watched through the long range lens, completely transfixed.

From the way their mouths moved, she could tell he was using his tongue to probe the woman’s mouth. Ethel felt a stir of excitement; if he knew how to do that, what else might he be capable of?

In a matter of moments his hands were all over the mystery woman’s body, and judging from her reaction, he knew how to touch as well.

He was clearly aggressive as he pushed her back against the door of a storage shed and lifted her so that her feet no longer touched the ground. When his mouth moved from hers it was to travel down to her neck and as his body held her suspended, his hands pushed under her shirt, leaving the woman squirming with her head back and eyes closed.

Then Raphael, as she came to know him, grabbed the woman’s pants and yanked them down, rolling one pant leg over a boot so he could push her thighs apart and slide between them.

Just before he did so, Ethel saw his manhood and she gasped at his size. If she hadn’t wanted him before, she certainly did now.

His lovemaking was brutal and rutting, like a wild beast, and Ethel wished it was she being pounded by him rather than this mystery woman.

It went on and on. When his movements slowed and stopped for a moment, Ethel thought they were done until suddenly he was moving in her again, his stamina amazing.

When they finally stopped and left the rooftops, Ethel was flushed; heated to her core. Like she told him when they met, she kept what she witnessed that night to herself.

Back in her hotel room, Ethel preened herself. Surely if he liked that skinny bitch, he would find Ethel’s physic tantalizing. Ethel looked herself over in the mirror and admired her well defined muscles, her sheer bulk. Not an ounce of fat on her two hundred and fifty pound frame, she was more than enough woman for the beast she’d observed. In the animal kingdom, males picked the heartiest, strongest females as mates, and Ethel knew she was a far better choice than the woman Raphael was bedding.

Ethel had dressed for the occasion of their first meeting, not in her rugged hunting gear, but in something softer and more feminine. She’d actually had to wear the outfit a couple of nights because she wasn’t sure when they would catch him.

She also wasn’t sure if the woman would be with him, not that it mattered all that much. She was clearly of no consequence.

Ethel’s knitting bones and infuriating itch reminded her of how wrong she was. Ethel was clearly the more powerful woman, but this other was quick and skilled. Ethel thought that the woman was afraid of her; during half of their fight she avoided Ethel. It wasn’t until Raphael told her to fight that she did and then Ethel never saw it coming.

It angered her immensely to think that the woman had been holding back all along, unwilling to fight at her full capacity for fear of hurting Ethel. Ethel of all people, who had wrestled a brown bear to the ground with her bare hands and had taken on many other of nature’s most dangerous animals. And most infuriating of all, Raphael seemed to prefer the smaller woman over Ethel!
That would not do. Ethel looked at her casts and crutches, angry at her infirmary. Angry at Raphael’s mystery woman. She was certainly not April O’Neil. The photo did not match, but Ethel had also made sure for herself as soon as she was once more mobile.

Ethel had gone round to the O’Neil woman’s store and looked the woman over in person. Definitely not Raphael’s woman; O’Neil was a little taller, less full on top, and had redder hair.

The way she moved was familiar though, easy and confident, balanced, hinting at hidden abilities. Maybe in befriending the Turtles the women had gained a skill set.

It was something to be remembered and considered, not that it mattered to Ethel. That woman of Raphael’s had to be gotten rid of, despite what Bishop had ordered. Screw him, he would have his Turtles and that was all Ethel was obligated under the current contract to provide.

As soon as the call to Lavinia disconnected, Lin turned to the man standing across from him and asked, “You are sure of this information? The vehicle these costumed people drive is this van?”

He lifted a sheet of paper from the couch where he was seated and glanced over the description.

“Yes Master Lin. It is quite reliable. The man who provided the information is a drug addict but his facts are never wrong. Several months ago he saw the woman get into this van driven by a large green turtle looking person. Our man heard through our sources that we were looking for knowledge of the green men, or Miss Daniel. When he saw the van again, he wrote down the license number and that description.”

“Months.” Lin Zhu frowned and let the paper drop from his hand.

“I am sorry Master Lin. For some of that time, our informant was in a court ordered drug program and unable to contact us.”

Lin flipped his fingers, dismissing the issue. “What has been done about this now that we have the information?”

“Our people have spread the word into the streets that the van should be observed and followed. The license plate is a fake and therefore no trail can be linked to it.”

“If that van is seen again, I want it tracked to its destination and the occupants brought to me, is that clear?” Lin stared at his retainer.

The man bowed. “Yes, Master Lin.”

Lin waved him away and reclined more deeply against the plush cushions. Green costumed men and Lavinia Daniel. New York was indeed a strange place.

Lavinia Daniel was a strange woman. Lin Zhu wanted her as soon as he first laid eyes on her, thinking she would be another simple conquest and a night’s entertainment. Women were not difficult for him to get and he was sure of himself as usual.

She had politely but firmly turned him down. All his advances were adroitly turned aside until he was obsessed with her. It was of course possible that he only wanted what he could not have; but he didn’t think it was that alone.
He was further intrigued to find no information could be had about her. Where she was from, who her parents were, schools, lovers – she was a mystery. A mystery with powerful friends, an impressive intellect, money and the one fact he did know; knowledge of the Japanese culture.

Lin had discovered through the passport administration that she had an alias and that it was Hamato. Beyond that he knew nothing. His craving continued to grow.

He had come to believe that the men in green costumes held the key to breaking this woman. They appeared and disappeared as quickly and efficiently as smoke, always interfering in his business. By some strange happenstance, one of his business associates had gotten a good look at the woman who sometimes ran with them, and Lin immediately knew it was Lavinia Daniel aka Hamato.

Of course he had no proof, but he was a man who could hold his secrets. He sent the word out that he wanted information about the costumed men and about Daniel.

This is what he had after months of inquiry and heavy expenditures – one sighting, by an addict, of his woman with the freaks.

His eyes narrowed. She was his. When the time was right, he would take her as his wife, and she would be willing. Whether she wanted him in return or not, she would be willing. Because he would know enough about her friends to make her willing.

The telephone call from his father the previous evening was the impetus for his decision to marry Lavinia.

They had discussed business for half an hour before his father had switched to topics closer to his heart.

“My son, tell me you have furthered your search for a wife,” his father had demanded without prelude.

Lin grimaced. “Father, I have been extremely busy with widening the scope of our enterprise here in the States. It has not been . . . .”

The elder Lin interrupted, “No excuses. I have many children, Lin Zhu; of them you are my only legitimate heir. I will not leave this soil until you have continued our line. It is time for you to find a bride worthy of our family and begin to bring forth boy children.”

Lin clenched his teeth. “Yes father.”

His father continued, “That is what you said the last time we spoke. Enough of this. If you do not find a woman very soon, I will require your return to Japan, and I will arrange a suitable marriage for you. This is not optional.”

“I have found a woman, father,” Lin said quickly. “She is well connected, wealthy, and refined.”

“Is she Japanese?” his father asked.

“Not entirely.” Lin stretched the truth to stave off his father’s protests. “She has a Japanese name and has lived in Japan. And she is young, father. Young and healthy. She will be able to bear many children.”

“Good.” His father sighed. “I will begin the arrangements for your wedding.”
“Please father, not just yet,” Lin spoke hastily. “We have not become formally betrothed. She is still tentative in our relationship; I cannot move too swiftly.”

“This had best not be another attempt to circumvent my wishes,” his father menaced darkly. “It would be a simple thing to give one of my bastard sons most favored status.”

His father would carry through with this threat, Lin Zhu knew. He placed family above all else; family honor ranked highest. Lin Zhu was at an age where he should have married and produced children, and his father’s light shone unfavorably among his colleagues because this had not occurred.

They would have begun whispering by now that Lin Zhu was too much a playboy and not worthy of the Lin empire. Or the whispers would say he did not like women. Their enemies would use his lack of a wife to diminish Lin Zhu’s father and the honor of their family.

“I assure you it is not, father. Miss Hamato will be my wife soon, you have my word,” Lin swore to his father.

The elder Lin was stern. “As you know what will happen if you do not keep it, your word is accepted.”

Lin stood up from the couch, pushing aside his lethargy and the conversation with his father. Indeed he knew the consequences of failure. He liked his place in line to take over his father’s empire. He liked the wealth, the prestige, and the power. He also liked each of his fingers.

Lin could visualize himself married to Lavinia. His father would be proud of his choice, his friends and enemies envious. Marriage did not mean he couldn’t continue to play with other women; better, it meant that they would not begin insisting he make things permanent. All around it was a winning proposition.

He just needed to bring Lavinia around to his way of thinking. The flowers were a good start. Finding her troublesome green friends and threatening to dispose of them an even better one.

If she was not willing, then he would exert force. That was how an empire was built.

“You should just give up cowboy.” Arthur Samuels tapped the end of his pen against the scarred desktop. “You gave it a try, but she’s not into you. It happens to everybody eventually, even you.”

Sandoval looked across their joined desks at his partner. Samuels was a short rooster of a man, full of wiry strength and a banal sense of humor. Originally from Oklahoma, he clung to his western roots while embracing the big apple and was easy to underestimate, unless you knew him.

“Ah, but I’ve just begun to fight.” Sandoval grinned. “Quitters never prosper. To the victor go the spoils . . . .”

“Shut up,” Samuels growled. “Okay, how’s this. She got money, you don’t. Your best suit cost you eighty-nine bucks and she probably pays that much for a cup of coffee. You’re just on different socio-economic spheres. Deal with it.”

Sandoval turned back to his computer and began typing out his daily report. A few minutes went by and then he said, “That’s not why she keeps turning me down.”
Samuels was still looking at him. “If that’s what you wanna believe. She’s an angel who rescues children and you’re her hero ‘cause you chopped up the big, bad wolf. Only she don’t wanna join you down here on earth, which is where you need to get your reality checked. What has to happen before you stop trying?”

Sandoval chose to treat it as a rhetorical question and didn’t answer. After a bit, Samuels shrugged and went to work on his own report. Love sick puppy, he thought with the smugness of a man married for fifteen years.

================================================================================

“Mistress Karai, the men have called in to report another uneventful evening.” Her retainer was on his knees, head bowed.

Karai moved with unhurried grace, dancing away from the weaving mannequin she was practicing her kicks on. Jumping into the air, she twisted with little effort and planted the heel of one foot into the dummy. The force ripped it from its moorings and it flew backwards.

When she stepped towards her Foot ninja, his eyes lifted quickly, then once more dropped.

Karai’s mouth was a thin line. Her own people were beginning to question the time she was putting into the observation of the Daniel woman. They had come up with nothing in two months of surveillance.

The woman’s actions were completely innocuous. She went to her office, to one of several different hospitals or medical clinics, she shopped, and she went home. Twice she’d boarded a private jet, destination unknown, and returned within a day.

One fact, one tiny fact that they’d discovered was that the woman was skilled in the martial arts. It would have bolstered Karai’s convictions that she was on the right track except for the fact that Daniel’s made no secret of that fact; indeed, it was part of her published biography.

And unfortunately, martial arts was the flavor of the month with the young rich of New York. Every third young man or woman of breeding was taking classes in some form of fighting art.

Karai had removed the rooftop surveillance, but she held onto the van. Something deep in her gut would not allow her to cease all activity with regard to Lavinia Daniel just yet.

“They are to continue to watch until I say otherwise. Is that clear?” Karai’s voice was haughty, brooking no argument.

“Yes Mistress. I will see to it.” He backed from the room, his head lowered.

A pair of light eyes gleamed at her from the shadows near the door to her bedroom. One corner of Karai’s mouth twisted up as she caught the flash before it disappeared.

She turned in that direction, prepared to address a challenge issued earlier in the day.

No light burned in Karai’s bedroom and she did not turn one on as she entered. Her prey, as she thought of him, had backed further into her sanctuary at her approach, keeping to the darkest shadow.

She could feel his presence; hear his heartbeat, smell his masculinity.
Karai had seen him for the first time that afternoon as she surveyed the newest group of potential elite Foot ninja. She never bothered with ninja below this level of achievement; she had others to train the novices.

They all wore their training uniform; dark slacks and black shirts, but no masks. Karai wanted to see their faces. She liked to gauge the level of their concentration or their pain, whichever the occasion called for.

Karai noticed him right away. She stood to one side, listening as their trainer gave them sparring assignments. To her amusement, the men always eyed her with an air towards acquisition but this one wore a challenging look as well, an impudent half smile on his lips.

His hair was thick, the color of dark sand, and he was well built; sculpted muscle on a tall frame, flat tight abdomen, strong legs. But his eyes were what caught her attention.

They were a light, almost honey color. Not the amber that so haunted her, but very close.

When his name was called, she had interrupted and told the trainer she would spar with him. Her employee had nodded and passed a knowing look to his assistant.

The trainee was as impudent as he looked. During their sparring he whispered to her, his mouth spewing innuendo as he fought. He was very good and his body began to burn her when they touched.

It was when she got him down with a tricky throw and locked him under her that she had leaned in and issued her challenge. Her bed was open to him if he could make it past her and her guards unseen. If he could not, the punishment would be severe.

He had said nothing one way or the other, but his breathing had changed, and she saw the light flash behind his eyes. Karai looked forward to finding out if he was brave enough to make an attempt.

And now he was here. No one had seen him; no alarm had sounded. He’d waited in the shadows until she became aware of him and then pulled back to await his promised reward.

She shivered with anticipation, her vaginal muscles clenching as adrenalin pumped into her. When Karai turned towards his scent, he leaped from the shadows and wrapped his body around hers.

His mouth on hers was as impudent as he, forcing his tongue inside her he drank from her without a word.

Karai responded with as much force, her tongue fought for control and her arms moved around his broad shoulders to pull him closer.

There was no gentle touching or caress between the two. Clothing was removed hastily and then his hands were on her body, kneading her breasts and teasing the nipples to hardness with rough hands. She gave him a moan as encouragement, letting him lift her and carry her to the bed.

His mouth tasted her body as it had tasted her mouth, his tongue playing over her skin, moving to her stimulated nipples and tweaking them with his teeth. Karai arched her back towards him and he opened his mouth wide to pull as much of her tit inside as he could, his tongue rolling over her nipple in a teasing manner.

His hands moved down lower, one pushing under her to grab her butt, the other dipped...
between her legs to cup her womanhood.

Karai opened her legs wide with a low groan and his fingers stroked her sex, occasionally probing her opening or tweaking her clitoris. Karai’s eyes were closed as he touched her, feeling the wetness begin to seep out.

Karai’s hands fell to his shoulders and she pushed against them, urging him to move lower. He released her breast and moved down, licking his way across her taut stomach, stopping momentarily to circle and then dip into her navel, before making his way to his final destination.

His tongue found her clit first and licked over it, before flicking it again and again. Her hips gyrated in response, her hands now on the top of his head, fingers weaving into his thick hair.

With a vicious tug, she pulled his mouth tighter against her sex. He grabbed her hips in response and lifted her slightly, burying his face in her pussy. His tongue moved into her vaginal canal, lapping at the heavy flow of her arousal.

Her hips moved in response as she rode his tongue. And in her ecstasy, her mind played its tricks on her. With eyes still tightly shut, she pretended he was Leonardo.

A flush of quick heat sped from her head down to her cunt as the image took hold.

“Ah, ah, ahhh!” Karai panted, lifting herself against the man’s mouth – Leonardo’s mouth. Her tormentor continued to stroke her clitoris, his hands moving to her ass to squeeze the rounded yet firm flesh.

She could take no more. Karai wanted to come with his cock inside her and she pulled him by his hair, giving him his orders without speaking.

He followed directions well, his hot breath dancing across her skin as he moved back up her body, pausing to bite gently at her nipples. His knees were between hers and she felt his manhood for the first time as it grazed her thigh. It was hot and slick with precome; hard against her skin, against her opening where he paused.

“Don’t stop . . . .” Karai hissed, her eyes still closed.

She felt his mouth on hers again, frantic with lust he captured her tongue and pushed her head back against the mattress. He was rocking back and forth on top of her body, rubbing himself against her and she moved her hands from his hair; raking her nails down his shoulders, across his back and flattening them on his lower back, just touching the rise of his butt cheeks.

Pushing down hard with her hands, she pulled her mouth from his and let her eyes open just enough to focus on the light colored eyes above her. They were glazed over with lust, lost in desire for her and only her, the way Leonardo’s eyes should be.

“Fuck me,” she ordered him, lifting her legs to wrap them around his waist.

He thrust forward quickly and embedded his cock in her hot, tight pussy. Karai arched up as he struck a glorious spot deep inside her, making her moan. Catching her lower lip with her teeth, she struggled to hold back words, afraid they would give her away.

The man moved in her, slowly at first, then faster as Karai’s hands scrambled at his back and his ass. His cock pounded against her womb, threatening to punch through as he began to drive harder, sounds escaping him as he grew more frantic.
“Yes, yes, mistress . . . b . . . beautiful . . .” he murmured, his voice low and harsh. Like Leonardo’s voice, never loud or crude.

A wave of pleasure rolled over her, then another tightened in a knot around her sex, making her muscles clamp down on his penis. He grunted and moved faster, rising up on his knees to drive full body thrusts into her willing pussy.

Karai hands fell away from his back and gripped the sheets, pulling at them as the knot in her womb deepened and her body tensed.

“Mmaahhh! YESSSSS!” Karai screamed when her orgasm hit, her hips rising from the bed despite the pounding above her. She bit down hard on her tongue, reality grabbing her roughly just as she started to scream the name that did not belong to this man.

“Unnghh, Mistress!” he shouted as his own climax burst from him, flooding her insides with warmth.

He continued to move his hips against her, expelling himself fully and then he slowed, panting heavily and lowering himself onto her body. Karai’s breathing was rough, heating his shoulder even as his burned against her neck.

Time passed and took with it the high of sex. Coming down, Karai wiggled under the man, until he pulled out of her and rolled onto his back. Her pussy tingled and she continued to pretend, if only for a bit longer, that Leonardo had done this to her; that Leonardo had filled her and satisfied her so completely.

But fantasy only lasted so long. The one next to her was not Leonardo, just a substitute to quench her momentary thirst. That he could continue to do so; continue to satisfy and take away her need, was lost to her obsessed mind.

“Go now,” she commanded harshly.

He looked at her in surprise. Karai saw his gaze slip over her naked body, his not-quite amber eyes returning to her face.

“The night needn’t end just yet,” he whispered, rising up on an elbow and resting a hand on her stomach.

“Yes it does. Our game is done. Don’t push my patience.” Her eyes froze him, and with a stiff nod, he rolled away from her and off the bed.

He dressed quickly and moved to the door. Pausing, he turned back to Karai, an unfathomable look on his young face. Almost on the verge of speaking, he stopped and remembered his place, bowing instead and leaving as quietly as he had entered.

Karai realized she was a fool as soon as he was gone, but was unable to do anything about it. The men drifted to her bed, she used them and sent them away. The pattern was the same even if the men were not.

In her heart and mind, she had room for only one man and she did not want him there.

Rising slowly, she pulled back into her clothing, overcome with a desire to continue her practice, pushing herself to become a better fighter than she was.

Pushing to become better than Leonardo. Someday she would get her chance to fight him
again. Although he was the better fighter, Karai had skills unknown to him.

If she could once get him down, Karai wasn’t certain if she’d kill him, or make him beg under her as she rode him as hard as she could. It didn’t matter; either way would be satisfying.

“Lavinia Daniel’s office, Cynthia Page speaking.”

“Cyn, it’s me. Cancel all my appointments and turn everything over to the Board. Tell them my commitments have been met. You won’t be able to reach me for a few days, just hold down the fort until I call.”

Cynthia took a deep breath. “I guess we’re moving again.”

Lavinia gave her a small laugh. “’Fraid so. Sorry Cyn, I know you were starting to really enjoy the bright lights and excitement of New York City.”

Cyn giggled lightly as she said, “You told me when I took this job to expect to do a lot of moving around. If I didn’t enjoy it, I’d quit you sweetie. Where are we going now? Paris would be fun, if you’re looking for suggestions.”

“We’ll see; I’m still weighing several options. Oh and Cyn, if anyone calls, you don’t know where I am, or when I’ll be back. Just take a message,” Lav said softly.

Cynthia looked at the phone knowingly. “And don’t volunteer a damn thing.”

A sigh on the other end. “You know I’d be crushed if you ever quit me, Cyn.”

“Yeah, mystery lady. Go do your cloak and dagger thing, I’ll wait for your next call patiently.”

Lav hung up and leaned back against the car cushions. Her grip on the steering wheel was white knuckle tight and she forced herself to relax. The city was behind her, her old life was behind her, and she knew what she was going to do today and tomorrow.

She’d figure out the rest of her life later.
Running

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 5,326
Chapter pairing: none this chapter
Chapter Rating: R Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, violence, language
Chapter Summary: April gives the guys a tongue lashing that pushes them to go after Lavinia en masse. Discovering that she is gone, Don begins a massive search, but he isn’t the only one looking for her. Raph decides to question Lav’s driver and winds up in the middle of a fight.

Mikey met up with his brothers at April’s after his failed attempt to get Lavinia to come home with him. The gloomy look on his face answered their unasked questions.

He told them anyway, trying not to put too much stress on her walking around the park in the middle of the night. They were all worried enough that she was becoming self-destructive.

April sat a little separate from them, hugging a mug of hot tea, and listened as Mikey told his brothers what Lav had said about feeling used.

She’d listened in silence for most of the night as the three older Turtles discussed their experiences in attempting to bring Lav back. They were frustrated, unhappy, confused, and Raph was angry, his mechanism for dealing with things beyond his control. He had skirted a big portion of his encounter with Lavinia, but April was like a sister to them and she knew what he wasn’t telling just as well as his brothers did.

Mikey finished his story, “She said we told her lies and broke our promises and she’s never gonna trust us again.” The wet traces on his mask told them how unhappy he was.

“Stubborn,” Raph said morosely. “She’s just stubborn.”

“Oh my God!” April threw her hands up in the air. “What did you think she’d be like? How do you think she’d feel? Did you think you’d waltz back in and go ‘oh sorry, just fooling, come on back’?”

The Turtles sat in stunned silence at April’s outburst.

“We told her we made a mistake,” Don offered meekly.

“A mistake?” April yelped. “A mistake is when you put salt in your tea instead of sugar. Don’t you understand; she thinks you don’t really love her. Words aren’t going to clear up this mess. She has to believe in you again.”

Pacing now, April spit out what she’d been holding for weeks, ever since they’d informed her of their decision. Lavinia had become a really close friend; in fact, other than Casey, the only friend she had who she didn’t have to hide part of her life from.

She didn’t say anything about the huge mistake they were making at that time, because it
was done and they were obviously torn up about it. She knew that she couldn’t have contact with Lav because she needed to honor their wishes. But April was not happy with their choice and now she was going to vent.

“The way you did this was so abrupt; like you didn’t have to think about it, like it was so easy for you to kick her out, as though she has no value to you. No woman wants to feel that way, and no woman is going to put herself back into a situation where she’ll be forever wondering,” April ranted.

“I needed her to be safe,” Leo said softly, owning the mistake.

April spun towards him. “I’ve been in just as much danger helping you guys out and you didn’t dump me. You blew a damn hole in my basement wall so Karai wouldn’t know we were still seeing each other. We’re family and we don’t abandon each other, no matter how dangerous things become; in fact the more dangerous it is, the closer we should be to each other.”

“I’m sorry April; we love you but we’re not in love with you. That’s kind of a new thing for us and we weren’t good at reasoning everything through,” Don said, trying to ease some of Leo’s burden.

He could feel his brother pulling back into the shadows and was desperate to keep him from them. They had almost swallowed Leo too many times in their lives and Don was fighting hard to keep them away.

“Forget why we did this, okay? Fuck it, it happened. Thanks April for tellin’ us how women feel and blah, blah, blah we gotta make her trust us again. All useful shit when we can’t even get her ta listen ta us for more than five minutes,” Raph growled.

Mikey was watching them all and saw when Leo started to pull back. He also saw how Don moved closer to him protectively. Mike’s blue eyes narrowed; he’d guessed right with Lavinia and he bet he was right about Leo, too.

Mike leaned towards Leo and told him fervently, “It doesn’t matter how much we want her back, or how much we say we love her. She’s gotta believe it from you, Leo. That’s just the way it is. So you tell me right now, right here, and I want the truth. Do you still love Lavinia?”

Leo felt Don’s hand on his shoulder. Don had been correct; Lavinia needed Leo to put things right for all of them.

“Yes, I do,” Leo admitted in a strong voice.

Mikey’s eyes grew larger. “Then make her believe it.”

A low rumble from Raphael turned Mikey’s head. Raph’s arms were crossed, his face dangerously close to belligerent.

“Man I knew it. It’s all about Leo,” Raph muttered.

“Nuh uh.” Mikey was determined to set him straight. “It’d be the same for any of us. We’re together and we always will be and Lav can’t live with someone being separate. She doesn’t want to divide us. If three of us wanted her but Leo didn’t it would be too much of a strain on our family. It’s gotta be all or none ‘cause that’s how we work best.”

“So it’s all,” Don announced with determination. “We all go get her. We do it together so she’ll know that having her back is important to all of us.”
Mikey looked at the clock and sighed. “Not gonna do it now, it’ll be daybreak soon.”

“It’s okay Mikey. One more day won’t make a difference. We’ll go tonight,” Don said.

Leo looked at April, a fond expression on his face. “That good enough for you, big sis?”

April smiled at him, her countenance softening at his caring look. “Yes Leo. You know I love you guys like family, right? I had to say my piece.”

“Actually, it was probably a good thing for us to hear it. So thanks April,” Leo told her.

One more day did make a difference, but the Turtles didn’t know it. They were feeling optimistic the next day; sure that a united front would tell Lavinia everything she needed to know so she’d start trusting them again.

None of them noticed that Master Splinter came out of his room after morning meditation with a strained look on his face. He felt older than he had in a long time, especially when he looked around the lair and saw his sons all appeared happier than they had in over two months.

He knew that Lavinia had started running, but could not bear to tell his boys.

Night fell and Don monitored the security cameras so he could see when Lav returned to her apartment. As it got later, they all got more worried.

“Maybe she didn’t go out today,” Mikey offered. “Were you watching the cameras this morning?”

“No, I didn’t see any reason to,” Don admitted.

Raph paced back and forth, saying, “Let’s just go already. All this sittin’ around is makin’ me nervous.”

“We need to be cautious, I don’t want to run into any of Karai’s people while we’re out,” Leo said.

They left the lair and went topside. The night was cold and they were not fond of the cold, so they didn’t waste time getting to their destination. Raph opened the roof access door and they filed into Lav’s apartment silently.

The place was eerily quiet. Blankets were spread over her furniture and the curtains were pulled across the picture window. Not a single light was on.

Raph headed towards her bedroom and Don went around a corner to look in the kitchen. Leo and Mikey waited, the former sending a familiar eye over her bookcases.

“She ain’t here.” Raph came out of the bedroom quickly, his face anxious.

Don appeared from the kitchen and shrugged his shoulders.

“Okay, so we just wait for her,” Mikey said with determination.

“No, Mikey. She ain’t here anymore. She ain’t comin’ back. A lot of her shit is gone,”
Raph’s voice cracked as he made that announcement.

The significance of the dust covers over the furniture struck them then.

Don’s hand shook as he ran it over his skull. “She’s running,” he hissed.

“We’ll find her.” Leo looked at his brothers as he stood motionless in a corner of the room, half in shadows.

“She’s running, Leo,” Raph growled. “She’s got an entire world to fuckin’ hide in. How do ya’ propose we find her?”

“Everyone leaves a trail,” Don said, a glint in his dark eyes. “You just have to know where to look. Credit cards, bank accounts, hotel receipts, airline tickets, surveillance cameras; it’s all in a main frame somewhere. I can find her.”

“Don . . .” Mikey moaned, letting his brother hear his fear.

“I’ll find her,” Don promised, his voice confident.

Leo was glad his face was in shadows. Don would find her, he had no doubt of that. But would she be somewhere they couldn’t follow? That was a real possibility. She, better than anyone, knew just what their limitations were.

The first day was a busy one for Cynthia. The directors weren’t happy to hear Lavinia was turning the final phase of completion of the children’s hospital over to them. The fact that she’d been warning them for months to find an administrator was an inconvenient truth.

There were other calls to make; appointments which needed to be cancelled, medical procedures turned over to other surgeons, hospital rotations, people to notify, paperwork.

It was going to take weeks to sort out. Cynthia sighed in resignation; this wasn’t the first time she had followed behind her boss with this kind of routine. Working for an enigma was an infinite challenge.

Her nerves were already on edge when her phone rang late in the afternoon. For just a moment, she thought about letting it ring as she eyed the flashing light with active frustration.

Taking a deep breath, she answered with her formula, “Lavinia Daniel’s office, Cynthia Page speaking.”

“Miss Daniel please.” The well-modulated tone was low and sent a shiver down her spine, as it had done the first time she’d heard this man speak.

“I’m sorry, Miss Daniel is unavailable. May I take a message?” Cynthia asked.

A pause. “No. When do you expect her?” he asked.

Cynthia felt a twinge of worry as she responded, “She’s not expected to return, sir. Miss Daniel was called away on business and will not be returning in the foreseeable future. She will probably call in for messages in the next few days, if you’d care to leave one.”

“Where has she gone?” The question was preemptory, from someone not used to being circumvented.
The tingle down Cynthia’s back was different this time, the voice far from enticing now. “She didn’t leave her destination, sir. If it’s an urgent medical issue, I can give you the number for her referring physician. Otherwise, the best I can do is relay a message when she chooses to phone in.”

“You are her personal assistant, are you not, Miss Page? Surely she would have told you where she was going.” The man’s voice was harsher, the tone threatening.

“N . . . no. I mean . . . yes, I’m her assistant, but no, she doesn’t tell me when she decides to relocate. Never,” Cynthia added hastily, wishing he would leave her alone.

“Hmmm.” He paused again, then said, “Then you may leave a message. Please tell Miss Daniel that Mr. Lin phoned. Tell her I will see her soon.”

Cynthia swallowed. “Yes sir.”

The phone disconnected and Cynthia replaced her receiver with a shaky hand. For the first time since she’d come to work for Lavinia, she seriously thought about quitting her job.

Don thought to call Lav’s office the next day, on the off chance finding her would be as easy as that. Her assistant was unable to tell him anything, other than offering to leave a message. Don had declined.

So he started trying to track her. First he went through the recordings caught on the cameras at her apartment, at various hospitals, and the one on the ATM at the entrance to her office building. He drew a complete blank.

Next he checked her credit card transactions. Living with them for almost a year, she’d given Donatello access to everything; every bank account, credit card, investment – everything. As he went through her personal financial records searching for her, he realized the trust she had shown him. That thought brought home the cruelty they had shown by sending her away.

As far as practical help went, he had none. Mikey was pacing incessantly, which wouldn’t have been a problem if he’d done it outside of the lab. To make things worse, he would stop every half hour to lean over Don’s shoulder and ask if he’d found her yet.

Leo could have helped with that, but their leader had found enough inner peace to meditate, and he seemed to be trying to catch up on two months’ worth in one sitting.

And Raphael was working his frustrations out on the punching bag, the free weights and the wooden dummy, in equal portions. Whenever Don came out to grab coffee or a quick bite, Raph would come to the door of the dojo, stare at him and growl. Like that was going to help.

By the end of the second day, all Don had to show for forty-eight hours of effort and no sleep was a bunch of negatives. She did not go by plane, train, or rental car. He got nothing out of the limo service she used except that her driver Frank Logan was available, which meant he hadn’t taken her anywhere.

Her cards hadn’t been used, but she had drawn a large amount of cash from her account. The transaction took place at her bank and was a dead end.

He couldn’t find her registered at any hotels, motels, or smaller lodgings. That took the most time; he wasn’t even sure she’d actually left New York City and if she was using an alias, he
was screwed. All he could do was look for the two names he knew she used, Daniel and Hamato.

Don grimly delivered his list of negatives to his brothers. Leo’s mouth was set in a firm line, his arms crossed. Mikey’s head was down, eyes open and staring at nothing. Raphael stood with his hands on the grips of his sais, his legs tense and his face belligerent.

“Shell, Donny that was useful,” Raph snapped when Don was finished.

Don spread his hands. “I’m sorry Raph, these things take time. Lav is an expert at disappearing, remember?”

“I thought ya’ said ya’ could find her.” Raph was confrontational and pushy, not a good sign.

Don palmed his face. He didn’t need this, he was tired.

“He’ll find her Raphael. Let him alone,” Leo told him calmly.

Raph spun on him. “So what do the rest of us do? Sit here and hold our dicks in our hands?”

“Would you rather run all over the city? Where will you look?” Leo responded, quirking an eye ridge.

“That would be more helpful than sittin’ on my ass with my eyes shut,” Raph snarled.

“Raph, I understand your need to do something, but going off half-cocked without a plan isn’t going to be useful,” Leo said dryly.

“Yeah, well for your information Fearless, I got a fuckin’ plan,” Raph said with a smirk.

Mikey’s head lifted. “What are you going to do?”

“Ya’ know that driver she uses? I’m gonna go ask him where she went.” Raph was smiling now, his eyes narrowed.

“Raph, he probably doesn’t know any more than her assistant did,” Don pointed out. “And even if he did, he’s not going to tell you. Lav would surely have taken care of that contingency.”

“Oh, he’ll tell me alright.” Raph’s eyes gleamed wickedly. “He ain’t gonna have any choice.”

“Suppose he doesn’t know anything? You gonna beat him up anyway? Lav respects the guy, she’ll really be upset if you do that,” Mikey said, looking over at the hot head.

“Okay, so maybe I won’t pound on him, but he’s sure as shell gonna tell me somethin’. I’ll appeal ta his better instincts; ya’ know, have a heart to heart talk with him.” Raph was nodding, pleased with his idea.

“You want me to go with you?” Mikey offered.

“Nah. I’m gonna take the bike.” He headed towards the garage, but turned his head to say over his shoulder, “Don’t worry, I’ll be gentle.”

The way he said that didn’t make his brothers feel any better, but they knew not to try and stop him.
Raph rode fast, enjoying the feel of his bike between his knees. He was going to the garage where Frank Logan, Lav’s usual driver, worked. If he couldn’t find him there, then he’d track the guy down at his home address, having gotten that information from some papers on Don’s desk.

Raph parked his bike in a dark alley and proceeded on foot, keeping to the shadows and unlit doorways until he was within sight of the garage. He could see a few people milling around inside and most of the limos were parked in their stalls. It was a week night and apparently they weren’t too busy.

He spotted the car Logan usually drove, parked against a wall. Raph knew the guy by sight; he’d seen him pick up Lav enough times, and after fifteen minutes had passed Raph knew Logan wasn’t there.

Hopping on his bike, Raph started the motor and turned in the direction of Logan’s apartment building.

Frank Logan finished with his last customer at eleven and took the limo back to the garage. Having no other assignments for the night, he serviced the car quickly and took off.

Usually he’d hit the sports bar at the end of the block and enjoy a couple of drinks while he watched whatever game was on. He always sat alone and with his back to a wall; too many years trying to keep bullets out of said back had ingrained the caution into him.

He didn’t have friends there, just nodding acquaintances, but he enjoyed the sound and feel of people sometimes, and the bar felt safe enough. Tonight he didn’t stay long.

Something was nagging at him, the hair on the back of his neck had been giving him warning signals all night. A couple of guys had come by earlier in the day, before he’d picked up his first assignment, and started asking him about Lavinia Daniel.

He told them nothing. Firstly, they had no credentials, and secondly, he knew how to keep shit to himself. They took the hint and left after thanking him politely.

That didn’t fool him for a minute. Someone was after Lavinia; had been for a couple of months, and he sure as hell wasn’t gonna help them. Lavinia he respected; he knew her character and was certain she had done nothing wrong.

But he also knew trouble tended to follow her around. Last spring she’d had trouble with some blood cult group and he’d found himself protecting a houseful of society folks with the help of a couple of Lavinia’s friends while another group outside the house held off an invasion of assassins intent on killing all of them.

While the battle raged, the cult’s leader had whisked Lavinia away.

Logan kicked himself mentally for that several times a month. He was in the kitchen with a bunch of other driver’s, just where he was supposed to be, but he still felt like he should have known the danger was there; he should have felt it.

Fortunately, she had friends who did know about the danger, and they took care of the assassins and got Lavinia back safely.

No one knew Logan had taken a look outside while the battle raged. Lavinia’s friends inside the house had urged everyone into interior rooms and locked them up. It was a good move,
keeping the people safe, but Logan was retired army and a ranger to boot. He wanted to see it coming so he’d know how to deal with whatever the danger was.

To this day he wondered just what the hell he’d seen. Assassins he recognized, they all looked the same wherever in the world they happened to be; but Lavinia’s protectors . . . .

They looked like giant turtles.

With a grunt, Logan drained his mug and left the bar, raising a hand as the bartender wished him a goodnight.

Logan’s apartment was a few blocks away, and he tucked his chin into his coat and started walking. He’d only gone a couple of blocks when he realized he wasn’t alone on the sidewalk, and that the others were after him.

He took his hands out of his coat pockets so he wouldn’t get them tangled when he needed them. If this was a mugging, they were in for a big surprise, whether or not they had guns.

Walking more briskly, he turned a corner and stopped, pressing against the wall of a closed bodega. Looking through the glass window to the other side, he saw two men rushing in his direction.

Counting off five seconds, Logan swung directly in front of them, his fists connecting with the first man’s jaw, and when the guy dropped, Logan came around with an uppercut aimed for the second.

Except the second man back flipped away from him, spun on his heels and crouched, hands up.

Logan turned sideways, his fists up and ready. Good old fashioned balls-to-the wall fist fighting was more to his liking, but he’d trained in Judo and Karate as a Ranger.

They stared at each other for a long minute, then with a loud cry, the man attacked.

Logan blocked his strikes easily; ducked away from a foot aimed at his face and flicked in with a wicked hit to the kidneys. His opponent backed up with a surprised look, his hand pressed to the injury.

“What the hell do you want?” Logan asked him. “Why the fuck are you following me?”

The man’s companion groaned and began to stand up. Logan backed away a few steps so he could keep them both in view. He saw one of the men glance past Logan’s shoulder and then heard the quick rush of feet.

Twirling quickly, Logan made a dash down the sidewalk, hoping to outrun the new group pursuing him. There were five of them and Logan wasn’t ready to take on that many by himself.

He made it to an alley and darted in, thinking to kick in a back door and barricade himself in one of the buildings. The only door he saw was at the far end and he realized he wasn’t going to make it.

Spinning, he watched the mouth of the alley fill with his pursuers.

“Fuck,” he muttered under his breath and yanked his coat off quickly.
One of the men stepped forward and pointed a finger at him. “Tell us where the woman is and we won’t hurt you.”

It was one of his daytime visitors. They were still after Lavinia and apparently getting desperate.

“Go screw yourselves,” Logan replied.

“You first,” the man hissed and they rushed him.

Raphael was turning into the next block on his motorcycle when he saw Logan racing up the sidewalk, a gang of men in hot pursuit. He felt the adrenaline surge through his system and a wide smile spread across Raph’s features.

He pulled the shell cycle onto the sidewalk, unzipped his jacket, and withdrew his sais.

Logan was engaged in the battle of his life. Seven men converged on him; skilled fighters all, and though he made every one strike count, he received two in return. A blow to his nose made him see stars and he felt the blood gush. He whipped around with an elbow and caught someone hard enough to elicit a pained cry, then kicked the knee out from the next closest man.

Someone caught him with a forceful kick directly against his ribs and he lost his breath. His hand came up to protect his face and a punch caught the side of his neck. He was going down.

The man who had asked him about Lavinia pulled a large blade from his belt. Logan skittered backwards, dodging blows and trying to keep the knife wielder in front of him.

“Now you will tell us what we want to know,” the man said menacingly, holding the knife higher so that the slight illumination from a street lamp glinted off the metal.

Logan saw another flash and the man cried out, dropping the knife and grabbing his arm. A large pronged weapon was embedded in his forearm, seemingly coming from nowhere.

He heard a loud yell and the men around Logan started to fall. Something darted in and out of the shadows, moving faster than Logan could follow. It was big, it was strong, and it could fight.

Logan could hear bones breaking under his rescuers fists and decided he wasn’t going to sit like some maiden in distress. Lashing out, he struck the nearest man to him, and then pounded him until he went down and stayed down.

Jerking around, he saw a flash as the mystery man swung the hilt of his weapon into a face, the crunch of broken bone giving Logan satisfaction for his own broken nose.

The fight was suddenly over, seven assailants out cold around him, and one unknown and still unseen rescuer hovering in the shadows.

Logan was down on one knee, his hand pressed against his side. He grimaced at the pain and then a slight sound brought his head up. A long, muscular arm stretched out of the deep shadow and plucked the pronged weapon from the arm it was embedded in before disappearing.

Logan was pretty sure that arm was green.

A rasping sound told him the stranger was still there, silently watching him, but keeping to the shadows.
Both were silent for several heartbeats. Logan watched warily as he slowly stood, holding himself carefully and slightly bent to the side. Nothing happened; the stranger didn’t approach, nor did he leave.

“You saved my bacon,” Logan told him.

“Ya’ was doin’ okay.” The voice was deep, a little rough, with a slight Brooklyn accent.

“Sure.” Logan laughed sarcastically, then hissed at the stab of pain.

“Ya’ gonna be all right?” the stranger asked him.

“Cracked rib,” Logan answered. “Not my first. You got a name?”

Hesitation. Then, “Names Raphael.”

“Frank Logan. Where’d you serve?” Curious; this guy was too good to be strictly civilian.


Logan snorted. “Could have sworn you been in the service; maybe Special Forces, Rangers, something.” He paused, memories of that night at the mansion coming back, and the shapes he’d seen on the lawn. “You showing up right now a coincidence?” Logan asked.

“I think ya’ know it ain’t.” Raph found himself liking this man and understood why Lavinia had chosen him to be her driver.

Logan’s eyes narrowed. “If you’re looking for the same information as these guys, I can’t help you.”

Raph chuckled. He liked loyal. “Can’t or won’t?”

Logan flashed his wolfish grin. “Seeing how you saved my ass, let’s just say can’t.”

“That don’t get me any closer to solvin’ my problem.” Raph shifted and watched Logan move with him, still leery.

“You a friend? Of the person in question?” Logan asked, needing to know.

Raph thought how to answer that, and decided on the truth. “More. Me and my brothers. We kinda... fucked something up with Lavinia.” He said the name out loud, making sure there were no misunderstandings.

Light dawned. “She’s been kinda upset lately. That your doing?”

“Yeah.” A big sigh let Logan know there was real feeling from the big guy in the shadows.

Logan thought for a minute. He owed Lavinia his silence, but he owed this guy his life. Those debts warred inside of him. He didn’t really know why Lavinia was running, but he didn’t think it was because she was afraid of this... whatever he was.

Looking down at the unconscious men at his feet, he was pretty sure her running was mostly due to them. And having nothing to stay for.

“Back almost a year, there was a big fight out in Scarsdale...” Logan began.
“That was us,” Raph admitted.

Again, Logan thought hard. “I never married; never had any kids,” he told the stranger.

Not sure where this was going, Raph merely said, “Okay.”

“Point is, I kinda think of Lavinia as a daughter. Mostly she’s all woman, but sometimes I see a kid who needs someone to care about her.” He peered into the shadow, barely making out the bulk that was Raphael.

Raph folded his arms across his plastron. “We care about her,” he said simply.

“Then I’m going to tell you what little I know. By God, if you use the information to hurt her, I’ll find you,” Logan promised.

“Already hurt her. Ain’t ever gonna do it again,” Raph informed him.

Logan believed him. He also believed that Lavinia needed to stop running.

“Day before yesterday I picked her up on the loading dock back of her apartment building. She had some bags with her, not a lot, but she always travels light. She had me take her to a private parking garage on Water Street and I helped her transfer her bags into another car.”

“Who’s car?” Raph asked.

“No idea. Not hers, she doesn’t have one, but she has a lot of friends.” Logan shrugged.

Raph dropped his arms. “Got a description of the car?”

“Yeah.” Logan grinned. Raphael asked the question like he knew Logan had paid attention. Lavinia’s guy knew how to size people up.

“It’s a blue Lexus LS 460. Can’t give you the plate numbers, they were covered and she waited until I drove off before she even climbed behind the wheel. She’s . . . cautious,” Logan explained.

He didn’t need to, Raph already knew that she was good at planning. Tactical. Fuckin’ Leo Jr. he liked to call her sometimes, just to pull her chain.

“I guess if she’s hiding the plates from ya’, she ain’t likely telling ya’ where’s she goin’.” It wasn’t a question, just reasoning aloud.

Logan heard the pain in the statement and understood a little more.

“I hope you find her my friend. I think she probably needs you,” Logan said.

A sound as Raphael moved to leave. His voice was low when he responded, “That goes both ways.”
The knowledge that someone else was looking for Lavinia made the Turtles more worried than ever. Raph said the men who had attacked Logan were not Foot ninja; neither were they ordinary street thugs.

Reasoning excluded Karai as well as Hun. They also excluded Bishop on the basis that he knew nothing about Lavinia.

That left Lin Zhu. It appeared that after months of no dealings with the man, something had occurred to make him interested in Lav once more.

The information Raph got from Logan about the car Lavinia had last been seen driving helped Don discover his first clue about her disappearance. Logan had told Raph the car had a toll tag, so Don hacked into the transportation department’s mainframe and found a list of tags registered to that particular Lexus model. He pared the list down by sorting it into groups with New York City addresses.

It was not a short list. That’s when Mikey stepped up to help. Using one of Don’s other computers, he split the list with Don and they both began looking for tags used during the day Lav began running.

That cut the list down by half and Don went back to his cameras. He and Mikey watched hours of edited film showing Lexus cars passing through toll booths.

Mikey started laughing at one point and Don glanced over at him.

“What?” Don asked.

“Dude, some of these people would be totally embarrassed if they knew there were cameras filming them,” Mikey said, still chuckling.

Don started laughing too. Yeah, he’d seen some pretty funny things on those public cameras. As mutant Turtles, they were very aware of the city’s many cameras, but ordinary folk tended to forget about them.

Mikey ended up spotting her.

“Don, Donny . . . oh, shell . . . how do I stop this thing?” Mikey yelled.
Don spun around in his chair, saw Mikey frantically stabbing at the keyboard, and rolled his chair over to peer at the computer screen. Images were rolling by; cars going through toll booths.

“I saw her!” Mikey was excited.

Don jumped up from his chair and leaned over Mikey, grabbing and removing his hands from the keyboard. His fingers replaced Mikey’s and he began typing in a series of commands.

The film backed up until Mikey yelped and touched a finger to the screen. Don froze the image quickly.

The picture wasn’t great, but it was definitely Lavinia.

“Need the license plate,” Don mumbled under his breath. Another series of commands moved the film backwards slowly.

Don leaned further over Mikey, scraping his plastron against his brother’s carapace. The resulting rasp brought Don’s eyes to the side and he realized how close Mikey’s face was to his. Turning his head slightly, he picked up the scent of his youngest brothers musk; an aroma that made his head spin with sudden longing.

Mikey felt Don’s mouth touch his cheek and yanked his head aside, turning to look into his brother’s eyes. Don’s arms were on either side of his body, the fingers now frozen over the computer keyboard.

Those deep brown orbs seemed to shimmer as the brothers stared at each other for a long minute.

Then Mikey ducked under one of Don’s arms and shot out of the chair.

Don straightened up with a hurt look.

“Nuh uh, Donny. No way dude. You just focus on getting Lav back,” Mikey told him purposefully.

The look on Mike’s face told Don to leave it alone. With a heavy sigh, he sat down in the chair Mikey had vacated and returned to manipulating the film of Lav’s car.

He backed it up enough to get a clear shot of the front license plate and then stopped the film so he could send a screen shot to his printer.

Don glanced at Mikey, who stood near Lav’s desk, his arms folded across his plastron.

“This film is from the I-78 toll road. As soon as I run these plates, we can search for the toll tag registered to this car. That should allow us to keep following her route.” Don cleared his throat and looked down at the paper in his hand. “That is, if you still want to help me.”

Mikey smiled brightly enough to get Don’s attention. When he looked up, Mikey told him, “I still love you, Donny. I’m just kinda on a mission right now, you know?”

Don returned the smile, if somewhat tentatively. “Sure, okay Mikey. I’ll try not to get too distracted.”

Mikey’s arms came down from the defensive posture as he said, “No probelmo, bro’. I
know I’m hard to resist.”

While Don and Mikey searched for Lav using their first and only clue, Leo sat in the television room, a book in his hand. He wasn’t reading though; hadn’t read more than a page before his thoughts began to drift.

Raph’s sense of accomplishment over getting information for their search left him satisfied enough to turn in for the night. Leo was glad for that; being rather tired himself, he didn’t want to spend time worrying about Raph’s penchant for getting into trouble.

Leo was also glad that Mikey was helping Donatello; seemingly returning to his normal happy self as he watched all of his brothers throw themselves at the task of finding Lavinia and bringing her home.

His brothers were all doing the things best suited to their talents. Leo waited, knowing that any information to be found would make its way into Don’s hands soon enough. Information was what Leo required in order to determine their next course of action. He had several ideas along those lines but wouldn’t act until he had something to act on.

An upward glance and his eyes fell on the sketch Mikey had done of the five of them. Rising from his seat, Leo set the book down and walked closer to the picture that was mounted on the wall.

The artistry and detail was very fine, exquisite even. Leo was truly amazed at how good Michelangelo really was at creating a piece of art.

The sketch always brought back memories of their trip to the farmhouse last summer, as it probably did for all of them. Leo’s eyes scanned each of his brothers faces and then his own as seen through Mikey’s eyes, caught in that singular glorious moment in time, just after the five of them had shared their intimacy as a group for the first time.

His eyes traced Lav’s form last. She was completely nude, surrounded by her Turtle lovers, her smile genuine and loving. Mikey had made her skin come alive; Leo thought if he touched the sketch, he could probably feel the soft texture of her body.

Every inch of her silky smooth, completely unblemished. Unlike them, she had no scars, nothing to show the bitterly difficult life she had led. Because of her mutant healing powers injuries would never show.

It was partly that fact that had made Leo itch with curiosity and a deeper, darker kind of longing during one of those summer days at the farmhouse. A longing he had finally given in to.

Leo and Don sat on the front porch watching what was turning into some pretty rough horseplay between Mikey, Raph, and Lavinia. Mikey had decided it would be a great idea to hide Raph’s sais and had somehow gotten Lav to help. Taking one each, they’d split up to hide the weapons in different places.

“You’re seriously dead!” Raph’s yell when he discovered his loss was of course aimed at Michelangelo.

They were all inside, having just finished breakfast. The guilty look Lav had flashed at Mikey made Raph stop his lunge at the youngest for just a second, a look of confusion on his face that was immediately followed by understanding. They were in it together.
The pause was enough to give both guilty parties a head start and they used it, darting out the back door.

Mikey, being the quicker of the two, dodged Raph easily. Lavinia, however fast she was, couldn’t outdistance the powerful lunge that propelled Raph off the steps and on to her retreating back.

They both went down and then Lav scrambled to her feet as the impact rolled Raph far enough off of her to save her from being pinned. Raph dove at her ankles, but Mikey grabbed her outstretched hand and yanked her away just in time.

Raph got up slowly, eyeing the two who stood together just out of his range.

“Lav, where are my sais?” Raph asked in a low, menacing voice.

Lav lifted her shoulders, hands out, and then dropped them. Not lying exactly, but not telling him anything either.

“Okay, ya’ wanna play like that, when I catch ya’ I’m gonna spank ya’ so hard ya’ ain’t gonna sit down for a week.” He moved in her direction, deciding she was the weakest link of the two.

Mikey caught her wrist and pulled as Raph charged forward. They were running now but they didn’t leave the main yard, opting to stay and dodge Raph while toying with him.

“Raphie, feeling kind of lost without your sais?” Mikey teased, causing Raph to growl and turn towards him.

“How ‘bout I take your nunchucks and stick ‘em where the sun don’t shine?” Raph’s retort was followed by a quick dart towards his brother.

Mikey danced aside much like a matador, grinning broadly. Raph spun on his heels and came back at him, his fingers just brushing the edge of Mikey’s plastron as his little brother continued to taunt him.

Lav stood back from the two, watching Raph intently, her smile and eyes both bright. When he missed Mikey with a quick grab his head whipped around, spotting her as she jumped up and down, clapping her hands.

“Oh crap!” Lav yelled when he came for her and then she ran. His head down, Raph barreled after her, determined and intent.

She was laughing too hard to run very fast and he caught her. Hands on her shoulders yanked her off her feet and she fell back against Raph, then tried to squirm out of his grip.

“Uh, uh.” Raph pulled one of her arms behind her back and twisted it up between her shoulder blades.

“Ow!” Lav yelped, still laughing.

“That’s funny, huh?” he husked against her ear. “How about ya’ tell Mikey there to get my weapons and maybe I’ll let ya’ go.”

“Nope,” she told him, followed by a giggle.
Raph pulled up on her arm and she rose on the balls of her feet.

Lav yelled to Mikey who was moving closer, “Stay back!” To Raph she said, “Maybe I’ll tell you if you ask nicely.”

Raph grinned and twisted her arm a little more, causing her to wince. “That nice enough?”

Lav laughed again and flicked her hair away from her face as she turned it up towards his. “Not really what I meant, no. God Raph, don’t you know you can’t intimidate me like this? What will you do if I don’t talk, break my arm? I can do that myself.”

Raph’s other arm snaked around her middle, holding her still because he was suddenly afraid she might do just that.

With a malevolent grin, he told her, “Maybe ya’ can be stubborn, but how long can Mikey hold out while I’m twisting your arm?”

The pair on the front porch watched the show play out without getting involved. Don was amused at Mikey’s dilemma and Lav’s stubbornness.

“Don, what do you suppose Lav’s pain threshold is?” Leo asked. His eyes had never left her as the trio rushed about the yard.

Don glanced sideways at his brother and saw the look on his face. He knew that look; the intense focus when he got an idea in his head and was determined to follow through.

The look that made Donny’s dick hard.

Don turned back to watch Lav struggling with Raph. “I don’t know,” he responded. “Probably pretty high.”

“Hmm . . . .” Leo hummed low, his eyes avid.

Don looked at him again and swallowed. “Leo . . . .”

“Don.” Leo was still intent on his target.

“You’re going to find out, aren’t you?” Don hazarded to guess.

A full minute of nothing, then, “Yep.” Leo’s eyes glittered.

Don’s breath hitched. Leo only had one real fetish and it didn’t get catered to very much. Actually, Don was the only one who allowed Leo to play his game. Mike and Raph had agreed only once each and refused to do it again.

It wasn’t that they didn’t trust their big brother, it was just that his kink tended to be painful.

But Lavinia would do it, Don knew right away. If Leo asked, she wouldn’t hesitate. She trusted her Master completely.

“Which did you bring?” Don asked.

Leo didn’t answer right away, his thoughts fixed on his idea. He finally pulled his mind back enough to respond.

“The needles.”
Don had asked to assist, a little worried that Lavinia wouldn’t know when to stop Leo and that Leo would dive so deep into his ritual that he wouldn’t recognize the need to stop. A flicker at the corner of Leo’s lip passed for a smile and he’d told Don yes.

Leo waited until after dinner, when Lav was alone in the kitchen, to approach her with the idea. While he was doing that, Don informed their brothers that they were on their own for the evening.

“What the shell, Don?” Raph blurted.

Mikey was staring at him, comprehension dawning on his lively and imaginative face.

“Leo wants to perform a little . . . experiment with Lav and I told him I’d help,” Don answered.

“Dude . . . .” Mikey’s voice dropped an octave, rougher around the edges.

His voice clued Raphael in. “Oh fuck,” he said, sitting straighter in his chair.

Don nodded and he cleared his throat, already becoming aroused and nothing had even been finalized yet.

That’s when Leo came out of the kitchen and caught his eye. He turned towards the stairs and Don’s feet refused to work for a second. Lav had of course said yes.

They used April’s room. Don stripped the bed of its linens and replaced them with a plain white sheet. Leo’s special case was on a side table and both brothers had removed all of their gear, leaving them as naked as they ever got.

Lavinia joined them after she showered and changed into a lavender baby doll nightie, something Don had purchased for her over the internet.

If he wasn’t turned on before, he certainly was at the sight of her wearing his gift. It must have done something to Leo as well, he heard the tiny choked sound his brother made before walking across the room and taking her hand.

Leading her to the bed, they sat on the edge together and Leo looked into her eyes.

“Are you positive you want to do this?” he asked seriously.

Her eyes searched his and her mouth curved up slightly as she said, “Of course.”

Don leaned over to get her attention. “You know the safe words Lavinia. You have to use them if you need to. Don’t think you’ll disappoint us, we’d rather not do anything that makes you uncomfortable or causes you pain.”

She nodded, turning to look at him. “I know, I trust you completely. Trust that I’ll know if I need you to stop.”

Leo felt his heart swell with pride and the longing stirred something deep inside of him. His finger on her cheek, he turned her head back to him and pressed a passionate kiss to her mouth.

His other hand found the hem of her nightie and lifted it. Don reached over and took it from him, pulling it up and over her head when Leo released her lips.

Together they positioned Lav in the center of the bed, her arms down and away from her
body. Leo knelt next to her, pressed a kiss to her naval, and slid her panties off of her. Once they were gone, he pulled her legs apart, making a gap large enough for his body.

That done, Leo crawled off the bed and moved over to open his case. While he did that, Donny placed himself on the mattress a couple of feet above Lav’s left shoulder, resting on his hip and tilted close enough to watch her face. She moved her head to smile at him and he bent down to kiss her.

Leo took a deep breath as he opened the case containing his acupuncture needles. His collection was impressive, divided into the small Japanese needles and larger Chinese versions. His needles ranged in diameter and length, giving Leo an unlimited selection to choose from.

Picking up the case, he returned to the bed and set it down close to Don. The pressure on the mattress at his return broke Don’s kiss and he sat back up to look inside at the needle collection.

This wasn’t the first time he’d seen it, but it made him gasp anyway. Leo’s hand rested over the contents lovingly, his fingers stroking across the needles in a gentle caress that fired Don’s blood. Don had experienced those needles in Leo’s hands and he flushed from the memory.

The temperature of his body must have risen slightly. Leo looked up at him and their eyes locked intimately. Don was breathing harder, his heart pounding in his chest at the intensity of Leo’s gaze.

Leo moved over Lavinia; on his hands and knees he loomed above her, straddling her waist. His eyes caught hers and held them, memorizing the size of her pupils and then her facial expression before he began. She in turn lay perfectly still, her body tingling at his nearness and her vagina clenching in reaction.

Reaching into his case, Leo carefully withdrew one of the smaller needles. With the lightest of touches, he placed it just above her collarbone, and tapped the end with enough force to embed the needle.

As the needle went into her skin, Lavinia scrutinized Leo’s face, losing herself in the concentration she saw there. This was part of why he was so extremely sexy to her.

Lav’s nipples hardened and lifted, reaching for his plastron, but he was too far above her. The longing to rub her body against his kept her from even feeling the first needle.

Leo looked at her face again after placing the needle. Her eyes hadn’t left him and the only change he saw was a flush on her cheeks. Glancing down, he saw her breasts rising up towards him, the nipples perked and rosy. He felt a churr build in his chest and his cock twisted ever so slightly behind his shell.

The next needle was larger. With the same deliberate care, he placed it just at the swell of her right breast and began turning it, pushing down with steady even pressure. His eyes swept back up to her face as the needle began to pierce her flesh. Not even the slightest flicker could be seen; nothing to indicate she was feeling anything.

Lav felt a slight pinch when Leo began to work the third needle in. It was a larger diameter and he placed it in the fleshy side of her right tit. His hand gently brushing against her taut nipple caused more of a reaction, her eyes narrowing slightly as she contained the quiver that threatened to move her.
Don watched as Lavinia lost herself in Leo. The power he had over her was a little frightening and more than a little erotic. Don shifted to get a bit more comfortable; his tail was stiffening and extending and other stirrings in the lower regions urged him to move.

His movement drew no one’s attention. Leo had chosen his fourth needle; it was thin and very long, and Leo set the tip against her neck, slowly tracing a line down between her breasts, then back up under the left one. The needle moved with deliberate slowness up to the top of her full teat. Letting it rest there, he lifted his head and caught Lav’s eyes.

Her cheeks were a deeper red, her pupils dilated from lust, but no hint of pain or fright showed.

The churr he’d been containing moved into his throat and escaped. Lav’s hips moved just slightly in response to the sound before she stilled them.

With the most deliberate care, Leo set the tip of the needle on one side of Lav’s left nipple and began to pierce it.

The endorphin rush made Lav’s pussy snap and her juices began to flow. The pain in her breast she ignored, choosing to shift her focus to the point between her legs that was growing hotter with her need. By concentrating, she pushed the pain from her nipple down her body, carefully guiding it until she reached her clitoris, and then she left it on her love button.

The resultant stimulus made her arch her back ever so slightly.

Don watched Leo’s eyes glaze over as he pushed the needle into Lav’s nipple. Don shifted his eyes to Lavinia, who was gazing in reverence at Leo’s face and showing no indication of pain or discomfort.

Remembering his job, Don whispered to her, “Lavinia, tell me a color.”

Lav barely registered the sound of his voice. His hand touched the top of her head and he asked again.

Lavinia’s eyelids fluttered as she breathed out quietly, “Gre~en.”

The tiniest droplet of blood showed as the needle pushed its way into her hard nub and Leo dipped down to capture it before Lav could reabsorb it. His tongue stroked across her nipple, catching the blood, the taste coppery and sweet.

It earned him his first sound from Lavinia as she moaned low in her throat.

The sound made his cock expand and slide into the open, blood rushing to fill it completely. Full and heavy, it dipped down to touch Lav’s belly, the head brushing pearly drops of precome across her skin.

Leo shifted to place his knees between her thighs as he pushed the needle all the way through her nipple. Exhaling hugely, he lowered himself enough to rub his shaft against her belly, then backed up and let the heat from her sex warm his cock.

Resting his penis against her vulva, he reached into the case, feeling for the needle he wanted because his eyes were locked on Lavinia’s.

Lav’s soul felt as though it was spiraling into those amber, gleaming orbs. Her body reacted to the press of his cock against her mound, trembling with the need to feel him filling her. Her
insides contracted, the spasm setting off a wave of heat that threatened to consume her.

The green light behind her eyes glowed brighter, spilled out and rolled like a fog over the occupants of the bed. The sight of his brother’s cock dripping precome onto Lav’s stomach, the tingling erotic feel of that green haze touching his body brought Donatello to a full, hard erection and he dropped down.

“Ah, God, Leo . . . .” Donny moaned, watching his brother extract another needle from the case.

Leo shook his head, maintaining his focus and ignoring his own pain as his cock throbbed against his lover’s body. Bending over her, he kissed the tip of her pierced nipple and then grabbed it gently between his teeth and pulled upwards, stretching and elongating it around the needle.

Lav’s head rolled back against the mattress and she pushed her breasts up towards him, the other needles quivering at her motion.

When he released her nipple, Lav relaxed again, becoming motionless once more as the fifth needle caressed her skin. Leonardo slid the small metal wire across her breasts, teasing it around her untouched nipple and then guided it lower.

Leo shifted back on his knees, moving further down, and his cock slipped over her pussy lips. He hesitated at the feel of her heat beckoning him, closing his eyes and willing himself to deny the call. Moving a little sideways, he pressed his rigid shaft against her thigh, unable to completely pull free of the warmth of her skin.

The needle continued its course, across her flat abdomen, over her hipbone and into the hair surrounding her vulva.

Don’s eyes grew wide as he saw Leo’s intention. The needle wasn’t small; it was one of the larger diameter tools in the case, and quite long. He knew Lav had seen it, Leo had held it up for her before sliding it across her body, but she wasn’t saying anything.

If he was going to pierce her skin in the most private of areas, it was going to hurt. She had to realize that.

Don strove to ignore his own painful stiffy as he attempted to make eye contact with Lavinia. Her eyes, however, were glued to her Master.

“Lavinia, Lav . . . .” Don coaxed, trying to slip his voice past the haze of her desire. “Tell me again baby, give me a color.”

He hoped she would say red or at least yellow to tell Leo he was going beyond her comfort zone, but she remained silent, and the glow in her eyes intensified. Don lifted his head, deciding it was time for him to end their play, opening his mouth to call Red and bring Leo out of his trance.

“Green,” Lavinia announced in a determined, breathy voice.

Don hadn’t realized Leo was holding his breath until he heard the loud sound of his exhale. Don was shaking, one hand on Lav’s head and the other balled in a fist at his side, trying to refrain from wrapping it around his extremely hard cock.

Leo’s heart beat faster in his chest, adrenaline rushing through his veins. He wanted to know, he needed to know just how far Lavinia would go, just how much she could take. The needle in his hand became his hand, an extension of himself, and he could sense the transfer of
feeling from the body beneath him through the wire and into his own fingers.

The fingers of his free hand caressed the length of her sex, from top to bottom and back up again, pausing to touch and press down on her clit. Her thighs moved outwards, opening herself wider, offering herself to him, and he churred as he rolled the button of nerves around. Lavinia groaned loudly, her hands grabbing the sheet and clenching it to keep from moving.

Leo’s hand moved down again and he used his knuckles to spread open her outer labia, then with the tips of one finger and thumb he pinched together the skin of her inner labia. The other hand brought the needle against her flesh.

Lav’s eyes closed slightly as the first hint of pain coursed up her body and then she stopped breathing. Don watched her closely, alternating between Leo’s action and Lavinia’s reaction. Letting out a short, panting gasp, Lav caught her bottom lip between her teeth and kept silent as the needle was forced further into her sensitive privates. A small amount of blood formed, trailing down to her vaginal opening to be swallowed by her own skin.

Leo’s eyes slowly lifted from her pussy and traveled up to her face. He raised himself a bit higher, his hands continuing to push the needle into her as he sought Lavinia’s eyes. Her face was flushed, lip pale as her teeth cut off the flow of blood, but her half shut eyes opened for him when she realized he was seeking them.

He studied her eyes as the needle passed through the first fleshy bit of skin and into the next. She inhaled sharply and then held her breath again, repeating the process every thirty seconds, but otherwise refraining from giving any other indication of the pain.

His own breath came out faster, excitement coursing through Leo’s system as their woman, his woman, refused to succumb to the pain and cry out for him to stop. Somehow he had known she wouldn’t; deep inside he’d been sure she could withstand the torture.

Leo’s need for relief pressed him down against her again. Holding his cock tightly against her leg, he rubbed his shaft on her skin, leaving wet trails of precome dripping over her thigh. Mustering every bit of his control, Leo refused to let his body release the pressure that built in his groin, instead concentrating once more on the action of needle piercing flesh.

Finally, with slow and infinite care, Leo pushed the needle through the second lip and then he tugged on both ends, drawing her together as though he was mending a piece of fabric.

Lavinia shuddered and whimpered, her shoulders twitched on the mattress. Don moved up on his knees, unable to lie still any longer. His cock jumped, pulsing painfully, and he finally gave in. Gripping his shaft tightly at the base, Don hoped to hold back his orgasm until he got the chance to use his dick on one of them.

Leo leaned down and placed his cheek against her belly, rubbing and nuzzling into her skin. He worked his way down, rolling his beak in her silky pubic hair all the while gently pulling on the needle. With his face inches from her sex, he inspected his handiwork, noting that her skin had healed around the needle’s entry points. Pulling it back out was going to be as painful as inserting it had been.

Dipping down and in, Leo licked across the length of her labia. His tongue darted around the needle, pulling on it lightly, then crept up to touch her clit. Lavinia shivered under him, rolling her hips upwards, an inarticulate sound wrenched from her mouth.

Pleased, Leo began to remove the needle, just as slowly and painstakingly as he had
Lav’s toes curled back and a moan pushed its way out of her throat. Her pussy spasmed in small micro bursts, the endorphins rushing through her system lighting a fire inside of her. She could feel the wave rising; her clit sang with each flick of Leo’s tongue.

The exercise in pain was fast becoming a lesson in erotica.

Just before he yanked the needle free, Leo moved so that his eyes could watch the exit. Blood oozed from the wound as the needle slid free and Leo plunged down to close his lips over the spot, sucking hard.

“Ahh . . . .” Lavinia gasped, lifting her hips as a current swept over her and lit her womb up with bright electricity.

No longer able to stand his role as spectator, Don swept over her open mouth with his, plunging his tongue inside. Lav returned his ardor with desperation, her tongue wrestling with his.

Leo removed his mouth from her vulva and crawled upwards, his hunger suddenly greedy. Dropping the needle into the case, he extracted another, slightly shorter one and inhaled deeply, his heart pounding.

“Don,” Leo growled, his voice thick.

Donatello reluctantly moved back again, his chest heaving as desire engulfed him and pushed his body relentlessly. His hand tightened on his cock, the precome dribbling from the tip dripped onto his knuckles.

“Last one,” Leo whispered, his face almost touching Lav’s.

His eyes were close to hers, close enough to feel her lashes brush his eye ridge; close enough so that the green haze that covered their bodies cast its glow across the amber richness of Leo’s orbs.

Leo lowered himself onto her then, the head of his cock touching her entrance. Lav released a low keening moan as Leo’s hips rolled forward, pushing his penis slowly into her opening, spreading her wide to accommodate his immense size.

Their eyes stayed locked together as he buried himself to the hilt in her tight heat. All the way inside of her, Leo refrained from moving, instead placing a soft kiss to her lips.

“You’re doing good for me,” Leo whispered. “Perfect. Lie still now.”

The final needle moved across her forehead, traced the curve of her temple, down her flushed cheek. Leaning on his left elbow, he caught her earlobe between his fingers and gently tugged down until it was taut.

Leo touched the tip of the needle to her lobe and pushed. The sting was there, Lav felt it, but she had been commanded to lie still and she would do that. A million needles could pierce her skin and she would lie still if Leo commanded it of her.

A drop of blood welled up from the entry point and dripped onto the sheet. Leo watched it fall as if time itself had slowed. Pushing the needle harder, another droplet formed and Leo caught this one on the back of his thumb.
Leo churred as he studied Lav’s face. She was following his orders; keeping her body still, even relaxed, and his pride in her jumped again, a fierce living thing.

Rolling his hips, Leo ground his cock in her vagina. Lav gasped, then sucked in a breath to avoid responding, though her entire being begged she push her hips towards him. Instead, her insides contracted, squeezing around his shaft over and over again, looking for relief by the use of her own inner muscles.

Leo bore down on the needle, using enough force to plunge through the gristle in her lobe. Lav’s grip on the sheet was the only indication she had felt anything and Leo rocked forward to flick his tongue over the end of the needle, making it quiver in her lobe, which had closed around the small metal filament.

With a grunt, Leo rocked back again and then realigned his body over hers, his weight resting on his muscular forearms so that his rough plastron brushed against her hard nipples. Lav arched her back, pressing her breasts against the plates on his chest and begging him with her eyes.

A slightly rakish grin etched Leo’s face and he began to move in her. With a groan, Lav let her hips thrust back against him as he unleashed the power pent up in his body.

Leo was thrusting with mindless escalating ferocity as sounds; grunts, gasps, and churrs worked their way out as his pleasure started to build. Lav forgot to think, letting sensation take over for her. The pressure in her womb began to tighten, the feel of Leo’s shaft completely filling her and his lower plastron rubbing against her clit left her momentarily breathless.

Lavinia hovered for a moment on the edge of her ecstasy and then it exploded, rolling through her womb as she called out, “Leonardo!”

Her orgasm caused her inner muscles to clamp down on Leo’s cock and he began to ram inside her, losing himself to pure animal need. Reaching for his peak, his movements lost their rhythm, his hips driving his dick as deeply as possible with each thrust.

With a low cry Leo came, his eruption hot and thick. Gasping for air, Leo’s body convulsed with each contraction until his seed had been completely expelled.

Drawing a long shuddering breath, Leo looked down at Lavinia’s face, now radiant. A sound brought his eyes up to his brother.

Donatello sat next to them wearing a pained expression, his rock hard cock grasped tightly between two hands.

Lav’s mutant power had already charged into Leo’s penis, beginning to cause the first stirrings of a new erection. Breathing deeply, Leo pulled his cock from inside her and crawled up her body to straddle her shoulders.

“Don,” he whispered.

That was all Don needed to hear to abandon his role as spectator. Moving with ninja speed, he took his place between Lav’s legs, positioned his cock at her entrance and thrust his painfully hard organ as deeply as it would go.

No time for preliminaries, Don moved with rhythmic driving thrusts. His hand darted up to grip her pierced tit, his thumb rolling over her nipple and the needle driven into it.

Lavinia gasped when Don drove into her and arched her head back as he groped her tit. She
could feel the pull of the needle, the pain and pleasure intensifying the small shock waves that roiled through her body from her orgasm.

The thump of Leo’s heavy cock against her lips made Lavinia open her mouth wide to accept the press of his organ. Lav stroked the tip with her tongue and then slid her tongue along the underside as he thrust deeper into her mouth, touching the back of her throat. Lav could taste herself on him and moaned lowly as he pulled back, only to thrust forward again, beginning to fuck her mouth.

Her tongue twirled around his shaft each time he drew back and Leo’s head fell forward, the fire in his veins crying out for release. A loud churr from Donatello was an echo of his own as the building current spiraled out of control and Leo climaxed, spilling his milky seed deep into Lavinia’s throat.

Forgetting everything, Don threw his entire being into his need. Brightly colored lights began to pop and fizzle behind his eyes and his movements became faster, harder, and deeper.

A violent twist in his gut, a brutal tug at the base of his cock, and then he burst. Shaking uncontrollably, Don continued to pump his dick deeply; short, sharp thrusts that milked the last of his come into Lav’s pussy.

Leo recovered first. Rolling off Lav, he lay on his side and stared at her closed eyes. They fluttered open a moment later and she started to roll her head towards him.

“Wait,” he told her, lifting his hand to the needle still embedded in her lobe.

Rising up on an elbow, he tugged at it, pulling it slowly back through the healed skin. Eyes fixed on Leo’s, Lavinia didn’t so much as twitch, but her vaginal muscles spasmed slightly and squeezed around Don’s flagging cock.

“Damn,” Don choked out as he pulled his penis from her grasping sex.

Flopping backwards between her legs onto his carapace, Don dragged in oxygen and draped his muscled calves across her thighs.

With the needle extracted from her lobe, Leo rolled against her and kissed her thoroughly, his tongue invading her mouth to taste his own essence.

Pulling back slightly, Leo murmured, “You’re incredible.”

Her Mona Lisa smile touched his heart. “I love you, too.”

**********

Mikey’s shout snapped Leo out of his reverie. Turning he saw his little brother grinning triumphantly from the doorway of Don’s lab.

Crossing quickly to him, Leo asked, “You found something?”

“Oh yeah.” He backed into the room, Leo following. Don glanced up from his computer and shot Leo a quick smile, then went back to his task.

Mikey told him, “We got the license number of her car and tracked it through toll-booths along the New Jersey turnpike.”
“She didn’t stop in Jersey, though,” Don interrupted. “We have her passing into Pennsylvania.”

Mikey jumped in again, excited. “She didn’t stay on the turnpike after that and we can’t find her on any other tolls.”

“So she’s probably still in Pennsylvania,” Don finished for him.

“Pennsylvania’s a fuckin’ big place.” Raph’s voice at the door turned them.

“We’re still looking,” Don explained. “She didn’t go into Philly anywhere we can find and I don’t think she would. It’s too big. I’ll bet she stopped in some small city, for a little while at least.”

“Car,” Leo said. “Who is the car registered to?”

“Tried that. It belongs to a rental agency. I checked the owners against possible properties in Pennsylvania, but nothing pops up. Don’t worry, we’ll find her,” Don insisted.

By late afternoon the next day, Don was getting worried. He had found absolutely no sign of her after she crossed in to Pennsylvania. She didn’t even have to be driving the same car anymore and cash with no questions asked would have gotten her a plane ride to just about anywhere.

Mikey saw the tired, worried expression on Don’s face and felt bad. Every one of them except Don had at least taken a nap. Donny was running on caffeine and those little pills he sometimes took to stay awake, which probably weren’t all that good for him.

Placing a hand on Don’s carapace, Mikey told him softly, “Bro’, why don’t you go lie down for a while?”

Don glanced up at him, his eyes slightly feverish. “I can’t Mikey. She has too big a head start. If she hasn’t moved on I have to find her. Lav won’t stay in one spot very long.”

Mikey pulled a chair around and sat next to Don. “Okay, then let me help.”

Don managed a weak smile. “I’m afraid it’s all intuitive at this point, Mikey. I can’t tell you what to search for.”

“So I can’t help on the computer. Why don’t we just try to reason it out?” Mikey argued.

“Reason it out?” Don’s eye ridge lifted and he leaned away from the keyboard, allowing himself to relax for a few minutes in his brothers company.

“Sure.” Mikey flipped a hand in the air. “Psychology.”

Don rubbed his fingertips across his forehead. “You’ve been watching too many crime dramas.”

Mikey was too excited by his idea to take offense. “No really. Why do we gotta assume she’s only running from us? Suppose Lin Zhu put the nail in the coffin and got her to run. She’d be mostly worried about staying away from him, right? Doing something or going somewhere he wouldn’t expect. So, what do we know about Lavinia that other people don’t?”
Don sat up straighter, the idea catching him. “That she’s a mutant.”

“Right.” Mikey snapped his fingers. “She’s got this healing power and she’s gotta use it. I don’t think it’s a choice, Don. I think if a lot of energy builds up inside she starts feeling weird. Just like if she uses too much at one time. So if she’s travelling and needs to stop, it’s gonna be partly ‘cause she needs to use her gifts.”

“That’s why she became a doctor; to give her access to people who could help her drain off the excess,” Don reasoned.

Mikey was nodding enthusiastically. “Right. So wouldn’t she be likely to use her credentials to get access to some sick people wherever it is that she’s hiding?”

“That’s not information that would even be in a database anywhere, Mikey. It would be more of a professional courtesy type of thing,” Don informed him.

“I know that.” Mikey opened his blue eyes wide. “But the fact is, people would start getting better in droves, wouldn’t they?”

“Oh! Oh, shell! Mikey, you’re a genius.” Don spun in his chair and started to type.

Mikey was smiling broadly, watching Don’s fingers fly over the keyboard. “Yeah, I know that,” Mikey said.

Don didn’t hear him, lost in his search. Muttering aloud, he explained his actions. “Records, hospitals keep records. Those records include a history of the percentages of everything from child birth to deaths. One of the things Lav told me is that funding is often based on the percentage of people who are cured of whatever they entered the hospital with. So the hospital keeps track, and it’s part of their report to their board of directors, or to the government entity that has charge of their oversight.”

“You’ll be able to find . . . .” Mikey started to say.

“A spike in the cure ratio,” Don finished for him. “They post it daily, they have to; patients check in and out and they can’t fall behind in something so critical to their funding.”

“Whoa . . . sweet,” Mikey said.

Don glanced at him, smiling. “You’re a pretty good detective, Michelangelo.”

Mikey had the courtesy to blush. “Aw, you’re gonna give me a swelled head.”

Mikey dragged Donatello to the dinner table that evening. Don was reluctant, but Mikey insisted he could report his findings and eat at the same time, and that was more efficient than skipping the meal altogether.

“Ya’ got somethin’?” Raph asked as Don forked a bite of food into his mouth.

“Mmm. Yes. With Mikey’s help.” Don couldn’t help but smile as he watched his younger brother’s chest expand. “We know where she is now. A small city called Willow Grove. It’s a little over two hours from here.”

“Then let’s go get her. Why didn’t ya’ two say somethin’ earlier?” Raph rumbled at them.
“Slow down, dude,” Mikey said. “There are about twenty-thousand people in Willow Grove. What are you gonna do, run up and down the streets yelling ‘Lavinia’?”

“Plus, we don’t know if she’s in the city or just outside. We only know she’s been visiting the hospitals in Willow Grove,” Don added.

“’Cause all the kids are getting better,” Mikey told them triumphantly.

Leo’s heart thumped. He knew they were right, she was in Willow Grove, and he thought he knew how to find her there.

Rising from the table without finishing his meal, he told his brothers, “I’m going out for a bit. There’s someone I need to talk to.”

Raph’s seat went back with a loud scrape. “Ya’ want me ta’ go with ya’? In case some more of Lin Zhu’s thugs are runnin’ around?”

Leo paused to look at him, then shook his head. “No. I’m going to get Lav’s assistant to tell me where she is in Willow Grove.”

Don twisted in his chair as Leo moved away. “She doesn’t know where Lav is, Leo. I’ve spoken to her several times and I can tell.”

Leo stopped at the doorway and shook his head. “I think she would be able to guess if she knew that’s where Lavinia stopped. I’d bet she knows Lav well enough to know some of her friends.”

“She’s not gonna talk to you,” Mikey said. “She doesn’t know anything about us. At least Lav’s driver had some idea we existed.”

With a slight smile, Leo assured him, “She’ll talk to me.”

Cynthia usually took the subway home, but she’d gotten out of the office late and it was dark. Dark had never bothered her before; this was New York City after all, and there were plenty of people out.

She was afraid tonight and her fear made her cautious.

Hailing a cab, Cynthia leaned back against the seat with a small sigh. She hoped this situation wouldn’t last much longer.

The flower man had called again today.

Cynthia knew his name was Lin Zhu, but to her he would forever be the flower man. It seemed to her that the flowers he’d sent to her employer had been the catalyst that prompted Lavinia’s latest decision to move.

Cyn was pretty sure that Lavinia was afraid of him. Well, so was Cynthia.

Thinking back to the first time she heard his voice she couldn’t believe she’d found it to be sexy. He’d sounded so sensual and seductive then, but now his voice just scared the crap out of her.

He had called every day since Lav’s departure. No matter that Cyn had explained that Lavinia could take weeks before calling in, and despite Cynthia’s continued assurances that his
message would be delivered, the man continued to call.

Today he had sounded as though he didn’t believe her when she told him she didn’t know where Lavinia was.

Cynthia was shaking when she hung up the phone. She had begun to dread the sound of its ringing and understood why perfectly.

Only one other caller showed the same persistence, but he had yet to leave a message. His voice did not evoke the same fear in Cyn as Lin Zhu’s; in fact, at one point she almost confided in him so she could ask his advice. Funny how a kind and polite male voice could do that to a person.

Cynthia had been with Lavinia for nearly eleven years. She had taken the job fresh out of college because she didn’t really know what to do with herself and the job offered the adventure of travel.

She hadn’t realized how much travel until she found herself moving eight different times in a fifteen month period.

Her boss was still an enigma to her even after all this time. They were the best of friends; in fact, Cyn was pretty sure she was Lav’s only friend up until a year ago. And although she was sure Lav was older than she, though Lav never seemed to age, Cyn felt protective of her. It was amazing, but the sharp, savvy business woman that Lavinia was seemed ill equipped to deal with heavy emotional issues.

So each time she told Cyn they were moving, Cynthia would read between the lines and convert that sentence to ‘we’re running again’.

Cyn didn’t necessarily go with her each time either. There would be periods of months without contact where Cynthia was left to take care of Lav’s business and finances by herself. That was okay; Cyn liked the freedom, she liked the independence, and she really liked the paycheck.

As far as her personal life went, this job suited her just fine as well. Cyn considered herself to be a free thinker and she liked to sample a little of everything. She had no preference as far as lovers went; men or women, race, creed, color – it was all the same to her. And moving a lot meant she didn’t have to commit to anyone either.

She had enjoyed her time in New York City though. It was large and diverse and if she had to pick a spot to settle in, this would be the place. Cyn had begun to think that might just happen this go round, because she finally figured out that Lavinia had a lover and Cyn was pretty sure that was a first for her.

Cynthia sighed when the cab drew up in front of her apartment building. Apparently, Lav had managed to get her first broken heart as well.

The shadows around the front of her building brought Cyn’s fears back. Some of the street lights were out, throwing a dark, miasmic gloom over the entire block.

Cynthia moved from the cab to the front door with alacrity; her key out and in her hand to prevent fumbling at the top of the stairs. Once inside, she leaned against the entry wall and raised a shaky hand to her forehead. That’s when she noticed the lights were out in the hallways of her building.

She actually felt a little relieved at that since it meant there was probably a power outage. Cyn glanced at the elevator and quickly decided to bypass that and take the stairs. Power outages
and elevators did not mix in her book.

Leo allowed himself a grim smile as he perched atop the building adjoining Cynthia Page’s apartment house. Why did amateurs insist on smoking when they were supposed to be spying on someone? The red flare of the butt smoldering to life was a dead giveaway.

It had given Leo the position of the man leaning in an areaway across from Page’s entry door.

Page wasn’t home yet; Leo had already ascertained that fact by quickly dropping into her apartment. Access was easy; her alarm system was a standard model Don had taught them all how to bypass years ago.

He prepared for her arrival by loosening all the light bulbs in her living room and kitchenette. If she managed to get past him and into another room – well, he would just hang it up as a ninja.

The man outside was a problem that needed to be dealt with before Page came home. Leo didn’t know if the guy’s assignment was to watch Page, or to grab her. Leo was leaning towards the latter; basing his assumption on the treatment Lav’s driver had received.

Leo spun off the rooftop and onto the fire escape, moving with complete silence. Before the final drop to the street, he took out two street lights with shuriken. A bright spark and lights at several building entrances went out as well.

Glass shattering brought the idle man onto his feet and that was the only movement he had a chance to make. Leo’s arm was around his neck pulling him into an alley before the glass finished hitting the sidewalk.

“Do you have friends?” Leo hissed in his ear.

The man scrabbled at Leo’s arm trying to loosen his grip. Leo responded by lifting him a bit higher and tightening his hold.

“Friends?” Leo repeated.

“No. I am alone,” The man answered in highly accented English.

The sleeve on his jacket fell back from his arm as he tried to grip Leo’s forearm and Leo saw the solid coloring of tattoos across his skin.

Switching to Japanese, Leo asked him, “Are you Yakuza?”

Getting no response, Leo placed a knee in the man’s back and began to bend him backwards.

A grunt and then, “Yes, yes. Yakuza. You will pay for this.”

Leo’s dark chuckle was low. “I doubt it. Why are you here?”

The man tried to turn his head, but Leo pulled up with his arm, lifting the man’s head and putting more pressure on his neck. After a moment of useless struggling, the man finally answered.

“To talk to a woman.”
“Just talk?” Leo pressed harder with his knee.

“AAeeh! No . . . to bring her to someone who will make her talk,” the man said.

Leo grabbed one of the man’s arms and twisted it behind him, pulling it up between his shoulder blades. The man winced but couldn’t cry out because of the pressure on his neck.

“Don’t make me drag it out of you.” Leo kept his voice low. “Who were you to bring her to?”

“M . . . my Kyodai! That is all I know. He told me to grab the woman when she came home and bring her.” He was panting, unable to take a deep breath due to the arm locked around his neck.

Leo didn’t loosen his grip. “How were you to know her?”

The man’s other hand dipped towards his jacket and Leo pulled up on the caught arm. The man stopped moving, his hand in mid-air as he said, “A photo. I was given a photo.”

“Slowly. If anything except a photo comes out, I’ll break your neck before your hand clears your jacket.” Leo tightened his grip just a bit as a reminder.

The man used the tips of his fingers to pull a snap shot from his pocket. It was a picture of Cynthia Page, taken while she stood on the sidewalk in front of her office building.

“Drop it on the ground,” Leo ordered him. When the man complied, Leo asked, “Who do you work for?”

“My f . . . family. I do as I am told,” he responded with a hint of arrogance.

Leo pulled his arm higher, earning himself a squeal. “They must be proud. Who is your Oyabun here in New York?”

“No. That I do not say.” The man spat the words with determination.

Leo bent him back further and pulled up on the trapped arm.

“AArrghh! Stop!” his captive wailed, gasping for air.

“I’ll stop when you answer the question. Or would you rather I break your back?” Leo growled against his ear.

“MMphhh! AAhhhh! AAAH! Stop! I will tell you!” the man shrilled.

Easing off a fraction, Leo waited as the Yakuza pulled in enough air to speak.

“L . . . Lin Zhu. Our Oyabun is Lin Zhu.”

“Fancy that,” Leo whispered. “Good night.”

Leo pulled his arm tight around the man’s neck and squeezed, cutting off his airway. A two minute fight and the man slumped against him.

Dragging the man further into the alley, Leo flipped open the top of a trash bin and dumped the unconscious body inside.
As Leo was retrieving the photo from the sidewalk, a taxi pulled around the corner. Ducking into the alley, Leo leaped onto a nearby light pole, shimmied to the top and caught the ledge of the roof across from Page’s apartment.

When he saw the cab stop at her door and Page get out, Leo made the jump to the electrical wire running between buildings and pulled himself over to her roof.

Cynthia practically ran up the stairs, all three flights, and quickly unlocked the door to her apartment, darting inside. She had no idea why she was suddenly spooked but she had goose bumps all across her skin.

With the door locked behind her she felt slightly better until she tried to flick on a light and nothing happened. Moving further into the apartment, she tried one of the living room lamps to no avail. Her heart was thudding and she forced herself to take a breath.

“Get a hold on yourself, girl. It’s just a power outage,” she muttered aloud.

“Not quite,” a soft voice from the shadows informed her.

Cynthia jumped and grabbed a nearby vase, holding it out defensively.

“I’m not helpless, if that’s what you’re counting on,” Cyn informed her intruder.

“That’s good to know. I’m not here to molest you, I came looking for information,” Leo said quietly.

Something about the voice was familiar. Not the voice itself, but the cadence. It reminded her of the other daily caller, not Lin Zhu.

“You want to know where Ms. Daniel is,” Cynthia said.

“Yes. I understand she didn’t tell you where she was going, but I have a clue that you may be able to help with.” Leo watched her body language, noting that she relaxed a fraction.

Cyn started shaking her head. “I’m sorry, but when Lav wants to disappear, forget it. Even if I could help with your clue, I’m not inclined to do that. I work for her.”

“Loyalty is good,” Leo told her, “but Lavinia is in danger and so are you. A very bad man is looking for her and one of his men was out front waiting for you.”

“What?” Cynthia lowered the vase and darted to the window, her fear of the intruder momentarily forgotten.

“He isn’t there anymore,” Leo reported.

Cynthia turned and narrowed her eyes, trying to see the man in her living room. He was in deep shadow and all she could tell was that he was big.

“Where did he go?” she asked, and then understanding dawned. “You got rid of him?”

“I managed to learn who he works for . . . .” Leo began before Cyn cut him off.

“Lin Zhu,” she guessed.

“Yes.” Leo backed away a bit, keeping to the dark as she drew closer, emboldened by his non-threatening behavior.
“He’s been calling. Every day. She met him several months ago, but he started calling her again and then he sent her flowers. An office full of them and she didn’t like it. It was shortly after that she decided to move again.” Cynthia had no idea why she spurted forth so much personal information; something about this man seemed to draw it out of her.

“This isn’t someone she can run from,” Leo stated flatly. “But that isn’t the only reason she’s gone, Miss Page.”

Cynthia was quick. A ghost of a smile flitted over her face. “You’re the boyfriend, aren’t you?” Her fear gave way to romantic curiosity.

A pause, then, “Yes.” Leo said the word simply enough, although he was somewhat puzzled. He was sure Lavinia had told no one about him.

“Hah!” Cyn cried triumphantly. “I knew it. Lav tried to tell me she didn’t have a boyfriend, but I could tell. I’ve been with that woman a long damn time and someone doesn’t change that much in less than a year unless there’s some man involved.”

“She changed?” Now Leo was curious.

“Yeah, you know. . . .” Cynthia fluttered her fingers in the air and said, “Lav got all happy when she thought no one was looking. Didn’t feel the need to work fourteen hour days. Got that faraway look on her face sometimes. Happy. Then a couple of months ago, she started driving herself again. Already at the office when I came in, still there when I left. Not eating. Staring out the window with a blank look on her face. She looked just like a woman who’s been wronged.”

The look she shot towards Leo was accusatory and a little angry.

If she could have seen his face, she would have been happy to note the jibe struck home. Leo’s expression became pained and his voice changed a little when he spoke.

“I didn’t mean to do that to her.”

Cynthia could hear the depth of his feeling in those words and all her trepidation vanished. She set the vase down and took a step in his direction.

He backed again, towards the open window.

She stopped. “Mystery man determined to remain a mystery?”

“It’s better for both of us if you don’t see me,” Leo explained.

“Okay, I’ll try to keep that part of my curiosity in check. Can you tell me this, someone who sounds a little bit like you has been calling as often as Lin Zhu. Is that a relative?”

Leo told her, “My brother.”

“Family affair,” Cynthia observed. “Wait . . . are you Lav’s guy or . . . you know what, never mind. Are you trying to find Lav to protect her from Lin Zhu, or because you want her back?”

Leo recognized her protectiveness and answered truthfully, “Both. Lin Zhu is partly my problem as well and I thought pushing her away would keep her safe. I was wrong.”

“Ho boy, were you ever,” Cynthia agreed. “What’s this clue you want my help with?”
Leo’s eyes blinked quickly. This woman didn’t mess around. “Lav was driving a car belonging to a rental company, but I think it’s someone’s personal car because it has a toll tag. We tracked her to Willow Grove in Pennsylvania, but the rental company owners have no connection to Willow Grove that we can find. I know it’s a leap; one may have nothing to do with the other, but it’s all we have.”

As he finished his statement, he saw the look on Page’s face change. The clue had told her something. Now if he could just get her to share with him.

“Miss Page, please tell me. I can see you know something,” Leo asked gently.

“You don’t miss much. Maybe I can tell you where she is, but you have to convince me I should,” Cynthia told him evenly.

“How do I do that?” Leo was puzzled.

“Answer my final question truthfully,” Cyn said carefully. “And don’t try to lie or skirt around the truth, because I’ll know.”

A slight smile lifted the corner of his lip. “All right. Ask your question.”

Cynthia took a breath. “Do you love her?”

The question threw him off. “I’m sorry?”

“Do you love Lavinia?” she repeated, staring intently into the shadows.

“Yes,” Leo answered with his deepest conviction.

Cynthia waited a moment, letting the word resonate. She believed him.

“God help me if I’m wrong to trust you,” Cyn said. “But here goes. The primary owner of that rental company married money. His wife uses her maiden name and she owns a bunch of shi... stuff. She even owns a house in Willow Grove. I can’t think of her name offhand, but you can look it up on the internet easily enough.”

“Thank you, Miss Page.” Leo prepared to leave, but turned back to tell her, “Don’t go out at night and keep this place locked up. Well, lock it up better. Get a better alarm system. If Lin Zhu calls again, tell him Lav called and you gave her his message, but that she refused to say where she was. Try to sound as if you were mad at her for that. Anything to get him to leave you alone.”

“Okay.” Cynthia nodded. “Hey, can you make this guy go away?”

As he slipped out the window, he said, “Yes.”

Cynthia heard a low thud as he dropped onto the fire escape. Rushing to the window she called out, “What’s your name?”

She stuck her head out and saw that he had vanished.

With the last piece of the puzzle supplied by Leo, Don quickly pinpointed Lav’s whereabouts. The house she was occupying was in an upscale residential neighborhood. He verified this by hacking into the utility districts files and finding that power had been connected to the house five days ago; the very day Lav had fled New York City.
“Geez, hurry up Don. What the shell are ya’ bringin’?” Raph tapped his foot impatiently.

It was nearly seven p.m. and they were going to get Lavinia. For obvious reasons they had to wait for darkness to make the two hour drive to Willow Grove.

Don came out of his lab, his bag over his shoulder. “Okay, I’m ready. Are we taking the van?”

Leo nodded. “Less conspicuous. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, we should be back here just after midnight.”

They entered the elevator and Raph said, “Ya’ mean, if she don’t give us any argument.”

“All this time,” Leo replied, a determined look on his face.

Raph and Mikey exchanged glances and Mikey grinned. Leo sounded like Leo again, not the shadow person who had been occupying his shell for over two months.

In the garage, Raph snatched the van key out of Donny’s hand.

“Hey!” Don yelped.

“I wanna get there tonight, granny.” Raph smirked and slid in behind the wheel.

Don climbed into the passenger seat. “I don’t drive that slow, Raph. I’d just prefer not to have a police escort.”

Leo and Mikey jumped in the back and Raph made his way onto the streets of New York City.

**********

The van passed a group of teenagers as Raph, following Don’s directions, took some back streets on their way to New Jersey. One of the youths perked up, his young quick eyes scanning the plate before reaching into his back pocket and pulling out a cell phone.

“Yeah, I just saw that van you guys wanted us to watch for. …Uh, huh. ….No shit man….What? …Um, okay…yeah sure. Okay, I’ll keep the line open.” Lifting his head, he yelled,
“Joey, grab the car man. We’re gonna follow them until these dudes catch up.”

A few miles later, two black SUV’s took over the pursuit and the teenagers dropped back. They liked adventure, but not the kind being offered in those vehicles.

**********

Raphael never noticed the tail. He had stopped paying attention to what might be behind him when they got to the outskirts of the city proper; which was about the time the kids made their tradeoff with the SUV’s.

For him, what was most important now was the lively discussion going on inside the van. They were trying to decide on the best approach to Lav.

“Why can’t we just bang on the door and when she answers, we all go inside and tell her to pack her shit?” Raph wanted to know, glancing in the rear view mirror at Leo.

Mikey jumped in. “Do you honestly think that’s a good approach, bro’? Didn’t you already find out force doesn’t work well with her?”

“So what? Ya’ wanna just stand there with your dick in your hand while she shakes her head and refuses to budge?” Raph sneered.

“We should reason with her,” Don insisted. “Tell her how we feel and why she should come back with us.”

“Ya’ tried that too. How’d that work out for ya’?” Raph asked sarcastically.

“Well, shell. We’ve already tried everything short of threatening to commit hara-kiri,” Mikey tossed out, folding his arms.

“Not everything,” Leo said quietly.

Mikey quirked an eye at him. “You’ve got a plan.” It was a statement of fact.

With a nod, Leo went on, “I’m going in alone. I made this error and I need to fix it properly. In a way Lavinia understands.”

Raph opened his mouth and then snapped it shut. He glanced sideways at Don who was staring at Leo with a look of understanding on his face.

So was Mikey. With a wide grin, Raph quipped, “All hail, the leader has returned.”

They all acknowledged Leo’s decision to be the best course of action. Lavinia’s defenses were always best against a frontal assault. Leo had never approached her that way. That was one of the reasons he was the one to take her virginity.

It took closer to three hours to reach their destination because they couldn’t avail themselves of the toll roads. Now fully dark, with only a partial moon periodically swallowed by clouds, the night seemed to offer ninjas its favors.

The area was not good for street parking; any car standing at the curb in this residential neighborhood would be noticeable. About three blocks from Lav’s house there was a vacant home being remodeled and Raph backed the van into its driveway. A long line of hedges hid them from view on one side.
“Ya’ want us ta sit here and wait while ya’ go get her?” Raph asked as Leo climbed out of the van.

“Yes. If you have to move, call my phone. I don’t know how long this will take,” Leo told them.

“Try not to spend too much time kissing and making up dude. It’s cold.” Mikey winked at him.

Then Leo was gone, fading into and becoming one with the shadows. Mikey leaned over to pull a blanket off the back of the seat and settled down to wait.

Leo’s only worry about getting to Lav unseen was dogs. He could disguise his form in the shadows, but not his scent. Fortunately, the houses were well spaced and it appeared that if these well-to-do people kept dogs, they were the indoor variety.

At his destination, Leo stood against the trunk of a tree to survey the house Lav was occupying. Two stories, rather large, and everything was dark inside, save for a single light in an upstairs room.

Leo knew the house had an alarm system before he ever saw the sign posted conspicuously on the front lawn. Don had done his homework; Leo knew what kind of system it was, and how to disarm it.

Really, it would have been so much more difficult to be a ninja in this modern day world without a Donatello.

Knowing how cautious Lav was, Leo double checked the bedroom window through which the light shone. Sure enough, a small portable chime was attached to the inside corner. With a little smile, Leo spent an extra minute disabling the device, and then surveyed the room carefully before silently opening the window and slipping inside.

He saw that the bedroom door was bolted from the inside, but Lav wasn’t visible. Leo shut the window to prevent a draft from giving away his presence and crept towards the bathroom. He could hear water running and knew where she was.

Leo backed into a dark corner to wait.

Lavinia stepped out of the bathroom, wearing a short nightdress and running a towel over wet hair. Leo held to the dark corner, watching her as she crossed to a table near her bed and picked up the picture of herself with Master Yoshi, Tang Shen, and Master Splinter.

“I had no right to take that away from you.”

Lav’s head came up, startled. His voice, the voice of her Master; soft, low, and firm, coming from behind her.

Lavinia turned, a hand quickly brushing away the tears that looking at the photo tended to bring.

“You didn’t,” she told him. “They’ll always be in my heart.”

She wasn’t antagonistic tonight, he saw. Her mood was more melancholy, tinged with sadness and acceptance.
“Will I always be there as well?” Leo asked.

She eyed him warily. This wasn’t the same Leonardo who’d come into her apartment covered in a dark aura and making demands. This was the calm, self-possessed Leonardo; the indomitable force who was both strong and relentless.

“How did you find me?” Her question countered his, attempting to block the implications.

“You underestimated Donatello,” he replied.

Lav frowned. “I thought I took him into account when I made these plans. I must be losing my touch.”

Leo moved closer to her bed and Lav stepped away from it, trying to maintain their distance.

“We agreed once that running away didn’t solve problems,” Leo said.

He shifted position, keeping her away from all possible exits.

“You sent me away. There’s a difference,” Lav responded, her body tense.

Leo nodded, agreeing. “Yes, there is. The difference is in intent. My intent was to keep you safe. I didn’t understand at the time that the best way to do that was to keep you close to me.”

Lav’s heart was beating fast, his nearness sending her fight or flight signals. She registered his maneuver, understanding he wasn’t going to let her get away from him this time.

So fight. Her head came up, eyes flashing. “You made a decision without my input, with no regard to my feelings, without trying to understand what you were doing to me. When we first met you asked me to choose; my old life or one with you and I chose you. You didn’t even give me that choice at the end.”

“No, I didn’t.” His voice was low; quietly determined. “That was my error. My job was to protect you and instead I turned that job over to you. I shouldn’t have. I was afraid Lavinia; afraid of losing you, afraid of losing your respect. You didn’t know because I didn’t share how I was feeling.”

“You didn’t share anything,” she spat out, backing up a step as he advanced. “I had to sit alone and worry and I’m sorry but I’m not good at that. I’m sorry I couldn’t do what you asked but I was trying to figure out what you needed from me. Apparently, what you needed most was for me to be gone.”

“I couldn’t share what I didn’t understand. My demons run deep Lav; I bottle them inside and do my duty without dealing with them when I should. I stay in the shadows too much, my love, and sometimes they feed on me.” A flash of tenderness and pain crossed his face.

Lav hesitated at his endearment and the acknowledgment of his weakness. Was that what she needed to hear him say?

“How do I know it wouldn’t happen again, Leo? How do I learn to trust enough to give you all I have left? When you stripped me of my clan you took my honor. You’ve taken a lot of things from me Leonardo; what I have left is my dignity. I won’t let you have that.” Lav took a deep breath, her insides shaking.
“I could never take that. Mind and spirit, Lavinia. That’s what I love about you. That’s what the weapons master saw when he gave you the tonfa’s. You will trust me again because you know my soul. Now let me tell you my heart.”

He was very close now and Lav retreated again, until she felt the wall pressed against her back. She looked aside for some way to escape, and when she looked up, he was there.

Leo’s body nearly touched her, yet he kept his arms to his sides. Her head went back down, trying to avoid his gaze.

“Look at me Lavinia,” he husked, his breath touching her lightly.

She couldn’t help but look up. His amber eyes were magnetic, drawing her own almost against her will.

“I’m not going to fail you, do you understand? I’m not going to fail my family. This will never happen again, no one and nothing will ever take you away from me.” His voice was urgent, and now his hands came up to hold her arms as he pushed himself against her body.

“I don’t want to live in the shadows forever, my love, my Lavinia. You’re the light that keeps them away. For over two months I’ve let them control me. I gave them permission to push you out so I could hide from myself. I’m telling you everything; I’m giving you my heart so you’ll stand with me. Stand with me, Lavinia.”

Lav was barely breathing as she sank into his eyes; the rich resonance of his voice. It didn’t matter how she tried to resist, there was no fighting how she felt about him.

Leo was a tide, rolling in and washing away Lav’s resolve, cutting under her foundations and sweeping over her resistance.

A soft whisper, barely heard. “I don’t want to leave,” Lavinia admitted to him and herself as well.

His hand cupped her chin and brought her face closer. “I won’t let you.”

She was shaking against him, unsteady and unsure. “I don’t know what to do.” It was still a whisper, brushing his mouth.

“Do what I say, Lavinia.” His mouth touched hers gently. “You’re mine; you always have been.”

He leaned into her and stole what little breath she had left in a blinding kiss; tongue winding inside her mouth to reclaim her.

Lavinia closed her eyes and let Leo have her, pressing back against him, letting her body feel his strength. She still wasn’t sure she wanted to be dominated like this again; but there was nothing she could do about the instinctual response to his overwhelming will.

She needed to tell him something; some protest maybe or at least an indignant sound. But she couldn’t when he held her like this; he took the fight completely out of her.

They were both drawing little gasping breaths as their mouths continued to feed off each other’s. Leo’s arms moved around her and tightened, telling her she wouldn’t be leaving him.

The ringing of the shell cell broke them apart. Leo shook his head to clear it, annoyed at the
interruption, yet alarmed as well. He knew they wouldn’t call unless it was urgent.

One arm still tightly around Lav, he flipped open his phone. “Yes?”

“Sorry bro’, but we got company and it ain’t the good kind. Grab Lav and get your asses up here. We’re on the roof.” Raph’s urgency made his voice hoarse.

Snapping the phone shut, Leo switched quickly into leader mode. “Where are your shoes?”

Lav blinked. “What?”

“Shoes. We have to go . . . now, Lav,” Leo urged, pulling her.

No more questions. Lav knew something was wrong and jumped towards the bed, bending to retrieve her sneakers from beneath it and shoving her feet hurriedly into them.

Leo grabbed her robe and threw it over her shoulders, then pushed her towards the window.

“My things . . . .” she protested.

“No time.” Leo opened the window and lifted Lav to the sill.

Sticking his head out, Leo whistled. A pair of olive green hands reached down, grabbed Lav’s and pulled her up to the roof.

Leo darted back across the bedroom, snapped up her family photo and jumped back through the window.

On the roof he found his brothers peering across neighboring homes in the direction of the parked van. Don glanced over his shoulder as Leo joined them.

“I think they followed us,” Don said by way of explanation.

“Who?” Leo followed Mikey’s pointing finger and saw a small swarm of men moving across well-kept lawns.

“Not Foot and they don’t look like Bishop’s. I’d say Lin Zhu.” Raph shifted, crouching further, then added, “There’s a shitload of them. They’re lookin’ for us, but they don’t know which house we’re in.”

Lavinia gasped and said, “A lot of innocent people will get hurt.”

“Not if we lead them away from here,” Leo announced.

Mikey rolled his eyes. “How are we gonna do that without getting caught?”

“You’re going to create a diversion,” Leo told him, with just a hint of a grin.

Mikey grinned back. “Whoa dude! Finally some action. Nobody messes with the ninja Turtles.”

“So are we gonna do this or just talk about it?” Raph asked impatiently.

Leo’s eyes scanned the area quickly, taking mental notes of the layout. His tactical mind saw and discarded several possibilities before he gave them his plan.
Turning to Lav he asked, “Back a couple of blocks there was an area that looked like a park. Is that what it is?”

She nodded. “Yes. There’s a playground in the cleared area, then walking paths through a wooded section that’s about ten acres in size.”

“Mikey you’re with me. You get their attention and bring them to the park. While they’re focused on you, I’ll start peeling them away.” Leo turned and caught Raph’s eyes.

“You saw which vehicles they came in?” Leo asked.

A grunt. “Yeah. Ya’ want I should wreck them a little?”

“Wreck them enough so they can’t follow us again. Then grab the van and come pick us up.” Leo didn’t have to tell him not to be seen.

“Donny, you stay with Lavinia. She absolutely can’t be seen. There’s a storage shed behind the house, the two of you stay there until Raph calls to tell you it’s safe to come out,” Leo said.

“Got it boss.” Don hefted his bag to his shoulder.

Before he could leave, Leo caught his arm and told him, “Here, put this in your bag.”

He handed Lav’s family photo to Donatello. As Don tucked it safely into his duffel he saw Lav twitch as she recognized her prized possession. The glance she gave Leo was unfathomable.

Don touched Lav’s arm. “Come with me Lav. We need to get out of sight.”

She swung her eyes back to him and nodded curtly, her lips pressed tight. Don had a fleeting thought that maybe Leo hadn’t had enough time to fix things, but then he was too busy to think any more about it.

Don jumped easily to the ground and turned to beckon Lav. When she jumped he caught her, setting her on her feet so they could dash across a long manicured lawn to a small storage shed at the back of the property.

It wasn’t locked and Don pulled the door open quickly, touching Lav’s shoulder as she ducked inside. Taking one last scan of the area, he moved in with her and pulled the door shut behind them.

Don could see that Lavinia was already shivering from the cold, and only his constant motion had kept the freezing temperature from doing the same to him. But now they were stuck in a storage shed and jumping in place was going to get old fast.

Lav was curled atop a box, her hands tucked into her armpits. Don looked around for anything to cover themselves with; blankets, rags, even canvas sheeting would have helped, but there wasn’t anything.

He wanted nothing more than to go to her, wrap her in his arms and share some body heat, but her aloof attitude kept him on the other side of the shed.

Don wondered again how much progress Leo had made before the interruption.

Lav shrunk into herself as much as possible and tried to ignore the cold. She kept glancing at Don from the corner of her eye, knowing how badly the freezing temperature must be affecting
him.

She wanted desperately to hold her arms out to him but she just couldn’t. The cold and the situation were bringing her back to her senses. Holding Don might make him think all was forgiven and it wasn’t, not by a longshot.

What Leo had said to her resonated with her core being; Leo always had that ability, but now Lav wasn’t sure if she wanted to have him tell her what to do anymore. It had felt so good and so right before but now it seemed tainted. How was she to ever know how he truly felt?

She had no clan loyalty to keep her honor bound to Leonardo. Love, however, was so much stronger, something she’d never understood until now.

Leo and Mikey moved away from the house as quickly as possible, distancing themselves from Lav and Don. Lin Zhu’s men hadn’t invaded any of the occupied homes as yet; they had already been in the house where the van was parked and were now moving in tight formations as they searched outdoors.

When the brothers were closer to the men, Leo signaled that he was splitting off and faded into the night. Mikey crouched at the base of a stone gateway, giving his blue banded brother time to get into position.

His job was to get their attention and draw them away. It would have been nice if Leo had told him how exactly to do that.

Okay, attention getting time. Leaning down, he picked up a golf ball sized rock and hefted it, decided it was too big and would kill someone, and traded it for one that was half that size. With a wide grin, he swung his arm and launched the rock against the shoulder of one of the men.

“Ow!” the man shouted and spun around. Others in his group also stopped and turned to see what had happened.

Mikey leaped up, letting himself be seen momentarily, and darted off down the street.

The man who had been hit with the rock yanked a gun from his waistband and took aim.

“No guns you fool,” the group’s leader hissed, slamming a hand down on the other’s arm. “This is not the city. One shot and everyone will call the police. Go get him.”

As his men ran after the fleeing Michelangelo, their leader pulled his cell phone and called the other group, who were further up the street.

“One of the green freaks is coming towards you. Catch him. No guns.”

Mikey was quite an expert on being chased. The two groups who were after him now would have been fun to play with, but he was doing a job and Leo was waiting for him. So he pretended to be startled when the second group rushed towards him and he changed direction abruptly and apparently without thought.

That maneuver had them chasing him straight to the park.

In their city, Leo never had a problem finding something to bind a captive with, clotheslines being among his favorite. There were no clotheslines here, or any of the other half dozen things that were usually close to hand.
Going past a home he saw that a small sapling in the yard was staked and held upright by a trio of guide wires. Moving swiftly, he noted they would work just fine for his purpose, and a quick slash of his katana yielded suitable bindings. Further along he observed another sapling braced similarly and proceeded to gather its set of wires. Other yards showed him that tree binding in the suburbs was a common practice.

Before Mikey had begun herding the Yakuza towards him, Leo had a fine collection of strong and probably pretty painful bindings. He smiled grimly; they were lucky he was going to let them live.

The first man was easy to pick off. The entire group ran past his hiding place as they chased Mikey and Leo yanked the straggler away from the group, knocked him unconscious with a well-placed blow, and trussed him up with the ‘borrowed’ wire before pulling him under some bushes.

Leo’s breath misted in the cold night air as he sped after the rest of his targets on silent feet. The adrenaline was flowing and the challenge kept him warm. Could he get them all before they knew a shadow hunted them?

Michelangelo didn’t see Leo, but he knew his brother was hunting and that added a little kick to his step. To say that this type of cat and mouse game was almost an aphrodisiac to him would be an understatement. Leo in this mode was totally exciting and playing the game with him was just . . . hot.

At the park, Mikey paused near the swing sets to give his pursuers time to catch up. To someone other than a ninja Turtle, these guys might have been fast; to Mikey it was almost yawn time. Except that now he saw at least three men were missing.

Leo. Mikey jumped from the thrill, his entire body jacked up. As the remainder of the men drew close, he turned and dashed into the wooded area.

Raph approached the SUV’s cautiously, staying out of sight while he looked over the area where the vehicles had been parked. The sound of a bored sigh drew his attention to the man who’d been left behind as a guard. His boredom was about to come to an abrupt halt.

Using both the stealth and speed honed from years of practice, Raph moved to within striking distance of his target. Slipping a sai from his belt, Raph crouched behind one of the vehicles as the man paced away from him and then turned to repeat a well-worn circuit.

As he got to Raph’s hiding place, a hard driven sai hilt to the back of his head knocked him unconscious.

Raph stripped the man’s coat off his body, ripped it into several pieces, and bound the man tightly with it. After tossing him into the back of one of the SUV’s, Raph lifted the hood on each vehicle and ripped loose wiring as well as whichever belts and hoses he could reach. That should make them have to call a wrecker service, he thought smugly.

Back at the van, he started the engine and called Donatello. When he pulled up at the house where his brother and Lavinia had hidden they were both waiting for him. Don jumped into the passenger seat after holding the back door open for Lav to climb in. She quickly moved as far towards the back as she could and sat next to a window.

Raph looked at Don and lifted an eye ridge, to which Don could only shrug. Then Raph’s shell cell rang and he snatched it open. “Yo.”
“We’re back at the park, near the playground. Swing around and get us,” Leo told him.

“On my way.” Raph used the driveway to back the van around and head towards the park.

When the van pulled up at the curb, Mikey and Leo appeared and jumped inside quickly. Both were starting to feel the cold as their excitement began to wear off.

Although Mikey was talking a mile a minute.

“And, dude! My fave was when you swung down out of the tree and caught that last guy totally by surprise! I think he wet himself. Honestly, Leo. He was all like ‘AHHH!’ screeching like a girl and then he just pissed himself.” Mikey was beaming at his older brother, a look of adulation on his face.

Leo allowed himself a small smile; it was very good to see Mikey look at him that way again.

“Where are we going?” a small, quiet voice in the corner asked. Lavinia didn’t look at anyone, her eyes focused out her window.

Leo turned to look at her, noting the blank expression and the crossed arms.

“We’re going home Lavinia, back to the lair,” Leo informed her gently.

Her eyes darted to him and then back to the window. “You could drop me off at Molly’s. It’s only a little further.”

Leo moved from the middle section of seats to the back so that he could sit next to her. She seemed to shrink at his nearness, her shield back up; the moment in the bedroom pushed away.

He didn’t try to touch her, understanding that her feelings were still raw. “I meant what I said Lavinia.” He kept his voice low, intimate. “I’m back now and I’m bringing you back with me. Maybe it will take time to get you to believe in me again, but I’m going to work very hard so that will happen.”

“Even if it’s against my will?” Lav whispered, her face turned away from him still.

Leo paused and then leaned forward so she could see his face even though she tried to avoid him.

“Yes.” His answer was forceful. “If that’s how we have to resolve this, then I’m determined to do it that way.”

She said nothing else during the rest of the ride. Leo stayed near her, not touching but close, and was quiet as well. His brothers talked as they drove; their discussion soothing in its normality.

Two and a half hours later, they were safely parked in their garage. Raph had kept a sharp eye out, but no one had showed the slightest interest in the van on the return trip.

“We’re going to have to paint the van and change those plates,” Don announced with a deep sigh.

“Hey, be happy Leo’s gonna let you keep the van,” Mikey joked, nudging his brother with an elbow.
Leo offered his hand to Lav when she started to step out, but she ignored it and jumped down unaided. Her quick glance at the overhead door didn’t go unnoticed by him. When she turned and saw he had caught her contemplating making a run, she looked down quickly.

He frowned, wondering how much she was shutting down and if he should push the issue, then decided he wouldn’t pursue it tonight. She was probably tired, scared, and feeling a little lost.

Lavinia was back at the lair. Once she had felt at home and completely comfortable here; now she was nervous, unsure of herself, her surroundings, and its inhabitants. Her own overloaded emotions were making it difficult for her to gauge the emotions of those around her, so she had no way of knowing if they genuinely cared for her.

Except maybe for Mikey. The look on his face when she lifted her head in his direction was wistful and open. One didn’t need to be an empath to read that look. Her face softened just a bit and he smiled at her.

“You okay babe?” Mikey ventured to ask.

Lavinia nodded. “I’m okay,” she answered and then turned towards the elevator.

She wondered if they would let her talk to April now. April was the one person she could talk freely to about her relationship with the Turtles.

Right now though, Lavinia was confused, tired, and vulnerable. Knowing this, she was determined not to let anyone take advantage of her condition. As soon as they entered the lair, she dashed towards her old bedroom.

Her sudden movement took the four brothers by surprise. They followed her quickly, afraid she was going to make a break for the sewers, but were relieved to see her dart into her bedroom.

The door shut and they heard the sound of the lock being turned.

Raph let out a long, loud breath. “Well, Mikey, I guess you’re back in your own room again.”

“That’s okay with me bro’,” Mikey said softly, his eyes still turned towards Lav’s door. “Maybe I should see if she needs anything?”

“That would be nice Mikey,” Don said. He reached into his bag and lifted out the photo Leo had rescued for Lav. “And since she seems more inclined to talk to you than any of us, can you give her this? She probably wants to hang on to it.”

“Hokay,” Mikey agreed.

At her door, Mikey knocked lightly. He waited a moment, listening. When he heard no sound, he tapped again and called, “Lav, open up. I have your photo.”

Nothing. No sound, no movement. After a few minutes, he set the frame on the ground in front of the door.

“Okay, babe. I left it outside the door. You can get it when you’re ready. Will you call me if you need anything? Please?”

Still no sound. Sighing, he turned to walk away and when he did, his changed angle made him notice something strange about the photo. Lifting the frame, he saw the photo inside was
slightly askew and a hint of some other item peeked out from behind it. Completely curious, he carefully opened the back and slipped the hidden item out of the metal frame.

It was the sketch of the Turtle brothers he’d given Lav. With a smile, Mikey replaced everything as it had been and put the frame back near the door. He was happy to know she kept that sketch so close.

The next day each of the brothers took a turn at tapping on the closed door and speaking to Lavinia through it. She responded to none of them, nor did she come out.

Mikey put some food on a tray and left it near the door. At some point she must have opened the door because the photo was gone, but she wasn’t opening it for food. Several hours later he was forced to take the tray away before the sewer rodents discovered it.

He went to Master Splinter just before dinner to ask him to try to get Lavinia to come out. With a smile, his Sensei declined.

“Michelangelo, when a woman has decided she needs to be alone, it is best to allow her that luxury. I have no wish to destroy her mood by forcing her to accept my company, which she would of course do out of courtesy,” Master Splinter explained.

“But she won’t even eat,” Mikey fussed.

“She will eat eventually, my son. At the moment, sorting out her feelings is more important to Lavinia. I would offer one suggestion,” Master Splinter told him.

Mikey perked up. “What’s that, Sensei?”

“Do not stop trying,” he replied with a twinkle in his eye.

Taking Master Splinter’s advice, Mikey once more prepared a tray of food for Lav and left it at her door.

Once more he was forced to retrieve a tray of untouched food.

After dinner, Raph announced, “I’m taking my bike and headin’ back out ta Willow Grove.”

Leo pulled up short on his way to the dojo. “Why? That’s not such a good idea, Raph.”

“Lav ain’t got shit ta wear, Leo. All of her stuff is still sittin’ in that house an’ she’s gonna want it. Those punks ain’t gonna be there anymore and nobody can follow me on my bike,” Raph said stubbornly.

Donny said, “Raph, that’s extremely . . . considerate of you.”

Raph snorted. “What, ya’ think I ain’t capable of being considerate? I just wouldn’t ever do somethin’ like that for ya’ bunch of knuckleheads.”

Mikey chortled, “Just admit it, Raphie. You’re a big softie.”

Raph responded to that by showing Mikey his middle finger while he strode into the elevator.
After he left, Mikey turned bright eyes on his remaining two brothers. “You know, we should get a jar and make Raph put a buck in there every time he curses or uses obscene gestures. Dudes, we’d be rich!”

Raph returned unmolested a few hours later, toting a couple of bags and Lav’s laptop. He tapped on her door and received exactly the response he expected; none.

“Lav, I went back and picked up some of your stuff. I’m just gonna leave these things outside your door. I think I got everything but it’s probably all wrinkled ‘cause I don’t know how ta fold women’s clothes.” Raph chuckled. “I don’t know how ta fold any clothes.”

He waited, hoping for some sound, but got nothing. “Well, I’m goin’ ta bed. ‘Night, sweetheart. In case ya’ don’t remember or somethin’, I love ya’.”

Raph noted that Leo’s door was open and his room empty as he went past. With a snort, he knew his big brother was sitting up awaiting his return, like a damn babysitter.

Just as he reached the stairs, Raph felt eyes on him and he turned his head. Leo stood there, staring silently at him. Raph took his foot off the stair and pivoted to face him.

“Ya’ got somethin’ ya’ wanna say ta me?” Raph asked somewhat belligerently. Being teased by Don and Mikey earlier had put him on the defensive.

Leo had that inscrutable look on his face that really annoyed Raph. But his question took the hot head by surprise.

“You tired?” Leo inquired.

“Nah,” Raph answered. He glanced up towards his bedroom, then back to Leo. “Still kinda early for me. I was just gonna look through some magazines or somethin’.”

Leo didn’t ask which magazines. “You up for some weapons practice?”

“Sure.” Raph followed him into the dojo.

Some candles were already lit and Leo lit a few more. Donny had run some electric lights in there, but Leo never turned them on. He seemed to have a preference for flickering candle light.

Raph didn’t give a shit one way or the other. Drawing his sais, he stood ready as Leo swung towards him, his katanas sliding from their sheaths almost soundlessly.

This was how they fought, silent, determined; each watching the other for a sign, each pushing the other as hard as possible. The bouts when they were alone in the dojo were different; with no audience they moved faster and they didn’t hold back.

Leo’s flashing katanas whispered their deadly message as they cut a tight cocoon around Raph’s ever moving form. Raphael bobbed and weaved, his arms striking out with enough force to overturn a car, the sai driven by his muscle both accurate and deadly.

Only Leo’s sheer speed kept them from connecting with his body. His katana moved up to deflect a blow, twisted out and away from the side guards of Raph’s sai, and then flowed back towards his brother in one fluid motion.
Raph spun away from the blade, pressing in fast, spinning his weapon to drive the hilt at Leo’s exposed arm and connected with nothing as the arm retreated.

Leo jumped up high, kicking Raph’s plastron and sending him backwards in a skid. It didn’t bring Raph down nor did Leo expect it to. Raph was too big now, that maneuver at this close of quarters didn’t have the momentum to knock Raph’s hulking mass to the ground. It was meant to throw off the rhythm of his swing and it worked for about a second.

A second that gained Leo nothing as Raph adapted to the shift in his center of gravity and spun a kick at Leo’s head. Leo back flipped away from the kick and righted himself just as Raph descended on him, Leo’s katanas sweeping the sais prongs away from his body.

But Raph had launched himself with all his might to catch up to Leo and their plastrons smashed together in a violent clap that sent Leo backwards. He tried for half a second to keep his feet under him, but Raph’s bulk overwhelmed him, and he went down with Raphael atop him.

Leo knew that if Raph pinned him, it was over, and Raph knew that as well. As Leo struck the floor, he pulled his legs into his chest and rolled from under his red banded brother.

Raph expected the maneuver, knowing how fast Leo was and how quickly his mind worked in a fight. As he came down, he put his arms out to catch himself, drew his legs under him, and sprang after Leo.

Leo came up, saw Raph bearing down on him and leaped high, spinning a kick at Raph’s head. The foot grazed Raph as he pulled his head to the side. The move threw his lunge off kilter and made his drive with his weapons clumsy.

Leo batted the sais aside and ducked under the charging Raphael. Raph slammed to a halt, turned and caught both katanas on his weapons as they came down at him.

Beak to beak the brothers pushed against each other. Raphael, the stronger of the two, allowed himself a smug smile as Leo started to bend.

Leo went back with the suppleness of a young sapling; sliding his weapons free of Raph’s he flipped away from his brother. Raph pursued, sensing that Leo was tiring under his onslaught, the effort to push and deflect Raph’s weight and muscle wearing on the lighter brother.

Leo’s tactics changed to accommodate the situation. He began to shift forward and back from Raph, slashing in and darting away before Raph had the opportunity to close the distance. He kept himself out of range of Raph’s weapons and Raph’s greater reach; trying to frustrate the hot head into losing his cool.

But Raph knew his brother by now and refused to let his tactics aggravate him. He also slowed down, watching as his brother swirled around him, catching the katanas on his sais and saving his strength.

Leo quickly noted Raph’s response and guessed that his brother was waiting for him to wear himself out. Already a little winded from the effort, he pulled back; his katanas crossed in front of him as he watched Raph warily.

“Ain’t gonna last much longer, Leo,” Raph taunted him.

“Don’t count on it.” Leo’s rejoinder was followed by a quick lunge, straight at Raphael.

Raph was taken a bit by surprise, thinking Leo would spend a little more time catching his
breath. His sais came up and Leo swung low, aiming for Raph’s legs.

Raph jumped back with a curse and landed slightly off balance. Leo dropped into a crouch, swung a leg around and caught the back of Raph’s ankles, knocking him to the ground.

Raphael pulled his arms into his sides and rolled as Leo leaped down at him. Turning on his heel, Leo darted after him, determined to pounce before Raph could regain his footing.

Spinning on his shell, Raph swung his legs out and scissored Leo’s as his older brother got within striking distance. Leo fell with a sharp cry, landing partway across Raph’s plastron. Raph wrapped an arm around him swiftly and pinned Leo to his chest.

Rolling, Raph pushed Leo onto his carapace and quickly straddled him, the tip of his sai at Leo’s throat.

Leo slowly opened his hands and let the katanas drop to the floor. Raph glanced up, saw him relinquish his weapons and then looked back into the amber eyes of Leonardo beneath him.

“That mean ya’ yield, Leo?” Raph husked, feeling a tingling sensation run down his spine.

He knew it did, but he wanted to hear Fearless say so. That was part of the fun, making Leo admit to a loss.

Leo squeezed his eyes shut and swallowed, drew in a deep breath and opened his eyes to meet Raph’s shimmering golden orbs.

“I yield,” Leo said in a low voice.

“‘S good.” Raph’s voice was guttural. His eyes ran down Leo’s plastron suggestively, then back up to Leo’s face. “Your loss is my gain, bro’. Ya’ gonna put up a fight?”

Leo was breathing hard, from both the previous exertion and the lust in Raph’s voice.

“You ever know me to just give in?” Leo countered.

Raph chuckled darkly. “Yeah, maybe a couple of times. But I still hadda work hard for it, so I call that a draw.”

Without warning, he leaned down and crushed his mouth against Leo’s, the sai still held against Leo’s neck. The tip digging into his flesh reminded Leo not to move as he was forced to accept the press of Raph’s strong tongue inside his mouth.

Raph lowered his upper body onto Leo’s and rubbed their plastrons together forcefully. The loud rasp echoed in the dojo and the sensual sound made Raph’s cock move inside his shell.

Breaking the kiss, Raph shifted his body so that his knees were pressing against Leo’s thighs. Leo resisted for a moment, but Raph pushed the sai tip tighter against his throat and began to grind his knees against Leo’s legs.

Raph’s weight parted Leo’s thighs and Raph churred in anticipation as he slipped into the space.

His mouth came down once more, to bite at Leo’s throat. Leo’s eyes shut halfway and his head tilted back a fraction, unable to control his response to Raph’s rough onslaught. He felt a churr of his own pressing its way upward and fought to control it, but when Raph lapped at his
pulse point, the churr broke free.

Another deep chuckle. “You’re such a bitch when I get ya’ like this, ain’t ya’ Leo? Ya’ never wanna admit ya’ want me ta fuck ya’, but your body gives it away every damn time.”

Leo would have resented it more if Raph didn’t begin to rub his free hand down Leo’s sensitive and exposed side. He did squirm a bit, but more to ease his body’s reaction as his cock began to expand and slide towards his opening. Leo gasped when Raph’s hand dipped between his thighs and touched the slit housing his dick, prodding at the bulge where Leo fought to contain his erection.

“Oh shell yeah. I can feel ya’ tryin’ ta hold it back Leo. Gotta be gettin’ painful,” Raph growled against Leo’s throat, biting and nipping at the skin above his brother’s plastron.

Raph’s cock slid free and filled quickly into a proper erection. Raph’s hand moved up to grab his own dick, and he pushed the tip against Leo’s slit, pressing down until it entered the opening and touched the head of Leo’s still hidden cock.

With a shudder, Leo lost control and his cock pressed back, pushing its way to freedom. Raph grabbed Leo’s shaft as it came out and pumped it, then he wrapped his hand around both their cocks and squeezed them together.

Leo groaned and his hips lifted. Raph stroked their dicks simultaneously, churring at the feeling of Leo’s penis twitching against his own.

“Fuck Leo, I could get off just like this.” Raph’s deep voice sent a shiver down Leo’s spine. “I could fuckin’ come from this feelin’ alone. What do ya’ think, Leo? Ya’ wanna feel my jizz all over your cock?”

He didn’t expect an answer and didn’t get one. Both of their cocks were leaking precome, the pearly substance sliding over Raph’s hand to add a wet, slurping sound to the churrs both brothers were making.

Leo’s eyes were closed, his hands drawn into fists as he began to pant, the solid pressure in his lower region building quickly.

“No, don’t come yet, bro’.” Raph let his sai drop to the side as he rose up, pulling his cock away from Leo’s. Tightening his grip on Leo’s penis, he used his other hand to gather up a large swipe of precome and then he pressed a finger to Leo’s ass.

Leo clenched slightly and Raph stroked his cock harder. “Open up bro’, its happenin’ whether ya’ fight me or not.”

Relaxing as best he could, Leo tried to concentrate on the hand wrapped around his cock. He couldn’t help a quick intake of breath as Raph’s finger breached his entrance and then slowly entered him, twisting and turning to loosen him.

Pulling his finger back, Raph gathered up another dollop of precome and slipped his finger deeper into Leo’s ass, then slowly added a second. Leo hissed, his eyes opening slightly at the sting, and Raph grinned down at him.

“Ya’ know how big I am Leo. Don’t want me ta split ya’ in two do ya’?” Raph asked as he scissored his fingers a bit to widen Leo. Then he drove a bit deeper, pushing his fingers further in, searching for the spot he knew to be waiting for him.
His fingers touched Leo’s prostate and a jolt of pleasure shot through Leo’s veins.

“Raph,” Leo whispered despite himself, just before he groaned.

Raph was chuckling, his voice several octaves lower as he said, “Gods, I love it when I make ya’ moan my name, Leo. Can’t even help yourself, can ya’?”

He pressed against the spot again and Leo’s hips jerked in reaction; a low, rolling churr escaping his chest.

“Oh fuck yeah. Ya’ like what my fingers can do, wait ‘til I get my cock in your ass.” Raph pulled his fingers free and slicked his cock up with the precome flowing from it.

Lining himself up with Leo’s hole, he pushed in steadily, relishing in the gasp he got from his usually silent brother and enjoying the feeling of Leo’s tight heat surrounding his shaft.

Buried to the hilt, he remained motionless for a moment, looking down into Leo’s eyes.

“I’m gonna fuck ya’ hard, Leo. Ya’ ready for me?” Raph asked rhetorically, just before pulling back and snapping his hips forward in a brutal lunge.

Leo shook as Raph began to pound into him; hard, driving, full-body thrusts. Raph hand on Leo’s cock was nearly as brutal, pulling on his flesh harshly and bringing Leo’s hips up to push against him as he reached for his peak.

Raph’s massive organ found the little bundle of nerves previously tweaked by his fingers and hammered against it over and over. Leo’s fists ground into the floor, the back of his head doing the same as his mouth opened to gulp air. His legs straightened, muscles tightening and lifting his body as the pressure in his groin bloomed and exploded.

Leo climaxed hard, his come spurting in a fountain that splashed both their plastrons and dripped over Raph’s hand and wrist.

“Ye~s. Fuckin’ good Leo. Give me all of it,” Raph rasped, continuing to pump Leo’s cock as he spasmed more of his seed onto Raph’s hand.

“Shit, I been missin’ th . . . this. F . . . fighting ya’ then f . . . fuckin’ ya’. I love t . . . ta fuck ya’, Le~o!” Raph came, thrusting frantically as fast as he could, his release hot and thick inside Leo’s body.

Head down, Raph’s body jerked against his brother as his orgasm rolled on for several minutes. Then his body slowed, his chest heaving from exertion, and he lowered himself to rest on top of Leonardo. His chin dug into Leo’s shoulder as a last convulsion shook his body and then he laid still, his cock still buried in Leo’s ass.

Breathing deeply, Leo began to relax, his fists opening and the euphoria of good sex washing over him. He felt Raph’s cock slide free and the leak of his brothers come dripping from his ass, but didn’t try to move as Raph remained atop him, seemingly content to remain where he was.

Raph’s breathing evened out finally and he turned his head to touch his mouth to Leo’s neck before rolling off his older brother. On their backs side by side, they remained silent while their bodies dealt with the afterglow.

“I’m tired now,” Raph finally rasped out.
Leo started to chuckle, then a louder laugh escaped him. Surprised, Raph turned his head to look at Leo, and then a grin split his mouth and he was laughing as well.

“Damn, Leo, this is nice,” Raph observed when their laughter tapered off.

Leo stared at the ceiling, contentment his momentary friend. “Yep. Family is nice.”

Raph refrained from pointing out that their family still needed some work. At least they were all together again.
Fading Resistance

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 5,546
Chapter pairing: Mikey/Lav
Chapter Rating: NC-17
Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, het
sex, language
Chapter Summary: Break up, then make up.

It appeared the work needed to pull their family back together was going to take a while. Lavinia refused to come out of her room, though she had opened the door to retrieve her things.

She was still ignoring the food left by Michelangelo.

At one point Mikey sat down on the floor, leaned his carapace against her door, and began talking to her. He simply rambled, something he was good at; talking about things he’d seen on television lately, his video game challenges, anything he could think of. Sometimes he would tell a story about something that had happened to the Turtles before they had met Lav, turning the most horrific tale into a funny anecdote.

Lavinia never said anything in return, though he talked for over an hour. He did hear her move towards the door and was pretty sure she had sat down opposite him partway through his recital.

He counted that as a victory.

Lavinia found her resolve faltering under Mikey’s persistence.

Try as she might, he was hard to ignore and she found herself waiting anxiously for his next appearance. She liked the steady, good humored sound of his voice as he spoke to her through the door; the soothing sound a salve to her frayed nerves.

Lav had admitted to herself the night she had decided to run that Mikey was the Turtle who had gotten to her the most. He didn’t push his agenda that night, but he did allow her to see his vulnerability and sadness. It was so real it had touched her deeply enough to nearly make her cave in.

Now he was coming back to her closed door again and again, not allowing her to sink in self-pity or wallow in some morose fog. Mikey would never allow any of them to do that, his effervescent good nature too strong for a simple bout of depression to challenge.

He wasn’t going to stop or give up until she finally acknowledged him, she came to understand. Lavinia also came to understand that she couldn’t hold out forever.

A soft staccato tap on her door made her turn sharply to ensure the lock was in place. Lav’s lips pulled back in the semblance of a smile; in a house full of ninja, how was that lock even significant?
She didn’t move to open the door, hoping the intruder would simply leave. For a minute, there was complete silence.

Then a fingernail scratched the wood and she heard Mikey’s voice. “Lav. Can I come in, please?”

If it had been anyone but Mikey, she would have ignored the plea. Without really meaning to, she walked across the room to turn back the lock, and then opened the door enough to see out.

Mikey was standing in the hall wearing a slight grin and balancing a tray.

“If you wanna stay in there and pout you don’t have to do it on an empty stomach,” he informed her.

Lav bristled. “I am not pouting.”

Mikey laughed and said, “You so are. I should know; I perfected that routine a long time ago.”

Lav was trying to stay angry and aloof, but it was too hard to do with Mikey, so instead she stepped back and opened the door for him to enter.

When she shut and locked it behind him, he laughed again. “You need to turn the lock a little harder so it clicks really loud. That way everyone can hear it.”

Lav frowned at him. “Did you come in here just to tease me?”

He shook his head. “Nah. I did come to bring you something to eat. The teasing is a bonus.”

Walking over to her dressing table, he set the tray down and indicated it with a wave of his hand. “It’s just a ham and cheese sandwich, an apple and bottled water. I thought you might be tired of drinking from the sink.”

Lav had been too angry and upset to eat in the last three days, but now her body mutinied, requiring food.

Softening, she said, “Thank you.”

Mikey looked down, his cocky grin disappearing. “Aww, anything for you babe.”

She stared at him, entranced by the expression he wore. It was a cross between child and man, teenager and adult. He was intriguing, witty, and sexy all at once, and Lav knew she would love him forever.

“Michelangelo,” she murmured sweetly, unable to help herself.

Mikey lifted his head slowly, catching the look in Lav’s eyes. He’d been waiting for two long months to see it again and he smiled once more, this time brightly.

It made her laugh and while she was laughing Mikey crossed over to her, cupped her chin in his hand, and kissed her.

The laugh was cut short as she froze. Mikey pulled back, his smile wistful now.

“I’m not gonna say I’m sorry,” he told her.
It took her a minute before she replied, “Me either.”

Lav leaned forward to close the distance between them and returned the kiss. At first it was just the firm pressure of their lips against each other’s, but then the flame ignited and they were opening their mouths and letting their tongues become reacquainted.

Mikey’s arms wrapped around her. Lav pressed her palms against his plastron, sliding up along his scutes until she could place them on either side of his strong neck.

Their kiss deepened until they both fell into the place where everything else is forgotten. Her soft tongue pressed against his wide, strong one and he enveloped it, reclaiming her with his passion.

“Mikey,” she purred, breaking the kiss.

He rested his cheek on the top of her head, sighing contentedly. “I knew you’d come home. I kept your room clean so you would know I waited for you.”

Lav’s eyes clouded under a mist of tears. “I wondered why there was no dust. Mikey, did you stay in here?”

He leaned back and put a finger under her chin to tip her face towards him. “Yeah, I did. I wanted to be close to your stuff and sleep with your smell.”

“Really?” she whispered.

“Uh huh. And I didn’t let anyone else come in here either,” he said.

“No one?” The full import of that combined with things the others had said suddenly came to her. “Mikey, were you celibate that whole time?”

Mikey grinned slowly. “I was holding out. I think it worked.”

She looked at him with incredulous amazement. “How long would you have--?”

His hands pressed against her back, his face inches from hers as he answered forcefully, “Forever. I would have waited forever.”

Lav started to shake. “I love you, Michelangelo. I really, truly love you.”

“I love you too, Lav. And that’s also forever.” He caught her lips again, his kiss burning her mouth this time.

Two months’ worth of pent up sexual desire began to overwhelm both of them. Mikey’s hands slipped down until they cupped her ass, rubbing up and down over the curve. With a moan, Lav slipped her arms completely around his neck and pushed her body against his.

She felt feverish, her body tingling and nerves jumping across her skin. Her breasts ached to be touched and the sweet spot between her legs was clenching with need.

One of Mikey’s hands left her butt, traveling past her hip and around to her front, sliding between them to fondle her breast. With a strangled gasp, Lav’s head pulled back, her half open eyes gazing into his intently.

“Oh, Mikey, yes. Touch me,” Lav pleaded.
With a churr, Mikey grabbed her shirt as she lifted her arms and he yanked it off of her. Her tits were straining the material of her bra and he made short work of it, tossing it aside and capturing both breasts in his hands.

Her moan was his music. His cock twitched behind his shell and his tail stiffened. Bending, he licked a trail down her neck to her chest, and then across one tit to her nipple, which stood out and strained for his attention. He lapped at it, then circled it with his tongue, eliciting a deep groan of appreciation.

When he bit down lightly, Lav shrieked and her hands flew down to wrestle with her pants, releasing the button and ripping the zipper open. His mouth held onto the nipple as she struggled to roll the pants off and Mikey moved a hand behind her to help.

Her panties followed and then Mikey’s hand was on the center of her bare ass, his fingers curled inward to tease at her warm opening. He could feel how wet she was and another long churr moved up from his chest to burst free.

Lavinia’s breath caught when she felt Mikey’s fingers begin to explore her. Her hands grabbed for his shoulders as she opened her legs wider and she bent back further to push more of her breast into his mouth.

“Sweet Mikey, yes, yes,” she murmured in a deep voice as he sucked her tit and pushed a finger into her.

Mikey’s cock slipped out, bounced forward and touched her thigh. The warmth of her skin was electric and he hardened to a complete erection. Her legs tipped forward when she felt his cock and her thighs closed around his shaft, squeezing his painfully hard organ.

He lifted his mouth from her tit and wrapped both hands under her ass, lifting her. Lav opened her legs and brought them around Mikey’s shell. Dragging a hand from his shoulder, Lav reached between them and grasped Mikey’s rigid cock, pulling it towards her open and exposed pussy.

With a grunt, Mikey forced her body against him, impaling her on his organ. Her tight wet heat surrounded him and his head swam.

“Lav. Oh, damn. I b . . . been dreaming about you. About this.” He stood still, not moving in her at all, savoring the feel of his cock buried up to the hilt inside of her.

“Mmm, Mikey give me everything you’ve saved,” she whispered against his chest.

Mikey shifted towards the bed, holding her so that his dick stayed solidly implanted in her vagina. His knees found the mattress and he lowered them both down, then caught her mouth in another searing kiss.

They remained unmoving for several minutes, their kiss working away any final tension between the two. Mikey’s cock twitched; his pre-come was slicking her already wet insides and her muscles clamped down on his shaft in reaction.

It was more than he could bear. With a grunt, Mikey began to move, pulling part way out and plunging back into her again and again. Lav held him tighter with her legs and rocked her hips into his thrusts, panting and moaning, his name falling from her lips in a constant song.

“Gods you’re beautiful Lavinia. S . . . so tight. I’m gonna . . . I wanna . . . fuck you all night, okay?” Mikey churred, beginning to move faster.
“Yes, oh yes, yes, Mikey. I want you,” Lav mewed out in agreement.

“I want you.” The words echoed, rebounded, and then echoed again. Mikey wanted to hear them for the rest of his life.

Mikey’s hands were firmly on her rear as he lifted her, crawling up higher on his knees and plunging into her as hard as he could. Lav cried out, pushed her head back against the mattress, and squeezed her legs tighter around his carapace. She could feel the shell grinding against her delicate flesh and didn’t care; the pain seemed to double the incredible pleasure she was feeling.

His thick cock ground against her clit and the swollen, sensitive flesh surrounding it until a hard knot of intense pressure focused on that one spot; building higher and higher before overflowing like a volcano.

“Michelangelo!” Lavinia screamed, shaking under the intensity of her orgasm.

She snapped and squeezed all around his cock as she came, her vaginal muscles constricting her passage to half its size and clamping his dick in velvet heat. Mikey felt his own peak approaching, the pressure twining its way through his shaft.

“Ahh, ahh so good! That f . . . feels so go~od! Gonna . . . YES, I’m . . . gonna . . . COME!” Mikey shouted as he shot into her, his milky hot substance claiming her in wave after wave, lasting several minutes.

Spent, Mikey pulled his hands from beneath her and lowered himself, his heartbeat painful in his chest. Panting heavily, Mikey leaned over to take another kiss from Lavinia, plying her tongue with his before pulling back to inhale a lungful of oxygen and her scent.

Mikey’s cock twitched as Lav’s orgasm caused her to continuously snap around him until he was half hard and then he waited for her energy to complete his erection.

Within minutes he felt the buzz from her power transference seep through his system, crawling down his spine and lodging in a full blown static pop at the base of his shaft.

A jerk at the pleasure and then it shot up the length of his organ and Mikey was fully hard.

“Hmm, Lavinia.” Mikey’s pleased moan melted into a churr as he thrust inside her tight love canal. Lav’s eyes were on his face and then a lustful little smile found her lips.

Sitting up, Lav pressed her upper body against his, placed her hands on his shoulders and leveraged her legs to begin pushing him to the side. Mikey’s blue eyes widened.

“Oh, babe, I don’t th . . . think I can p . . . pull out right now,” Mikey groaned, wondering at her intent.

“You don’t have to,” she murmured in his ear slit.

Flinging one leg around him, Lav pressed her calf against his ass, rubbing his tail in the process. The sensation made him snap his hips forward in a full body thrust, burying his cock completely.

Lav rolled him onto his carapace, over the leg she had wrapped around his body until she had maneuvered their positions so that she was on top of him.

Lavinia straddled Mikey’s body, her weight over his groin and his dick totally embedded in
her pussy. Pressing her hands flat against his plastron, she lifted herself with her knees until just the
head of his long hard shaft was still inside her folds.

Moving slowly, Lav lowered herself back onto him, enjoying the feel of his massive organ
stretching and filling her; remembering the weeks of desperate yearning to feel strong hands on her
body, a wide tongue in her mouth, and the exquisite burn of a cock almost too large pushing its
way inside of her.

Mikey’s hands dropped to her thighs, moving so that his thumbs dug into the crease
between thigh and hip. The rest of his hand gripped the solid flesh on her hips and he pulled at her
until she rose again.

“Unn . . . faster . . . faster babe,” he begged, a flash of blue showing under barely open eyes.

Lav gave in to him, riding his cock faster and harder, enjoying the sensation as he thrust up
to meet her. The heat along his shaft radiated into the soft tissue of her puss and prolonged the
lovely little aftershocks of her orgasm.

“That’s it! Go~od! Oh Lav . . . babe . . . MORE!” Mikey called loudly, pulling on her hips.

When Lavinia felt his legs stiffen and the grip of his hand become painful on her hip, she
knew Mikey was close. Lav moved as fast as she could, slamming down on Mikey a little painfully
to give him the particular speed and rhythm that was his preference.

She knew him so well. Mikey churred out his pleasure and his toes curled back, one of his
legs coming off the bed to paw the air as his second orgasm rolled through his groin and then
exploded.

“DAMN!” His wild yell bounced off the walls and shook the air around the couple.

Mikey’s hips lifted and fell in spastic jerks as he transferred the remainder of his seed into
Lav. She leaned her forearms against his plastron and with her eyes shut, rode out the flow,
periodically twitching at the pleasurable feeling.

His high finally began to recede and Mikey lay still, his hands on her body loosening. The
bruises he’d made faded quickly, the ones created by the pressure on his shell from earlier already
gone.

When her eyes opened and she looked up, she found Mikey smiling at her, a twinkle in his
blue eyes.

“Come here,” he ordered, his hands up and reaching for her.

Lav didn’t want to pull away from the wonderful full feeling his cock was giving her, but
Mikey was insistent. With a sigh, she slid forward and his softening penis gave up its warm home.

Mikey shivered as the cool air hit his organ, but then Lav’s warm body pressed against his
scutes and he trapped her with his arms.

Laying her head on his shoulder, Lav stuck her tongue out and licked at the sweat on his
throat. It tickled a bit and Mikey laughed.

“I missed the taste of you,” Lav said simply.

Not laughing any longer, Mikey turned his head and looked down at her. “I missed
everything about you. Thanks for coming back.”

Before she could answer, they both heard a loud ‘whoop’ from the lair.

“What . . . ?” Lav asked.

A big smile split Mikey’s face. “I think Raph just figured out I’m spending the night in here.”

Snuggling into his shoulder, Lav said, “Yes, well that doesn’t mean I’m forgiving him.”

Mikey’s smile reached his voice as he said, “Okay, make ‘em suffer a while longer. The silent treatment works well too; it’s even better if you actually come outta this room and walk around the lair a bit.”

Her voice muffled by his skin, Lav asked, “Are you making fun of me?”

“Kinda,” he answered truthfully.

Lav sat up and stared at him. He stared back.

Sighing again, she said, “God, I’m hungry.”

Moving off Mikey, Lav crossed to the tray he’d brought in, twisted the cap off the water, and drank deeply. Mikey sat forward, braced his upper body on his elbows, and watched her.

“How long you planning on punishing them, Lav?” he asked, serious.

Ignoring the question, she lifted the apple and asked, “The sandwich is mine. You want this?”

“Sure.” He caught it deftly, taking a bite as she brought the sandwich and water back to the bed.

Not to be sidetracked, Mikey spoke around the apple, “It’s time to put this family back together.”

Lav bit into her sandwich and chewed slowly. She offered the water to Mikey, and as he took it from her, she said, “It’s . . . hard.” Her eyes flicked over to his and back to her food.

Taking a swig, Mikey washed the apple down and told her, “Time won’t make it easier. They feel like shit, Lav. They’re completely miserable and scared, too. I know you were the one who suffered most, but they kinda need some guidance to like, make it right.”

She took another bite. “Umm, Mikey. You really didn’t have sex with them for two months?”

He grinned and lay back, bringing the apple to his mouth. “Yep. Two really long months.”

Making a show of studying her food, Lav said, “Okay, I’ll do it for you.”

“Uh, uh.” Mikey finished the apple, setting the core inside a tissue and placing it on the floor. Lying back again, he put his hands behind his head and told her, “Do it for you. Do it ‘cause you wanna. You do wanna be with them again, doncha?”

“Yes,” Lav admitted in a voice close to a whisper.
He stretched one hand out and stroked her back. “All right then. You don’t need to make it too easy though. I don’t mind having you to myself for a while.”

Her sandwich gone, Lav climbed next to him and pressed against his side.

They lay together quietly, enjoying each other’s company. Then Lav began to touch Mikey ever so gently, first with her fingertips, then her mouth. When his arms started to move she quickly reached out to still them, so he kept both under his head and closed his eyes, allowing his other senses to intensify with the loss of sight.

It was intense. Her mouth found all the sensitive places on Mikey’s bare skin, licking or nipping as she moved; completely at random, no pattern in her choices for him to anticipate. The desire to reach for her was hard to overcome, even harder when Lav’s mouth moved lower on his body, her breath ghosting over his previously sated cock which lay against his plastron.

Lav didn’t go any nearer his dick, bypassing it in favor of a muscular thigh. Crawling down so she could plant herself between Mikey’s legs, Lav pushed them further apart. Massaging his calves, Lav kissed and licked his thighs, moving her mouth between them to get at the softer flesh of his inner thigh. When her tongue brushed lightly on his tail, Mikey churred and wiggled his hips.

She moved back up again, kissing all around his cock. It was still a little overly sensitive from the last encounter, but Lav’s mouth never touched him. Just when Mikey was sure she’d left the area, a tiny wet tickle brushed his cock.

It was the tiniest of caresses and he guessed she’d done it with the tip of her tongue. It was light as a butterfly, but the feeling stayed on Mikey’s flesh. Then Lav did it again, and once more; little flicks of the tongue, all over his cock, repeatedly. The sensation was hardening him quickly.

“Oh shell!” Mikey exclaimed.

Now she delivered a more solid lick, her tongue at the base of his shaft stroking along a nerve and following it all the way to his tip. Mikey wiggled his hips a little more, his cock moving up slowly as blood rushed to fill it a third time.

“Mmm,” Lavinia hummed, her mouth close to his dick.

Unable to resist the urge, Mikey pried back an eyelid and saw Lav hovering over his cock, breathing on it and coaxing it towards her with another dip of her extraordinary tongue.

Mikey groaned and his cock jumped up, almost slapping her cheek. Lavinia giggled and ran the tip of her tongue into the slit, catching the first traces of precome as they appeared.

The teasing was starting to get painful. His cock was throbbing and his whole body was tied in a knot. He thrust his hips up towards her face, hoping the message would get received.

Warm heat enveloped him and he crowed his pleasure loudly.

Down she went, her mouth curving around his cock as she took in as much of his length as she could manage. One small hand grasped the base of his dick to pump him, making Mikey gasp and churr.

Lav’s mouth was so talented; the tongue snaking across the head of his cock, tickling beneath it, sucking at the precome and swallowing him. She let his cock slide past her teeth while they gently traced his skin and then opened her throat so his tip could find the soft cushion at the
Swallowing around him, Lav pulled almost all the way off his cock, pumped again, and began to bob up and down.

Mikey lost whatever self-control he had right then. His cock was engorged, he could feel the veins pulsating under the skin and her mouth was tight and hot. His hands shot out and he grabbed her head and began moving her, fucking her mouth with quick thrusts of his hips.

“Oh Lav, Oh Baby! That’s g . . . good . . . mmm. Shell! K . . . keep going . . . Lav. OH Go! Go!” Mikey was yelling; thrashing his head wildly, his heels digging into the mattress.

Lav was extremely satisfied with herself. She loved getting Mikey to this point, loved the feeling of power over him and his enjoyment of her control.

Lavinia knew when she had him teetering on the edge. His cock twisted in her mouth, his hips thrust up and then stayed suspended, and the muscles on his thighs turned to rock. Lav sucked hard as she pulled his cock all the way into the back of her throat and then hummed to vibrate the tip. That final pressure pushed him over.

With a wild cry Mikey came, pouring hot and strong into Lavinia’s mouth. Her hands were firm against his thighs as she leaned over and swallowed him down, taking everything he was giving.

When he was spent, she used her tongue to wash his cock, lapping gently along the shaft and sucking away the last traces of his seed that clung to the tip. With an expert hand, she carefully tucked him back into his shell.

Mikey was in a semi-daze, his hands lying uselessly on the bed. After Lav had ministered to his dick, she crawled back up his body, draping herself across him.

“Tell me when you’re ready to do that again,” Lav teased him as she rubbed her face into the crook of his neck.

“I’ll show you when I’m ready,” he said, his cockiness returning.

Lav rolled her head so her chin was on his chest, looking into his face. “Mikey, was it my imagination, or were you louder than usual?”

With a sly grin, Mikey said, “Maybe.”

Don stood stock still just outside his lab, his coffee cup halfway to his mouth. Raph was likewise frozen in mid-stride as he came down the staircase, and Leo’s book was tilting dangerously close to falling from his outstretched hand.

Master Splinter took them all in as he stepped out of the kitchen. The last of the echoes from Mikey’s cries were fading in the lair and the youngest son’s message had definitely been received.

Their Sensei smiled, his hand clutching fresh batteries destined for his sound machine. He was happy to know he would need it again very soon.
Mikey was in a bouncy mood when he showed up for practice the next morning. He had coaxed Lav out of her room and when they parted at the kitchen, she kissed him long and hard.

He wasn’t sure if she knew the other Turtles were watching them and he didn’t much care. Mikey was walking on air.

It was the best practice they’d had in over two months. Everyone was alert, well prepared, and eager. When Leo split them off for sparring, Mikey turned out to be completely unbeatable. He even put Leo down a time or two.

When they broke for breakfast, Lavinia had already disappeared back into her room. However, in the center of the table a large basket held fresh baked biscuits, a cloth folded over them to keep the warmth inside.

“Oh shell.” Raph pulled back the cloth and inhaled deeply.

Mikey took butter and jam from the refrigerator and set them on the table, then grabbed a biscuit and bit into it, not bothering with the condiments.

His brothers followed suit, sounds of enjoyment filling the kitchen. Mikey slathered his second biscuit with jam and leaned back in his chair.

“I could die now and be just fine with it,” he announced, taking a big bite and dripping jam onto his plastron.

“We’ll be sure and bury ya’ with the food still covering your body,” Raph said with a snicker.

“Ah Raph,” Mikey began with the voice of a lecturer, “jealousy is such an ugly thing.”

“Who says I’m jealous of ya’?” Raph asked, his tone good natured as he buttered a biscuit.

Mikey leaned forward and raised an eye ridge. “I do, you big liar. You were staring at Lav and me with those big gold eyes of yours and your teeth all dripping. Admit it, you were wishing that it was you she was kissing this morning.”

“Dripping teeth?” Don interposed. “Quite the imagery there, Michelangelo.”

“Oh, you know what I mean,” Mikey waved a biscuit in the air. “He’s lecherous.”

“Well, shit Mikey. Maybe I was staring at your fine ass,” Raph told him, a grin on his face.

“It’s nice to hear you admit it for once,” Mikey rejoined, “but my ass is spoken for.”

“Satisfied with yourself much, Mikey?” Don asked in a soft voice.

Mikey squirmed a bit. “Maybe.” He turned a little serious then. “I can be happy for a while, okay? And I can make Lav happy too, and that’s what she needs right now.”

“It’s good, Mike,” Leo spoke then, his eyes on Mikey’s. “Take the time. Let Lavinia move at her own speed. She’ll let us know when she’s comfortable.”

Mikey smiled. “I told you guys before I’m not letting this family fall apart. You better all remember that a hundred years from now.”

Raph groaned. “Geez, a hundred years with ya’! What a thought.”
His orange banded brother laughed. “A hundred years without me would be worse.”

Mikey sat on Lav’s bed across from her and tried to peek down at the cards she held. Pulling them against her chest, she gave him an incredulous look.

“Mikey, cheating? Really?” Lavinia asked, shaking her head.

He laughed. “I’m a ninja babe. I take whatever advantage I can find.”

After a little, Mikey noticed she seemed distracted. Her card playing became erratic and he won easily.

When she picked up the cards to shuffle them, his hand came down on top of hers. Lav glanced up, questioning him with a look.

“What are you thinking about?” he wanted to know.

Lav sighed and set the cards down. “Actually, I was worrying about Frank and Cynthia. I know you told me Raph and Leo warned both of them, but I’d really like to know they’re all right.”

“Leo checked on them last night, babe. They’re both fine,” Mikey assured her.

“I’d still like to know it for myself. It really makes me angry that Lin would go after them like that. What the hell is wrong with that man?” Lav fumed.

Mikey chuckled. “Well for one, he has the hots for you, babe. You’re not easy to forget.”

“That can’t be all of it,” Lav said, shooting him a smile for the compliment. “I kind of got the impression that he has a hidden agenda. I can’t imagine what could be so all fired important that he would send men out to attack people I care about. Wouldn’t it have crossed his mind that I might not like that tactic?”

Mikey lifted his shoulders. “Some men get to a point where the power goes to their head, Lav. They just don’t worry about the consequences the way we do. If you wanna check on your folks, why don’t you call them?”

Lav shook her head. “I tried,” she admitted. “I can’t get a cell signal in here. I even tried with the shell cell but for some reason the connection keeps dropping and I’ve never been able to get a wireless connection in this room.”

“Yeah, Don’s lab is the only place with a really strong signal, although you can get one in the kitchen or television room,” he told her.

“I know. I don’t want to sit out there with them, though. And as far as spending time in Don’s lab . . . especially if he’s there--” Lav trailed off.

Mikey leaned over and tightened his grip on her hand. “Still uncomfortable?”

She looked up gratefully and nodded. “I don’t know what to say to them. Every time I look up into their faces, I see a replay of the night they kicked me out.” Her lip threatened to quiver and she bit down on it.

Mikey cupped her chin and placed a kiss on her mouth, making her stop biting herself. Then he scooted forward, knocking the cards to the floor so that he could wrap her in his arms.
“So it’ll just be you and me until you do get comfortable. Nothing wrong with that.”

As she hugged him back, Mikey’s mind started to spin. Being a practical joker his whole life had its advantages, and one of them was the ability to plan mischief. He started putting his talents to work right at that moment.
Mikey’s Plan

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 6,988
Chapter pairing: Don/Lav, Raph/Mikey
Chapter Rating: NC-17 Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, Tcest, het sex, language
Chapter Summary: The family continues its slow healing with Michelangelo's assistance.

The next afternoon Mikey stood in the doorway to Don’s lab and watched Donny try to ignore him.

Don was pretty good at it, keeping his face turned away and pretending to be ultra-busy, but Mikey was an expert at wheedling.

“Donny!” he called in his most plaintive voice, opening his blue eyes wide.

Giving up, Don set down the pliers he was using and turned to look at Mikey. The wide eyes made him wince.

“What did you break?” Don asked immediately.

“Why do you always think I broke something?” Mike countered.

Don sighed. “Because that’s exactly what you say every time you break something.”

Mikey stepped farther into the lab and his voice dropped conspiratorially. “Look, I was in the garage and I just sat on Raph’s bike, you know, not messing with it or anything, I just wanted to check out the new mirrors and shell, this piece just sorta came off . . . .”

Don interrupted him to ask, “Mikey, do you have a death wish?”

“Shell no! Why do you think I’m here, dude? Raph’s taking a nap and if you could just sorta reattach the piece before he wakes up then I won’t have to be dead. You’d hate to lose me at such a young age, right?”

“Are we talking about your youth or mine?” Don quipped. “Because you are aging me fast, Michelangelo.”

“You’ll help me out though, won’t you bro’? Now, before Raph wakes up?” Mikey implored.

Don rose to his feet and headed for the door. “Of course I will, Mikey. Don’t I always?”

Mikey clapped him on the shoulder as he passed. “That’s why you’re my favorite brother.”

He barely caught Don’s muttered, “Like that’s a recommendation”, before Don was out of sight.
Moving fast, Mikey ran across the lair and down the hall to Lav’s room. He was glad Leo was in with Master Splinter. Timing was everything.

A quick knock brought her to the door. She held it open for him and he sauntered in, to all outward appearances relaxed. With a sharp glance he noted that her cell phone was on her dressing table and he picked it up casually.

“Still can’t get through?” he asked.

Lav shook her head. “No. I think maybe, while you guys are at practice in the morning, I’ll try my laptop in the kitchen.”

“Why wait that long?” Mike asked, lifting an eye ridge. “Use Don’s computer.”

“No. I told you Mikey, I’m not going into his lab while he’s there,” Lav stated stubbornly.

“He’s not in there right now,” Mikey told her. “He’s in the garage doing something to the van. You know how long that could take; now’s your chance. I mean, if you really wanna check on Cynthia,” he added.

Lavinia looked indecisive for a minute and Mikey held his breath. Then her need drove her. “Okay. I’ll be quick and get out before he comes back.”

Lavinia dashed out of the room. Mikey waited for a slow fifteen seconds after she left, then drew out his shell cell and punched a button.

“Mikey, I can’t find anything wrong with Raph’s bike. What . . . .” Don began.

“I’ll show you later, Donny. Look, Lav’s in your lab trying to contact her friends on your computer and she’s having a problem. Can you meet her there?”

Don paused. “She wants my help?” he asked hopefully.

“Yeah. She’s in there now, dude. I wouldn’t wait too long.” Mikey grinned at the phone.

“On my way,” Don said.

Pleased with himself, Mikey snapped his phone shut and waited.

**********

Lav pushed the lab door open and peered inside. Just as Mikey had told her, Donatello was not present. Leaving the door ajar, Lav sat down at his desk and keyed in the password he had set up for her to allow her access to his computer.

The message she typed to Cynthia was short and somewhat cryptic, but she mainly wanted to make sure Cyn was all right. She asked her assistant to check on Frank Logan and to then send a message to Lav’s email letting her know everything was okay.

Just as she sent the message, Donatello walked through the door.

Startled, Lav sputtered, “S . . . sorry, I thought you’d be out and I wanted to check on Cynthia.”

Don smiled. “It’s okay Lav. Mikey said you needed my help with something.”
“No, I don’t. I was only sending a message, I never . . . .” She stopped and looked at Don.

“He told me that he broke something on Raph’s bike,” Don said, suddenly understanding.

“Mikey said you were out of your lab and I could send my message without disturbing you,” Lavinia explained.

Don’s eyes were soft. “You never disturb me, Lav. You don’t have to be polite; you can say you didn’t want to be in the same room with me.”

The look in his eyes finally told Lav what she needed to know about Don. Her heart flipped and began to thud in her chest. She’d never seen him look so sad.

“I should go.” Lav rose from the chair.

“You don’t have to,” Don said quickly. “I’ll go back to the garage. You take as long as you need.”

“I’ve finished, Don. Thank you for the offer. “ She met his eyes. “I’m sorry I’ve been hiding from you; I can at least behave in a civil manner.”

“I . . . I understand if you don’t want to. Mikey’s happy again and he deserves to be with you, he was your champion after all,” Don explained.

Lav tilted her head to the side, her lips slightly upturned. “Yes, he was . . . is. Apparently he’s your champion too, since this little ruse was designed to get us to talk to each other.”

Don looked down, his hand reaching to straighten some papers as he asked, “Would you have talked to me again if Mikey hadn’t done this?” He continued to fiddle with papers, afraid of her answer.

“Oh Donny,” she breathed out before catching herself.

His hands stilled. Slowly Don lifted his head until he could look into Lavinia’s eyes. A wet film covered them, her mouth quivering as she stood near his desk.

“Lav . . . .” he said.

She laughed quickly, and then sucked in a breath. “Sorry. I c . . . can’t even answer a straight forward question anymore. Mikey and his tricks. Manipulating. He told me he wouldn’t make-up with you guys until I forgave you all.” The back of her hand came up to catch the dampness leaking from her eyes and she laughed shortly once more, embarrassed.

Don’s mouth curved up. “Are you going to forgive us to make Mikey happy?”

“That’s a loaded question, Donatello,” she responded good-naturedly. “You’re making too many assumptions.”

“As a scientist I should know better?” he asked.

Lavinia sighed. “I think you know enough, Don. I’m the one trying to figure things out right now. I just wish it were as easy as Mikey thinks it should be.”

“I don’t know everything, Lav,” Don said softly. “I didn’t even try to understand a decision I felt might have been hasty. I didn’t even question it, Lavinia. You should know that while you try to work through our situation.”
Lav watched his face while he said those words and saw the anguish behind them.

“Didn’t Leo tell you it was the right thing to do?” Lavinia asked.

Don opened his mouth, closed it, and then finally said, “Yes.”

“How many times in your life have you gone against Leo?” Lav asked him.

“That doesn’t excuse my actions or my responsibility, Lavinia,” he replied sharply.

She shook her head. “Of course not, but it does explain your line of reasoning, Donny. Because we’re alike that way; we both do what Leo says to do. We can’t help ourselves; for you it’s a lifelong habit, for me it’s a learned response. It’s his way and if we were to trade places, I don’t know that I could have gone against him either.”

“Because he’s so often right,” Don murmured.

Lav smiled, showing him a flash of humor. “At least you didn’t say ‘always’ right.”

He shook his head. “He had other things going on then, Lav.”

She pursed her lips. “See Don, you’re still doing it. The need for Leo to be correct is too ingrained in you. That’s why you shouldn’t beat yourself up about that decision. I’m not going to hold it against you either, because the one inexorable truth, no matter what happens, is that I love you.”

Don couldn’t breathe. “Lavinia,” his voice shook and he stopped talking.

“I need to go now,” Lav said, feeling the hurt come back. She had just made herself vulnerable again and Don didn’t seem to be willing to respond in kind.

Feeling foolish, she started for the door but Don’s hand on her arm stopped her. Glancing first at his hand, Lav then turned her head to meet his dark brown eyes. They held her, so expressive and warm, gentle and intelligent. Lav felt the corners of her mouth twitch up despite herself.

Lav’s tiny smile was all the encouragement Don needed. Somewhat tentatively, his other hand went to her cheek. As soon as his palm touched her skin, Lav leaned to rub her face against him.

“Lavinia, I love you too,” Don finally managed. “Sometimes, those words don’t seem to say enough.”

Don slid the hand on her arm up to her shoulder and gripped hard enough to turn her body towards him. Her eyes were partially shut as she continued to nuzzle into his palm and he tilted her face up to his, leaned forward, and kissed her deeply.

The intensity of his kiss surprised Lav and she moaned as a result. Her mouth opened wide at his insistence, letting his tongue delve into her. She met him, welcoming and exploring the invader, moving all around his wide warm tongue.

Donny churred as she stroked his tongue and he pulled her closer, the hand on her face moving to grip the back of her neck. He opened his mouth even further, tasting all she offered, bruising her soft lips in his attempt to feel all of her.
Lav pulled back, panting. “Don, Donny. Those words will always say enough to me.”

Don held her securely as he spun both of them around so that he could reach the open door and slam it shut. Arms tightly around her body, Don pushed his mouth against hers once more. Lav’s arms curled up under his, gripping the tops of his shoulders firmly as she melted into him.

His blood felt like it was engulfed in a raging furnace. This was the intensity he had been missing, the spark that ignited the fire in his gut and loins. This was the promised release from two months of darkness, fear, and abject loneliness; the release from the miasma they’d created for themselves and had sunk into.

Don needed to be free of that dark abyss and to shatter its hold forever.

His hands began to roam her body, touching everywhere; a blind man learning to see. Lavinia followed his example, sliding hands over his broad shoulders, touching hard muscle, pressing against his plastron and scratching his scutes with her nails. Two fingers traced the center line past his belt, and then joined her other hand to explore his exposed sides.

His churr dropped an octave in pitch, her touch sending a shockwave straight into his cock. It began to swell and bulge inside his shell, and the slit behind which it hid started to open.

Don’s hands rubbed over her tender breasts, teasing her nipples through the fabric of her blouse. Lowering his hands, he grasped the edges of her blouse and then stopped, looking into her eyes, suddenly unsure of himself.

Her hands came up to join his and she lifted her blouse up and over her head, tossing it aside. Taking his hands, she placed them over her breasts and pressed down until he squeezed her firm flesh through her bra.

“The b . . . bra, Lav. Please. C . . . can you take it off?” Don husked, his eyes still focused on her tits.

Lavinia smiled as she unclasped the hooks and then pulled the bra away. His hands hovered, waiting for the bit of lace finery to fall aside before he grasped her again, this time rolling his fingers over her nipples. They grew hard under his touch, perky and rose colored, and he bent down to nip at one with his lips.

“Oh Donny!” Lavinia gasped, the words ending in a moan.

He opened his mouth wide and clamped down hard on her tit, his tongue flicking up and down on her nipple. Lav’s body started to shake, both of her hands gripping Don’s biceps until her knuckles turned white.

Don moved his mouth to the other breast, repeating his ministrations while one hand squeezed her other tit. His free hand slid down her tight abdomen and pushed past the waistband of her jeans, into her panties. When his fingers stroked through the soft hair covering her vulva he churred loudly, and when those fingers encountered the wet heat of her opening, his cock responded by coming to life.

Lavinia slid her legs wider as Don pressed the tips of his fingers inside her pussy. Her head back, eyes shut, she pushed against his hand, wanting more. Her sex throbbed with need, grasping at him due to the fire spreading into her body as he worked her nipples.

“Don . . . Donny . . . Donny . . . please . . . ” she began to beg, needing relief.
Don’s other hand dropped and worked the fastenings on her jeans. He pulled his fingers out of Lav long enough to push both jeans and panties over her hips. They slid down her legs and she kicked them aside.

His mouth left her breast to climb up to her mouth and capture hers in a mind numbing kiss. Half walking, half dragging her, he positioned her against the closest flat surface, which was his desk top.

When the backs of her thighs made contact, Don reached over and swept everything onto the floor, his mouth never leaving hers. Leaning into her, he forced her back onto the desk, then gripped under her thighs to pull her lower body partway off the surface, sliding her towards his fully erect cock.

Lav wrapped her legs around the back of his thighs as he started to push into her. Her head fell away from his mouth and she arched her back as she felt his full, hard shaft sliding against hot, swollen flesh.

Her vagina sang with pleasure when he was fully sheathed in her body. She squeezed her muscles around him, feeling how hard and hot he was, feeling the veins along his shaft pulse with energy. Lav wasn’t sure if she wanted him to move or just stay where he was forever.

“Lavinia.” He leaned over her and ran his fingers over her face, around her eyes, across her lips. “I swear I’ll never let you go again, Lavinia. I swear it.” His words were forceful; determined.

“Never . . . .” she repeated, the light behind her eyes glowing for him.

“Never,” Don said again, pulling his cock partway out of her and then thrusting with all his might.

“Ugghh!” she cried out and grabbed his shoulders, her legs constricting to hold him closer.

Don drove into her, his hands gripping her hips to hold her in place. Her body rocked back and forth on the desk top, hair fanning out around her head. Lav’s breasts jumped as Don pounded into her and he leaned down to suck on one, then the other, making her gasp and shiver.

Straightening, Don watched her face as he pumped his cock into her pussy. It was radiant, her eyes almost closed, her mouth slightly open as he forced sounds of pleasure out of her. Lavinia lifted her hips to meet his thrusts, her legs tight around him and the feel of constant heat and pressure along his shaft made his entire body vibrate.

Lavinia’s head rolled back even further, her hands scrabbled for a purchase, finally gripping the tips of his fingers. When her breath caught and held, Don tipped forward a bit to press his cock harder against her clitoris, knowing she was right on the edge.

The added friction sent her crashing over into orgasm. “Donny! Oh, oh Donny . . . ye~s,” she hissed as her body shook through her climax.

A moment more as his own pressure built, her inner muscles clamping and releasing rhythmically along his cock as he stroked into her. He was mindless now, his focus riveted on the feeling of impending release.

“Nnn oh oh Lav~oh . . . umph!” Teetering on the edge, his head filled with a balloon of bright light.

Then it burst, his orgasm pouring out strong and steady; filling Lav with his hot foamy
The aftershocks rippled through his body as he released into her. She was still shaking under him, her hands tight on his fingers, and her moan met his churr.

Don held onto her hips, breathing deeply. He leaned over and kissed her lightly, both of them too out of breath to do more and he knew he wasn’t finished anyway.

Her orgasmic flood of residual energy floated into his body and his cock hardened again.

“Ah Gods Lavinia!” he called loudly, the remembered ecstasy of double release returning as he fucked her; his woman, his mutant lover.

Don reached for his peak again, his penis ready; erect and almost painful. Thrusting with uncharacteristic brutality, he strove to put everything back the way it was before; willing their sex to mend their wounds.

His rhythm faltered sooner this time, her energy too strong in its pull to resist the pressure in his groin. With a lusty churr, he shot his load into her womb a second time, as hard and steady as the first.

Lavinia cried out his name again as his warmth surged into her body. His hips jerked against her vulva and she continued to grip him solidly against her body, refusing to let him expend anything of himself elsewhere.

Don draped over her, his weight on his legs, but his upper body lay on her, head pressed to her chest. She could feel his heart beating through his plastron and knew he must be able to hear hers.

Lav put her hand to Don’s head and stroked the soft, leathery skin. Tears slid from her eyes as she thought of two months without his touch; with touching him. Thought about how much of Don was leached into her soul and how badly she needed him.

He twisted his head to look at her, sensing a shift in her emotions, and saw the tears.

“Lavinia, darling, don’t cry,” he implored her, reaching up to gather her into his arms and pull her into a sitting position. Don’s cock slid from her body, her legs lowered, and she wrapped her arms around his neck.

“I missed you too,” she sobbed against his throat, responding to the words he had spoken to her at her apartment.

He kissed the top of her head and held her. “Five. We’re supposed to be five. Fate and destiny meant it to be that way, Lav. We won’t ever fight them again.”

She nodded, burrowing into the protective feel of his strong arms. Don swept her off the table and carried her across the room to the cot which occupied a side wall. Lying together with their arms and legs wrapped around each other, they fell asleep.

Mikey was seated on the couch flipping through channels when Raph came down from his nap. Tying his bandana on, he joined his brother, leaping over the back and making the sofa jump off the floor.
Mikey glanced over at him. “Whoa dude. You’re gonna break the springs one of these days.”

Raph smirked. “If your butt hasn’t done it yet, I think it can hold me.”

Leo came out of Master Splinter’s room and heard Mikey tell Raph, “Weren’t you the one admiring my butt yesterday morning?”

Raph snorted as Leo joined them, taking a seat on one of the chairs. The two older brothers watched Mikey flip through channels before finally settling on a science fiction movie.

Raph leaned forward. “Hey, isn’t this one of Lav’s favorite movies? Maybe if we tell her it’s on she’ll come out and sit with us.”

“It’s on her laptop; she can watch it whenever she wants,” Mikey informed him, his eyes still on the screen. “Besides,” he added with a touch of self-satisfaction, “she’s not in her room.”

Leo sat up straight and looked towards the kitchen.

“Nope, not in there either,” Mikey said, still refusing to look at Leo or Raph.

“Well then, where the shell is she?” Raph demanded.

“In Donny’s lab. With Don.” Mikey smirked. This time his head turned to look at his brothers, enjoying their faces.

“Mikey.” Leo stared at him. “What did you do?”

“Moi?” Mikey raised an eye ridge, putting on his best fake innocent face.

“Yeah, shell for brains. What did ya’ do?” Raph asked.

“I helped nature take its course.” Mikey snapped his fingers in the air. “I lured the two of them together and they figured out what to do after that. If it wasn’t meant to happen, then it wouldn’t have. From the looks of things, I’d guess it was meant to happen.”

“Well, damn . . . .” Raph huffed, staring at his youngest brother.

“Yeah, I know I’m a genius. Donny told me so.” Mikey grinned and went back to watching the movie.

Dinner came and went without a sign of Don or Lav. Leo made them go through a shortened version of weapons practice, just a refresher with something other than the weapons they most favored.

Mikey talked them into playing some video games with him. It didn’t take much cajoling; they had both missed his company and were willing to give him the opportunity to kick their butts at the games he excelled in.

Sometime around midnight Raph got up, yawned, and stretched.

“I’m turning in guys,” he announced.

“So early?” Mikey asked, holding his race car on the road around a wide turn. Leo’s car over compensated and spun out of control.
“Uh, yeah.” Raph’s eyes gleamed, unseen by the two who were engrossed in the game. “A guy can only take so much gaming.”

Leo fell back against the cushions as Mikey crossed the finish line. He turned his head as Raph walked away. “’Night Raph. I’m probably going to turn in myself after Mikey lets me make one more try at wiping his car off the track.”

“Psst.” Mikey’s derisive sound followed Raph. “Like that’s gonna happen.”

A half hour later Leo conceded to Mikey.

“Tell me I’m the best.” Mikey grinned.

Laughing, Leo set down his controller and touched a fist to Mikey’s arm. “Yes, Michelangelo, when it comes to video games, you are the champion.”

“Hooah!” Mike jumped up and moon walked in front of the couch.

Leo also stood. “I think I’ll call it a night.” He watched Mikey’s back as his brother began shutting down the entertainment center for the evening.

Mikey glanced back at him when he realized Leo hadn’t left. “Something bro’?”

Leo shook his head, a small lump in his throat suddenly at being alone with Mikey after so long. Pushing aside his need, he said, “’Night Mikey.”

“’Night, Leo.” Mikey watched Leo walk away. There sure was a lot of repair work left to be done, he thought.

Happy with himself, Mikey took the stairs two at a time and went to his room to grab some much needed shut eye.

As he turned from shutting the door, a hard body slammed against him, driving him backwards and smacking his carapace against the wall.

“Oh shell!” Mikey cried out as his shoulders were held in a tight, forceful grip.

“Two months.” Raph’s hot breath touched him and his face pressed into Mikey’s neck.

Raphael inhaled deeply, enjoying the intoxicating musky aroma of his younger brother. His head moved, beak sliding under Mikey’s chin until his face was pressed into Mikey’s neck on the opposite side. Once more, he inhaled the scent he’d been missing for so long.

“Two. Fucking. Months,” Raph croaked, and then began nipping at Mikey’s skin.

“Mikey tasted delicious. Raphael pressed closer to him, enjoying the feel of plastron scraping plastron. Mikey’s extra muscles felt wonderful under Raph’s exploring hands; new and erotic.

“Don’t ya’ ever hold out again,” Raph growled as he released Mikey from a searing kiss.
Mikey tried for a grin as his mind began to fog over. “D... don’t ever m... make m... .”

That was all he managed as he was forcibly snatched away from the wall, spun around and pushed onto his bed.

He felt the tug at his belt when Raph removed his weapons, and then heard Raph’s sais hit the floor next to the nunchucks. Raph’s mouth was on his again, his tongue as forceful as its owner.

Mikey came to his senses enough to wrap his arms around Raph’s neck and pull him closer. Two months had been damn hard on him as well, and Raph’s brand of burning passion had been especially missed.

Raph’s mouth released his suddenly and moved down his body. Mikey tipped his head up to watch his brother kiss his way down Mikey’s plastron, and then Mikey’s eyes shut and his head fell back as Raph pulled at his thighs to force them apart.

A loud churr moved past Mikey’s lips when Raph began to press kisses to the slit housing his cock. His dick was twitching and moving in its hiding place, and the hot breath that poured through to touch the head of his penis made it expand quickly.

When Raph’s beak pushed against the bulge his cock was making, Mikey let out a loud gasp and released his burning organ. Half hard already, the touch of Raph’s hand and then his tongue brought Mikey to full erection.

“Raphie!” Mikey yipped and wiggled his hips as his brother stroked his shaft. Raph lips wrapped around the head and sucked, hard enough to ‘cause pain.

“Again! Do that again!” Mikey called as his dick jumped at the feeling and a jolt of electricity shot through his groin.

Raph grinned and swallowed him, using his mouth like a vacuum to pull Mikey in rather than just sliding over him. The resultant pressure made Mikey’s toes curl and his fingers dig into the sheets. A long shudder ran over his entire body as he felt the tension building towards the breaking point.

Raph moved back to the tip of Mikey’s cock and licked over the head, lapping at the slit and licking up the precome, before pulling Mikey all the way into his mouth once more. The head of Mikey’s cock bounced against the back of Raph’s throat and Raph churred, long and loud.

The vibration set off the rockets inside Mikey’s gut. “RAPHIE! Yes, yes! OH, Shell, YES!”

Mikey came, shooting long and hard into Raph’s mouth. Raph swallowed; kept swallowing as his little brother shook and moaned through his orgasm.

Pulling back with a lusty slurp, Raph chuckled. “Tasty. Now that you’re nice and relaxed, I got somethin’ for ya’.”

Sitting up, he let Mikey see his huge cock. The orange banded turtle, completely slack against the mattress, felt a tiny tendril of fire in the pit of his stomach as Raph wrapped a hand around the shaft and pumped his dick for Mikey’s viewing pleasure.

“Oh shell,” Mikey murmured, making Raph grin.
“I’m assuming your lube’s in the same spot?” Raph didn’t wait for an answer as he reached into the drawer of the bedside table and dug around until his fist closed on a large tube.

Raph slicked up a finger and moved it between Mikey’s legs. Using his other hand, he tilted Mikey back on his carapace, lifting his little brother’s hips and presenting himself with a nice view of the target.

The lubed finger found Mikey’s asshole and pushed in slowly. Mikey was so relaxed, the small sting at the entry didn’t even make him jump. All he could manage was a weak moan.

“Oh, I like this. A nice blow job and ya’ just turn into putty. I’ll have ta remember that,” Raph muttered, moving his fully embedded finger around in Mikey’s ass.

The fire in Mikey’s gut got bigger as Raph twisted and turned his finger to stretch him. The probing grew more intense as Raph added a second finger, and then pushed in as far as his fingers would allow, brushing against Mikey’s prostate.

“Ahhhh!” Mikey yelped, an intense tingle shooting through his body.

Raph’s dark chuckle made Mikey’s legs open wider. “Seems there’s still some life in ya’ after all,” Raph commented, pulling his fingers out.

Positioning his body over Mikey’s, Raph guided the tip of his cock to press against Mikey’s slicked entrance. Looking up, he caught Mikey’s eyes with his own, and an intense joy sang in his chest at the wonderful familiarity of intimacy covering them both.

A hard thrust buried his cock in Mikey’s ass and his brother’s heat surrounded him. Raph churred as the velvet richness stroked his dick and then began a steady movement of rocking in and out of the tight cocoon.

The friction against his shaft drove Raph to move faster as he felt his body reacting to the pleasurable feeling. Mikey moaned; the pounding drives of that thick, hot dick in his ass making his cock twitch to life again.

“Yes, Mikey, that’s good.” Raph grabbed his cock and began to pump it. Mikey’s cock responded to the pressure, filling quickly until it was painfully hard.

Raph moved harder inside Mikey’s body, shifting his position to drive deeper with each thrust. His hand expertly manipulated Mikey’s dick; stroking it just the way Mikey enjoyed and he was rewarded with a loud churr from his goof ball brother.

“Mikey likes a good dickin’, don’t ya?” Raph growled, the tension building at the base of his cock. His hand on Mikey’s rod moved faster. “You’re so hot and tight bro’. I’m gonna come inside of ya’ Mikey. I want ya’ ta come with me, okay?”

“Uh, mmm, ah ah, o . . . okay.” It was all Mikey could manage, his eyes half shut as he concentrated on the wonderful feeling of impending orgasm.

So close, Raph was so close. Moving faster and harder, he plunged his cock into Mikey’s ass with no rhythm, grinding his dick into the tight cushion. The driving force struck Mikey’s prostate dead on and began hitting it repeatedly.

The upper half of Mikey’s body lifted off the mattress; his mouth open and eyes squeezed shut as he came, spurting his hot white ejaculate over Raph’s hand and onto their plastrons.
“Raphie!” he yelled loudly and lifted his hips as he fell back, convulsing with the power of his climax.

Mikey’s body jerking beneath him was the added stimulus that pushed Raph over the edge.

“Gahh, umph!” Raph grunted, spraying his seed into Mikey’s ass. Burying himself as deeply as he could, he held his cock in place as his release poured out.

Minutes ticked by with only the sounds of heavy breathing and tight, short grunts filling the air. When he was fully expended, Raph collapsed on top of his brother.

Mikey was too numb to notice or complain about the weight; but not so out of it that he couldn’t wrap his arms around Raph’s carapace and hold him. Too many nights without the hot head; nights he spent worrying about his family, nights consumed by the fear his family was coming apart forever, those things faded as he held Raph tightly.

A huff of air against his neck and Raph was rolling off of him. Mikey shifted onto his side so he could watch Raph fall asleep; the usual pattern for his big bro’ as the afterglow relaxed him completely.

Only Raph wasn’t dozing off; in fact, his eyes were wide open as he stared up at the ceiling.

“There’s something bothering you bro’?” Mikey asked tenderly.

Raph shifted his eyes sideways and muttered, “I’m just thinking ‘bout how we can handle hundreds of Foot ninja, bein’ sent into space, captured and used like slaves, fight and defeat Shredder and somehow manage to screw up our own love lives. Too bad ninjitsu don’t teach ya’ how to deal with that emotional shit.”

Mikey chuckled. “I don’t think anything teaches you how to deal with women, if that’s what you’re worrying about. You kinda have to figure that out as you go.”

“So what if you mess up so bad while you’re figuring it out that you lose someone forever?” Raph asked, his voice low and quiet.

Mikey gaped at him, then found his voice. “You haven’t screwed it up with Lav that bad, Raph. Really. Okay, so I don’t know exactly what happened when you went to try and get her to come back home, and I don’t need to. I know Lavinia, and she knows you. I’m not gonna give away what she’s feeling right now; it’s her business to tell you, but I will say I know she’s still in love with you.”

Raph’s head rolled towards him, hope lighting his eyes. “Ya’ sure?”

“Shell yeah!” Mikey chirped, nudging Raph with a hand. “But she’s not gonna come to you, dude. You messed up and you gotta go to her so she knows you mean it when you apologize. And for cripes sake, do it right this time.”

“Maybe . . . .” Raph cleared his throat. “Maybe we could do it together?”

Mikey looked at him calmly. “Nope. This you gotta do by yourself.”

“But ya’ helped Donny,” Raph argued.

“I didn’t do anything except put them in a room together,” Mikey explained. “They did the
rest. Don figured out what he needed to do and say and you will to.”

“Damn.” Raph stared at the ceiling, his emotions rolling. He couldn’t think through those feelings. “Damn.” He breathed heavily.

“Come on Raphie,” Mikey urged. “Keep feeling guilty and solve nothing, or get rid of it and get Lav back. It’s your choice. At some point you’ve gotta let go of past mistakes dude. You gotta trust yourself enough to know you won’t repeat, say thanks for getting lucky enough to pull through the last one, and let Lavinia know you’re not gonna stay trapped in those bad feelings.”

“S easy ta say,” Raph muttered.

“Well, sure. The hard stuff always is. But Raph, Lav feeds off your feelings more than the rest of us, ‘cause, well, mainly ‘cause you have such strong feelings. This one, the guilt, it’s bad for both of you. It reminds her of why you pushed her away and as long as you hang onto it, she’s gonna feel like you’re getting ready to push again. How do you expect her to wanna get close to you with that hanging over her head?” Mikey asked.

Raph blinked. That wasn’t something he’d ever thought of; too busy beating himself up for what he’d done to nearly get her killed and then for joining in on the bad mistake of making Lav leave their clan. One of the things he loved about her was how she always seemed to know what he needed to soothe his rolling emotions. Being an empath meant she knew what those emotions were.

“Yeah okay. I fucked up and I know I did. I know why I did, but sayin’ I ain’t ever gonna do that again would be lyin’,” Raph huffed.

Mikey laughed. “Geez, Raph. All of us know you well enough to know that. Even Lav. You always manage to pull through ‘cause you do what your gut tells you. You can’t afford to wallow in this guilt anymore or the next time we need you, you’re gonna stop to second guess yourself and someone will be dead.”

Raph rolled over and stared at Mikey. “Ya’ mean that? I always thought ya’ all hated when I went off half nuts.”

“Shell no.” Mikey grinned. “Leo puts on that act to keep your insanity focused where he needs it. The way you go off scares the shit out of the bad guys, which means half of ‘em don’t even put up a fight. What kind of leader wouldn’t like a guy on his team that could wipe out half the opposing force just by being a psycho?”

A slow smile spread over Raph’s face. “Well, fuck. If all I gotta do to make things right is just be me, I can do that. Ya’ know how I hate people tellin’ me what ta do.”

“Cool.” Mikey returned the smile. “I love you just the way you are, Raphie. Don’t change.”

Raph put an arm around Mikey’s neck and pulled him close. “Okay, I won’t.”

= = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

Raphael watched Lavinia the next day whenever she made an appearance. Having made amends with two of his brothers, she was not as inclined to keep herself hidden away in her own room.

He didn’t try to hide the fact that he was staring at her and he knew she noticed. Each time she would look up, meet his eyes and look away quickly, a lovely flush washing her cheeks.
It made Raph’s heart pound in his chest. The longing for her drove him to Don’s lab door during the late afternoon. He knew she was inside with Donny, and if he stepped in and blocked the door, maybe she would stop giving him the silent treatment.

The low murmur of voices behind Don’s door sounded relaxed and Raph stopped. Touching the door lightly, he leaned his forehead against it as he had done in her dojo, and fought to get his heart out of his throat.

Raph did not want a repeat of that night under any circumstances. He wanted to show her how he felt without completely losing control. He needed to prove that fear and guilt weren’t going to drive their relationship.

With a heavy sigh, he walked away from the door. Trying to figure out what to say to her was proving to be one of the hardest struggles of his life.

The vase smashed into thousands of tiny pieces as it hit the wall with such force the plaster cracked. Lin Zhu cursed in his native language as his underling crouched into as small a target as possible.

Looking around, Lin snatched up another, smaller vase before taking himself under control. He had already shattered a ten thousand dollar piece of art, no sense in letting a fit of temper compound the loss.

Taking a deep breath, Lin placed the vase carefully on its pedestal and fingered his tie. Slowly his color returned to normal, his eyes cleared, and his mouth closed over his bared teeth.

“Tell the men to continue searching for them. They must have returned to the city,” he ordered, pushing the words out with an effort.

“Yes Master.” His man left as quickly as possible.

Nothing. Absolutely nothing to be seen or heard from the blasted green things since his men were defeated and humiliated in the little city of Willow Grove over a week ago. There was no further sighting of their van, no further sighting of them.

He was furious when his people told him how they had followed the van for almost three hours and then proceeded to be captured, trussed up, and left without working transportation. Lin was positive those green creatures were going to Lavinia and now all of them had completely disappeared.

The man who was supposed to grab Lavinia’s assistant had been knocked unconscious and thrown into a garbage bin. Other than the fact that these menaces were much more highly skilled than his own people, Lin Zhu had nothing to show for his attempts to find the woman he meant to marry.

He had given up on getting information from her driver and her assistant. Lin was convinced they knew nothing of her whereabouts and equally convinced that his methods would not meet with Lavinia’s approval.

If he could ever find her. Should that day come, he didn’t want her anger over the mistreatment of her people to cloud her judgment of his proposal.

As for the men who had failed so miserably in their assignments, Lin had a small wooden
box containing their atonement. It was lined in plastic for obvious reasons.
Chapter Summary

Lavinia was in the dojo with Mikey, running through her katas. She had balked a little when they entered because Raph was there, but Mikey’s gentle hand on the center of her back persuaded her to move forward.

Raphael stayed where he was, going through his weight lifting routine while surreptitiously watching the two of them from the corner of his eye. He loved the way Lav’s body flowed and the way her supple muscles rippled as she moved, always reminding him of the wild cat he insisted on calling her.

Mikey moved in unison, his own agile body drawing Raph’s eye as well. Together they were a steamy, sensual distraction and under normal circumstances Raph would have been all over them.

Times were not normal. Not yet. Working through his hundredth push up, Raphael decided he would do something about that today.

Coming up with a plan required air, so Raph grabbed a towel, quickly gave his body a wipe down and headed topside. He didn’t notice that Lav’s eyes followed him as he left the dojo. If he had, he might have seen the little frown line on her forehead and the depressed dip of her mouth.

Sitting on a rooftop ledge, Raph watched the city move below him. People came and went, going about their business. He saw couples arriving at the little Italian restaurant down the street, heads pressed together as they shared secrets while waiting for a table to become available. A girl with a basket filled with roses mingled with the waiting customers and men stopped her to purchase some for their dates.

Raph perked up. Lav wasn’t one of the guys or one of those broads in porn flicks; she was a lady. She deserved nice things; thoughtful gifts. Don bought her stuff like lingerie; he even took her out on a date. Sandoval had sent her flowers.

There was no reason to believe that this sudden thought was a bad idea. Raph could stand the teasing from his brothers about his romantic gesture if it got Lav to forgive him.

Since he had no idea what flowers cost, he grabbed a wad of bills from his belt and dropped into an alley that was close to a flower stand. As soon as the owner was distracted by another customer Raph grabbed a big bouquet of flowers, dropped the money near the cash register, and bolted without being seen.
Raph kept the bouquet behind his back as he crept into the lair. A quick glance showed him that Leo and Don were sitting close together on the couch, Don’s head on Leo’s shoulder. The banging sounds coming from the kitchen had to be Mikey, Lav never made that much noise. And since Mikey was making that much of a racket, Raph concluded that Lavinia was probably not in there with him.

Taking a chance, he moved quietly into Lav’s hall and approached her closed door. Trying the handle, Raph found that it was locked. She was inside and alone.

Extracting a couple of small tools from his belt, he set the flowers down carefully and manipulated the locking mechanism. It took maybe three seconds to unlock the door, and another half second to enter her room and silently shut the door behind him. With a chuckle at the irony, Raph turned the lock.

He could hear the water running as he stood there. Of course a good long workout with Mikey would take her straight to the shower. Raph was pretty sure that somewhere in his subconscious he knew that’s where she’d be, and he wasn’t going to wait for her to get out either.

Raphael could see Lav’s nude form outlined against the clear shower curtain. Her head was down as she let the water wash over her hair and she was turned away from him. Raph quickly stripped off his gear, picked up the bouquet from the edge of the sink where he had placed it, and stepped into the shower stall with Lavinia.

Lav spun as soon as she heard the curtain rings jangle and upon seeing him she yelped, “Raphael!”

“Next time put a chair under the doorknob. Won’t keep me out, but it’ll make me work a little harder at getting in,” he told her with a slight smile.

A snappy retort started to her lips just before she noticed the flowers. The words died as she looked at the bouquet and then back up into Raph’s golden eyes.

He held the flowers out to her, ignoring the water streaming over the blossoms. “These are for you.”

It was such a sweetly romantic gesture from the big, tough Turtle that Lav felt the sting of tears start at the corners of her eyes. She leaped at him, flinging her arms around his neck, and planted her lips on his. The flowers would have been smashed if he hadn’t moved them at the last second, and with a deeply satisfied churr, he tossed them over the curtain.

Raph’s powerful arms encased her body with crushing force as his mouth opened; his tongue sweeping across her sweet lips and into her mouth.

The intensity of emotion Raph put into that kiss had Lavinia’s senses reeling. She held onto him as tightly as she could, his strength anchoring her in the present, the previous months of loneliness fading. His mouth told her more with a kiss than any words ever could, and the joining of their lips destroyed the last barrier between them.

Pushing against her, Raph pinned her back against the shower wall. His hands moved down her sides, circled her slim waist, and then moved down to her hips. He pulled her lower body towards him, keeping her upper half pressed into the wall, and his mouth left hers to trace a pattern down her neck.

Lav tilted her head far back as she thrilled in the feeling of his tongue caressing her skin.
When his teeth nipped at her, she squeezed her eyes shut and then hummed her enjoyment.

One of his hands came back up her body to cup a breast, holding it steady as he began to feed on it. Her nipples were hard and responded immediately to the stimulus, sending a bolt of pleasure down her body and into her pussy. Lav’s vaginal muscles responded by clenching tightly, then releasing a flood of juices to prepare her canal.

“Oh, uhh! Raphael!” Lavinia exclaimed in a breathy moan.

“Lavinia,” he groaned in return, burying his face between her tits.

He could feel her body quivering under him and Raph’s chest expanded with the rush of power that gave him. Moving more boldly, he kissed his way down further; across her tight stomach muscles, stopping to suck at her navel. When her hands reached for him, he grabbed them and flattened her palms against the shower wall.

Giving the backs of Lav’s hands a last tap as a reminder, he lifted his and placed them between her thighs. Pushing outwards to open them, he simultaneously pulled her legs further from the wall, so that she was leaning at an angle with her weight back on her heels, and her shoulders firmly against the stall.

On his knees now, he positioned his body between her legs. Using his shoulders, Raph nudged the backs of Lavinia’s knees until they bent slightly. The position left her sex wide open and exposed and his long, wide tongue snaked across the entire length of her labia, stopping to tease her clitoris.

Lavinia shuddered. Warm water washed over them as Raph expertly manipulated his tongue against the sensitive bud until she groaned.

Pulling his tongue away, Raph stroked her pubic hair with his beak, and then looked up at her, gold eyes gleaming.

“Tell me ya’ want me baby,” he prodded her.

Lav inhaled deeply, chest heaving with emotion. She barely registered that he was giving her a choice not a challenge. Say the words, she told herself. Say the words and fix everything.

“Raph…” she moaned.

Raph’s voice was a low rumble. “Yes. Tell me, don’t keep fightin’ it. I ain’t forcin’ ya’, ya’ already know what I want. Tell me what ya’ want.”

Her eyes glowed in a deep, emerald green as she opened them suddenly and looked into his face.

“I want you, Raphael,” Lavinia said in her strongest voice.

His loud satisfied churr vibrated her vagina as his tongue pushed into her opening. Lav’s body jumped at the suddenness of it, and then she felt him twisting and turning inside of her.

Lapping at her cunt with as much force as he could muster, Raph caught her clitoris between his fingers and rolled it with enough pressure to make Lav gasp. The sound made his already hard cock drop down, a needy shaft that he ignored while he worked on Lavinia.

His free hand moved to grasp one cheek of her ass and he kneaded the flesh like fresh
dough, enjoying the soft skin beneath his calloused palm. The tips of his fingers worked their way into the valley between her butt cheeks, and found the tight, hot hole hidden therein.

Lavinia caught her breath when she felt a finger push against her anus. The knot in her abdomen grew tighter and worked its way into her pelvis as Raph’s wide tongue thrust into her vaginal cavity, stroking against the walls and touching a sensitive spot deeper inside.

Inhaling a gulp of air, Lav held her breath, exhaled quickly, and then repeated the process, concentrating on the pressure building in her womb. Her head turned to the side and her breasts jumped with each sharp inhalation, her thighs tightening against Raph’s shoulders.

The sounds told him she was close to climaxing, and his fingers manipulated her clitoris faster. He shifted to press his mouth harder against her vulva as he sank his tongue as deeply as possible and began a quick, rhythmic stroking of her vagina.

One last deep breath and she was drawing no breath whatsoever. Her eyelids fluttered as sharp tendrils spread inside her pelvis and then her orgasm exploded.

“Ra~ph, oh Raphael, oh yes, yes…” she murmured over and over, jerking and twitching in the throes of ecstasy.

Raph pulled his tongue from her body, leaping to his feet as he wrapped his hands beneath her butt cheeks to lift her, and plunged his dripping cock into her pussy.

The force of Raph’s entry sent another shock wave through Lav’s body.

His first thought was how incredibly soft she was, and then how tight. Her vagina was like a constricting cocoon around his cock, massaging his shaft as he stroked it inside of her.

Her wet heat struck him next and old memories flooded back. He churred loudly as he drove his dick into her willing body. With Raph’s hands holding her up, Lavinia lifted her legs and wrapped them snugly around his carapace.

Raph stepped closer, sunk his cock up to the hilt and pushed his hips forward to grind his manhood inside the only woman he would ever love.

Lavinia rolled her head so she could look at him as he began to pound into her. Their eyes locked and held, exactly as they had a hundred times before. He watched the bliss he had given her dance in the green of her eyes; she watched him reach for his rapture in the gleaming gold of his.

A rolling drum of pressure pushed its way into his groin and built. Desperate for release, Raph hammered into Lav’s delicate vagina and she encouraged his brutality by squeezing him with her legs. Her hips moved to meet him and her large breasts bounced against his plastron as he leaned into her.

The water beat against his shoulders and seemed to keep time with his thrusts.

“Lav . . . oh fuck. Lav, Gods I love ya’ babe. We ain’t n . . . never gonna be apart again.” Raph groaned, his thrusts turning into short stabs. “P . . . promise Lav . . . sshell! LAV!”

He came with one final thrust, his eyes open and boring into hers. He pushed against her pussy with his hips, his plastron rubbing hard against her clit as he shot load after load of milky come into her body.

Lavinia’s hands left the wall and clutched at his shoulders, bringing her face close to nearly
touching Raph’s while he expended his seed deep inside her vagina. The spray was so powerful she could feel it hitting her inner walls and heating her with its warmth.

Her body absorbed the ejaculate eagerly, her snapping muscles milking him completely dry.

Raph continued to hold her as he buried his face into her neck, his breath so hot it burned her skin. She pressed her face against the side of his head and rubbed his leathery flesh, clinging to him with all her might.

Turning slightly so his mouth brushed her ear, Raph husked, “Promise me Lav.”

She nodded, her arms sliding around his neck to hug him fiercely. “I promise Raphael. I give you my word.”

Mikey sauntered out of the kitchen and drifted towards the television array. He had seen Raph sneak into the lair with something hidden behind his back and swallowed his normal annoying curiosity when he saw his brother head towards Lav’s room.

Since the hot head was still missing in action, Mikey figured it was safe to uncross his fingers.

Don was tipped over on Leo’s shoulder and Mikey leaned over the back of the couch on Leo’s other side. A glance showed him that Donny was sound asleep.

In a low voice, he asked, “I guess the Brainiac was exhausted, huh?”

 Leo turned his head to look at Mikey. “Yep. First time he hasn’t been worried about something in quite a while.”

“How about you?” Mikey asked.

“I’m okay,” Leo answered quickly.

Mikey shook his head. Moving around the couch, he gently lifted Don’s sleeping form off Leo’s shoulder and told him, “Get up so I can let Donny lay down.”

Leo hesitated for a moment, not wanting to give up the closeness with Donatello. But Mikey’s tone was insistent, so he got out of the way. Mikey lowered Don’s head onto a cushion, then lifted his feet to the couch. Grabbing a blanket off one of the chairs, he spread it over his sleeping brother’s form.

Turning to Leo, he said, “Come up to my room, Leo. I wanna talk to you.”

Leo swallowed his ‘about what’ because Mikey had already started walking. Smiling at Mikey’s new found assertiveness, he followed.

Mikey held the door open for him as Leo stepped into his bedroom. Leo stopped in the center of the room and turned to watch Mikey carefully shut and lock the door.

As Mikey approached, Leo asked, “What did you want to talk about?”

“This.” Mikey caught Leo’s face between his hands and pulled him into a deep kiss.
A moment’s surprise, and then Leo responded, winding his tongue around Mikey’s for the first time in more than two months.

Several moments later, Mikey pulled back from the kiss. His hands were tucked into Leo’s belt, holding his brother close against him.

“Do you wanna do this Leo?” Mikey asked him.

Leo’s arms were around him, his hands moving over Mikey’s carapace in a familiar caress. He studied Mike’s eyes; the wide open blue staring into his soul.

“Mikey . . . .” Leo whispered.

“’Cause I want to. I want to a lot,” Mikey husked, moving in for another searing kiss.

This time it was Leo who broke their kiss. He touched his forehead to Mikey’s and took a deep breath.

“I’m so sorry, Michelangelo. For everything I did and for not listening to you,” Leo told him.

Mikey nodded, swallowing the knot in his throat. “It’s okay, we’re fixing it now. That’s all that matters.”

Leo’s hands dipped down to rub at Mikey’s sides, and then drifted forward to tug at his belt. Mikey quickly removed his nunchucks and tossed them aside, just as Leo worked his belt free and dropped it to the floor.

Another hard kiss joined them and then Leo was removing his own weapons, hot eyes intent on watching Mikey move back towards the bed, dropping the remainder of his gear along the way.

Leo pounced on him just as he sat on the edge, knocking Mikey backwards onto his carapace. Expert hands stroked all over Mikey’s body and Mikey wriggled under them, gasping at Leo’s familiar touch.

Then Leo’s mouth pressed against Mikey’s neck, dragging a churr from the younger brother.

“Oh, crap Leo. That feels good,” Mikey groaned, feeling his cock begin to swell.

Leo chuckled. Mikey was always so vocal with his encouragements.

Mikey’s churr grew louder when Leo flicked his tongue against his pulse point. It deepened and turned into a moan when Leo dipped between his thighs and began to caress his tail, which stopped wagging immediately and flattened in arousal.

The hand moved to press firmly against the bulge containing Mikey’s cock. Mikey pulled in a deep breath as his cock responded and began to unfurl, the shaft peeping out from Mikey’s slit.

“Drop down, Mikey,” Leo urged in a deep, low murmur.

For once, Mike was not arguing an order from Leo. His erection filled and dropped into Leo’s waiting hand and Mike’s legs opened wider as an invitation.

“Very good, Mikey,” Leo encouraged in the soft tone that made his brother squirm in
Stroking Mikey’s cock slowly, Leo watched his brother’s face. Mike’s expression of blissful surrender made Leo churr. Repositioning himself between Mikey’s thighs, Leo pressed kiss after heated kiss to Mike’s plastron, ending with a soft kiss to the tip of Mike’s penis.

Mikey groaned as his hips lifted, trying to follow Leo’s mouth when he sat back. Leo gave him an understated smile, tightened his grip on Mike’s cock and leaned in to inhale deeply of Mikey’s scent.

“Michelangelo,” Leo murmured, staring into his brother’s eyes.

“L . . . Leo,” Mikey responded, blood pounding in his skull at that look.

Leonardo was intensity and silent focus, a little frightening in his single minded purpose. Mikey quivered as Leo moved again, releasing his cock and reaching for the tube of lubricant that was lying on the floor.

“On your hands and knees, Mikey,” Leo husked, his amber eyes sharply intent.

Mikey gulped and changed position as directed. Spreading Mikey’s legs apart with a firm hand, Leo crawled into the space and dipped a lubed finger into Mikey’s ass.

He slid the finger in slowly, touching as much of Mikey’s inner core as possible. Mikey hissed, then relaxed, letting Leo’s finger stretch him. A gentle slide in and out, and then Leo removed the finger, applied more lube, and pressed two fingers into Mikey.

A long groan rolled out of Mikey’s throat as Leo scissored those fingers inside of him. Mike touched his head to the mattress, tipping his ass a bit higher and lifting his tail. Encouraged, Leo pressed deeper, searching for Mikey’s prostate. He knew he found it when Mikey jumped and churred, his tail twitching from side to side.

Reaching around to grab Mikey’s neglected cock, Leo pumped it three or four times, then released it again in order to pull his fingers out of Mikey’s ass. More lube, and then Leo pulled all three of his fingers together in a tight spear, and pushed against Mikey’s anus.

“AHH! Leo!” Mikey shrieked.

Leo immediately stopped, his hand frozen to immobility. “Don’t move Mikey. I don’t want to injure you,” he ordered.

“Uh, o . . . okay.” Mikey squeezed his eyes shut and forced himself to relax further as he realized his oldest brother was intent on fisting him.

Frowning, Leo pulled his hand back and squeezed more of the lubricant onto his fingers, glad that the tube was large.

Methodically and with precision, Leo buried his entire hand into Mikey’s ass.

Mikey churred and forced himself to remain motionless. His cock was throbbing with desperate need as the incredible full feeling in his ass fed all of his pleasure centers. Then Leo started to move ever so slightly, turning his hand and pushing against Mike’s prostate.

“Oh yes, oh yes, yes, Yes, oh oh oh YES! Leo, More! Leo . . . mmm . . . nggh oh shell, harder!” Mikey begged shrilly, panting as his dick twisted. “Please, Leo . . . t . . . touch me . . . oh,
Leo allowed his cock to drop down then. Fully hard to the point of being painful, Leo fought his need as he concentrated on bringing Mikey as close to the edge as possible.

Tears started to Mikey’s eyes as his cock swelled and burned, calling for some small measure of friction to gain release.

Mike lifted a frantic hand to take care of himself when Leo warned, “Mikey, no.”

Sobbing, Mikey lowered the hand back to the mattress and began to gasp and moan.

Leo’s hand left his ass suddenly and without warning, and a split second later, Leo was pushing a rigidly hard cock into him.

Mikey’s head lifted and he sighed as Leo began a quick rhythmic movement in and out of his ass. The sigh turned into a cry of relief as Leo reached to wrap a tight hand around Mike’s neglected dick.

“Thank you, thank you . . . Leo, go f . . . faster.” Mikey began to rock back into Leo’s thrusts with a rolling motion that had him pumping simultaneously into the hand that held his cock.

It didn’t take much. Leo’s tug on his cock was tight and slick and perfect; and with one last, sharp gasp Mikey came, climaxing hard, his semen shooting across the bedding.

Leo shoved into Mikey harder and faster; picking up the pace of his fucking as he ground into that wonderfully tight ass. Mike his again, Mike all around him; the smell and feel of him coming back into Leo’s world.

With a low moan, Leo tipped over into a shaking, shuddering climax, spilling warmly into Mikey’s body.

Convulsing with small aftershocks, Leo draped his body over Mikey’s carapace and his brother’s arms gave out sending both of them crashing to the mattress.

“Yew! Wet spot!” Mikey complained, wiggling to shake Leo off of him.

With a breathless laugh, Leo rolled off Mikey’s back. Mike reached for the sheet bunched at the bottom of the bed and cleaned his plastron, offering it to Leo when he was done.

Leo wiped himself down and tucked his cock back into its hiding place. Mikey took the sheet and tossed it away, curling close to Leo and nestling into his big brother’s side.

“Are we good?” Leo asked.

“Yeah, dude, we’re good.” Mikey shifted, getting more comfortable.

They were silent for a bit, letting the after effects of good sex seep into their bones.

Then Leo sighed. “I still haven’t fixed everything.”

“Nope,” Mikey agreed. “That’s okay; all things considered, we’re doing pretty well.”

“It’s not back the way it was though. Lav hasn’t forgiven me,” Leo said, frowning.

Mikey chuckled. “She will, don’t worry. She can be mad for a while, but she won’t hold a
grudge forever.”

Leo eyed him. “Are you sure?”

“Hey, have I been wrong yet?” Mikey lifted an eye ridge, looking over at Leo.

“No, actually. That’s getting to be a little infuriating,” Leo said with a half-smile.

Mikey was smug. “Get used to it, I kinda like making you guys look bad.”

Leo was silent for a few minutes and Mikey, knowing his moods, waited.

“I thought I was protecting my family,” Leo murmured, hoping Mikey would understand.

Mikey waved a hand in the air. “Family is sorta like a chain, if you have a weak link you
work to fix it, you don’t just throw the whole thing away.”

Leo smiled and said, “Chain, Mikey?” He twisted his head to look at Mike fully. “I was the
weak link this time.”

“That’s okay bro’, we’ll work on you,” Mikey promised.

Leo sighed. “I didn’t want to see Lav die, Mikey, I couldn’t face it. It was easier to send her
away than deal with that . . . that fear. How can I ever tell her that? She’ll hate me.”

Mikey shook his head, staring into Leo’s eyes. “You don’t gotta tell her. I’ll bet she knows,
Leo. She takes huge risks for the same reason; she don’t wanna see any of us die. You two are
kinda the same. You can work it out.”

Raphael missed morning practice; in fact, he missed most of the day. He and Lavinia
remained in her room, not venturing out even for meals.

Dinner had come and gone before the pair made an appearance. When they walked past
Mikey, he saw that Raph wore a smug smile and a fresh string of crescent shaped scratches across
the skin above his plastron.

Mikey followed them into the kitchen, spun a chair around and perched on the back of it,
feet planted in the middle of the seat.

Raph and Lav stood side by side behind the open refrigerator door, scrounging around for
something to eat. Lav could feel Mikey’s eyes boring into her and peered over Raph’s shoulder to
look at him.

He flashed a self-satisfied smile at her.

“Mikey . . . .” she began.

“What?” he replied in his most innocent manner.

Raph turned around, clutching a container of leftover ham, and caught Mikey’s eye. The
orange banded turtle’s smile grew larger and Raph chuckled.

Leaning down, he kissed Lav’s shoulder. “Ignore him baby. He’s getting a swelled head.”
“Go on you two and admit it. I’m the Turtle,” Mikey chortled.

Lav took the ham from Raph, added it to a larger bowl of rice and stuck it in the microwave.

Skipping across the kitchen to where Mike sat, Lav planted a kiss on his mouth that almost knocked him off the chair.

Looking directly into his blue eyes, she said softly, “You are definitely the Turtle.”

Raph rolled his eyes skyward and groaned. “If she’s gonna start spoilin’ ya’ again, then things are back ta normal.”

Mikey’s hand was gripping her waist so she couldn’t walk away as he said, “Not quite yet, right Lav?”

Lav’s eyes moved down and Mikey followed the movement with his head, forbidding her to look away.

“Right Lav?” he insisted.

“Ya’ don’t gotta push her,” Raph growled.

“That’s okay, Raph,” Lav said. “He’s right.” She lifted her head to acknowledge him.

Mikey squeezed her waist. “It’s not your job to go to Leo to finish this,” he told her, holding her eyes. “But when he comes to you, give him a chance, okay?”

“When he comes to me?” she asked hopefully.

“Yeah when. He does a good job of hiding it, but he’s hurting real bad, Lav,” Mikey informed her.

Lav looked unhappy. “I don’t want that.”

“I know babe. You love him, don’t you?” Mike’s smile was tender.

“Yes,” she said quietly.

Mikey shot a glance at Raph. His brother stood near the microwave, his arms crossed over his plastron. Raph managed to squash down the prickle of resentment he felt as he was reminded of Lav’s special bond with Leo. He knew the repairs wouldn’t be complete until those two made up.

The next afternoon Mikey presented himself at Master Splinter’s door.

“Master Splinter,” Mikey began.

“Michelangelo,” his father replied, a ghost of a smile on his face.

“You know, last time we saw April she was complaining about how boring it is to practice with her katana all by herself. So I was thinking how it would be good for her to have a real challenge, maybe against some weapons other than the katana.” Mikey grinned when he finished.

“It would be a good training technique for someone at her level of accomplishment,”
Master Splinter agreed.

Mikey continued, “And we kinda owe her for some help she gave us with the whole Lav thing so I thought it’d be nice if we went over there tonight.”

Master Splinter watched his son unreel his plan, enjoying how his youngest son’s mind worked.

“Lavinia should probably remain in the lair. Would you not agree, Michelangelo?” Master Splinter ventured.

Mikey nodded vigorously. “And really, someone should stay here and keep an eye on things.”

Master Splinter looked up and tapped a finger on his chin. “Who should remain behind to watch?”

He could see Mikey fidgeting and asked, “You have a suggestion?”

Mikey blurted, “It just stands to reason that April doesn’t need to spar against a katana right now; she does that all the time.”

“That would make your brother Leonardo the obvious choice to remain behind,” Master Splinter concluded.

Mikey began, “Since it’s really not my place to tell him . . . .” His voice was wheedling.

“I will ask Leonardo to stay home tonight. He will understand,” Master Splinter offered.

“And I’ll let Lav know we’re leaving,” Mikey said. “Um, I’m sorta not gonna let on someone’s staying behind. She might think we don’t trust her without a baby sitter.”

“A wise decision, Michelangelo. She will more than likely remain in her room and not discover her guardian anyway,” Master Splinter stated pointedly.

“Yep, even if she should have to venture out to say, feed Klunk, she probably wouldn’t see Leo. He’ll probably spend the entire time in the dojo,” Mikey observed.

“Most likely,” his father agreed.

Mikey bowed and started to leave, then snapped his fingers. “Oh, I gotta remember to take that bag of cat food out of the dojo before we leave.”

Master Splinter enjoyed a good chuckle after his son departed.

Lavinia opened her bedroom door wide and went to sit on her bed. It was a small thing, but opening that door and not worrying about who might come in gave her a powerful feeling of freedom.

Knowing everyone was out of the lair and that she was left completely to her own devices gave her that same feeling. It was good to have their trust again.

It was good to have their love again. Her happy smile faded a bit. She was incomplete despite everything, because Leonardo was still distant.
Lav remembered every single word he said to her that night in Willow Grove and she knew he’d meant them. She could still feel his kiss; her lips tingled with the ghost of his touch. When he told her she was his she knew it down to the core of her very being. She had known it the very first time their eyes had locked, nearly a year ago.

His slow, steady pursuit of her wore down Lav’s defenses. He was consistent and measured in his approach, coming under her guard and surprising her completely.

But now he was just as consistent in avoiding her. Since that night when they brought her back to the lair, he had spoken to her through her closed door but once, and had not even attempted to interact with her now that she was out of her room regularly.

If he was having second thoughts again, it would be more than she could bear.

The smile was gone and the joy of that open door went with it. She couldn’t go to Leo and ask what was happening between them; she just couldn’t. If he said everything was okay she would spend the rest of her life wondering if he had succumbed to pressure from her without truly wanting her.

A flash of something at her open door made her look up. It was Klunk. He sauntered into the room and stared at her as though trying to remember where he knew her from.

The look wasn’t flattering and Lav was trying to decide what she’d done to earn his ire when the thought suddenly flashed through her head. She was supposed to feed him.

Jumping quickly to her feet, Lav startled Klunk and he darted out of the door just ahead of her.

Lav felt the chill from the lair as she made her way to the kitchen. It was quiet and dark, and the heat had been turned down for the evening. Lav was not dressed to be wandering around; she was wearing only a short, satin nightdress and no slippers.

Moving as fast as possible, Lav followed Klunk to his food dish and opened the cupboard where his dry food was kept. When she found it was empty, she remembered that Mikey had told her he had to get the bag out of the dojo. He must have forgotten.

Lav thought about darting back to her room for a robe, but decided the dojo was closer and she could bear the cold a few minutes longer. When Klunk meowed his frustration with her she bent down to stroke his head.

“Hold on impatient cat. I’ll take care of it,” she told him.

The sound of Lav’s voice caused Leo’s eyes to snap open. Deep in a corner of the dojo, with only two candles burning on the other side of the room, Leo was meditating peacefully for the first time in months.

He hadn’t expected Lav to come out of her room after his brothers and Master Splinter had departed. His father had asked him to remain behind as merely a precaution. Her brother was concerned that Lavinia would wonder at their leaving her completely alone so soon.

Leo wanted to explain to Master Splinter that someone else, perhaps Mikey, would be a better choice since Lav wasn’t speaking to Leo. But he’d shut his mouth at the last minute, because he wanted to be alone with Lavinia. Even if she remained in her room and didn’t speak to him at least they were together.
He watched her step into the dojo and glance around. She obviously didn’t see him and he chose to remain immobile, studying her as she apparently searched for something.

Her nightdress didn’t do much in the way of hiding her curvaceous figure and her long bare legs glistened in the feeble candlelight. He could see the sleek muscle move beneath her skin as she walked; her hair flowing around her shoulders with each turn of her head.

When her face turned towards the weapons wall, Lavinia froze.

She saw her tonfas hanging there, placed by Mikey’s defiant hand and untouched by their owner since her return. Lavinia had done a good job of ignoring her weapons until now.

Alone, and in the darkened dojo, the metal inlays gleamed and the words inscribed in kanji on the face of the metal seem to glow with sudden life. Cat food forgotten, Lavinia felt the pull of those weapons and she moved to within an arm’s reach of them. Stretching out a hand, she touched a finger to the wooden grip of one, and then pulled her arm back quickly.

Leo observed Lav’s approach to her tonfas and frowned when she denied herself the chance to hold them again. Rising, he moved across the dojo without a whisper of sound, coming up behind her as she stood with her head down, back turned to her beloved weapons.

Snaking them from the holster, Leo stepped close and in a low voice said, “Take them, Lavinia.”

Lav jumped and spun around. Leo stood just inches from her, her tonfas in his hands.

“I th . . . thought everyone was gone,” she stuttered.

A corner of Leo’s mouth quirked up in a smile. “Master Splinter asked me to stay. I think he may be concerned about us.”

Her eyes drifted down to the tonfas he held. “I can’t take those,” Lav said softly.

“Yes you can,” Leo stated with determination. “I think we both know how much you need to do this.”

Lavinia lifted her gaze then, forcing herself to look directly into Leo’s amber eyes. There was something she needed to see in them and he met her stare unflinchingly.

“Take them, Lavinia,” he repeated in the strong voice that always made her feel so safe.

Her hands slowly moved forward and closed around the grips. She had stopped feeling the cold as soon as she heard Leo’s voice and with the tonfas in her hands again, she felt a warm, comforting tide roll over her body. Lav looked down at them and squeezed tightly to welcome her weapons home.

The sound of Leo’s katanas sliding from their sheaths drew her attention to him once more.

“Leo . . . ?” She wasn’t dressed for this, nor was she mentally prepared after so many weeks in denial.

Leo wasn’t having excuses. “Defend yourself, Lavinia.”

It was all the warning she had. Leo attacked, his razor sharp katanas sweeping down at her with almost superhuman speed.
Training, habit, and reflexes brought the tonfas up to block his strike. She felt the tremor of his hit travel through her arms and pushed his katanas to the side to equalize the pressure.

Lav spun a tonfa back to center, stepped forward and jabbed for his chin with the front head. He pulled his head away, danced out of her reach, and then swept back in with his blades.

Lavinia crouched beneath his swipe and spun on her heels, coming in at his side and twisting a tonfa back around as she came up, clipping his carapace as he turned to protect his ribs.

Leo slashed back with his katana and Lav bent backwards to avoid the blade. The sharp metal caught a tendril of hair and cleanly sliced through a large curl, which fell slowly to the dojo floor.

Adrenaline rushed through Lav’s veins and with it came the darker form, the one that held her secret fears, her pain, and her anger. Green eyes darkening, Lavinia’s moved her hands slightly on the tonfas grips, and the blades extended.

Leo’s eyes narrowed as he watched Lav’s chin go down and the black tide sweep across her vision. This was what he wanted; to pull her anger up and out so they could both face it.

She rushed him then with a whirlwind of spinning fury. He adjusted for her added reach and pushed himself to block her blows. The tonfas moved faster than the eye could follow, flashing spirals of light reflecting off the blades left residual sparks in the air around them.

Lavinia’s teeth were clenched and small grunts and growls pushed past her lips as she fought. She drove at Leo without pause, never yielding ground when he struck at her, catching his blades on hers and shoving them aside in her mindless determination to hit him.

Just once. Lav could hear the sound of her own breathing and the pounding of her heart as she focused on the Turtle before her. Hit him. Hit him. Pent up anguish and loss pushed up and out; bottled up rage overflowed and she dove mindlessly into his plastron with all of her strength.

They hit the ground together in a resounding thump, Lavinia astride Leo’s chest. Her hands came up, short blades pointed straight down at his head and he dropped his katanas so that he could reach up and grip her wrists.

She struggled against his steely hold, frustration pulling a needy whine from her throat. Lavinia was panting; eyes dark and fearsome. She glared at the Turtle beneath her and wriggled to free herself, but Leonardo held on, saying nothing.

The tide began to ebb. Lavinia’s glare softened, the black cloud over her eyes started to dissipate. Looking down at Leo, Lav pulled in a harsh gasp and retracted her blades. Leo pulled her arms to the side and she relaxed her grip on the tonfas, letting them slide from her hands.

Lavinia started to cry then, head down, the convulsions racked her body and tears hit Leo’s plastron. He released her wrists and caught her shoulders, pulling her down against him and holding her tightly.

“Let it go, Lavinia,” Leo rasped, his voice coarse from emotion. “We both need to let it go.”

“Leo,” she sobbed against his neck. “I wouldn’t h . . . have hurt you. I wouldn’t.”

He clutched her tighter, squeezing his eyes together as his own tears threatened. Fighting for control, he whispered, “I know my love.”
When her movements lessened, Leo relaxed his grip and turned his head towards her. Lav leaned back from his neck enough to turn her face to his, eyes wide and questioning.

Leonardo lifted his head and pressed his lips to Lavinia’s. Her mouth opened and he deepened the kiss, enveloping her soft tongue with his.

Lav moaned as Leo invaded her mouth and she shifted her body so she was directly over him, pushing back hard against his mouth and trembling with the intensity of her need. Leo’s hands bunched in her nightdress, pressing his knuckles into the small of her back.

Lavinia squeezed her knees against Leo’s sides, pushing her vulva against his warm scutes. Her heart was beating fast and her fingers dug into the skin above his plastron.

Leo churred into her mouth, his tail already engorged and his cock twitching uncontrollably beneath his shell. His hands moved to her shoulders and he pushed at her until he broke their kiss.

Puzzled, her eyes questioned him, her inviting lips a scant inch from his own.

“Not here,” he husked in a deep, aroused tone.

She nodded her understanding and her legs released him as he turned and rose to his feet. Reaching down, Leo lifted Lavinia into his arms and carried her to his bedroom.

He set her down in the center of his bed and lay down atop her, his mouth questing for hers again. Lav put her arms around his neck and opened her mouth as wide as possible, her tongue begging he take her.

Another strong churr, and Leo’s hands moved over her body, pulling at the nightdress until it was bunched up around her neck. Breaking the kiss, Leo forced the offending material over her head and arms and tossed it aside.

Lavinia writhed beneath him as Leo’s hands trailed over her skin, followed closely by his mouth. Her head tipped back and eyelids lowered as he bit at her neck, then sucked hard at the little hollow where her pulse beat.

A sharp gasp followed by a moan encouraged him to move lower. His hands found her breasts and moved over them, massaging the enticing fullness of her flesh. Her nipples rose at his touch, hardening into tight, sensitive points and his lips closed over one to suck on it.

“Leo . . .” Lav moaned and arched her back, pressing on his shoulders and opening her legs wide.

Leo’s cock dropped down, extended to its full length and began to fill quickly. He lifted his head to suck in a lungful of air and shift to accommodate his throbbing manhood. Meeting Lav’s eyes, his mouth curled up just before he lowered it to her tit again, this time sucking in an entire mouthful of her bewitching teat.

One of Lavinia’s legs lifted over his backside and began to rub against his tail. With a loud groan, Leo dislodged her teasing limb by drifting further down her body, until his face was against her hidden mound.

Pressing his beak between her legs, Leo pushed against her panties and inhaled the aroma of her sex as it wafted up. Lavinia sat part way up, reaching for him in desperation and he batted her hands aside. He opened his mouth and clamped down on her pussy through the material of her underwear, sucking at the moisture that seeped into the cloth.
Lav yelped and flung her upper body back against the futon, hands scrabbling for something to grip as her vagina clenched hard in reaction. She lifted her hips against Leo’s face, her legs tight and quivering as he continued to suck her through the fabric of her panties.

“Leo, please . . . .” she moaned again, breathing hard.

Her voice set his blood ablaze with desire, and he grabbed her underwear, pulling sideways and snapping the material in his strong grip. The shredded cloth fell away from her and exposed her sex to him; glistening folds swollen with need.

The smell of her rose up strong without the barrier of cloth, and Leo felt a long, burning churr roll up from his core. His tongue darted out and licked the length of her sex, bottom to top; lingering on her clitoris where he pressed down hard.

“Oh, Leonardo . . . please!” Lavinia seemed to know no other words, her mind completely fogged by her lovers touch.

Leo’s lips closed on her clit and he sucked hard on the little button. Lavinia squealed, her legs lifting to clamp down on his carapace, her heels drumming against his shell. His mouth released her and he tilted his head back, eyes closed as he panted through a haze of lust.

Sliding up her body, Leo felt her legs slip off his carapace and over the backs of his thighs; until her heels were pressing against his calves. His aching cock touched her opening and he lifted his hips and then thrust forward, burying his dick to the hilt in the warm, wet interior of Lavinia’s body.

Moving hard against her, Leo drove his shaft like a battering ram, fighting his way into the tight confines that squeezed around him. Lavinia moaned and moved her hips to meet him, completely accepting his domination of her again.

“Tell me who I am,” he murmured harshly against her ear.

Lav groaned, low and long, as the last vestiges of resistance fell away from her soul.

Pounding into her, Leo bumped his beak against her temple and made her open her eyes to look at him.

“Tell me who I am,” he insisted, his voice low and guttural.


“Yes!” Leo cried out, peaking as she called his name. He climaxed hard, spilling come into her vagina in a strong wave that shook his entire body.

Breathing heavily, Leo lowered his face to her shoulder and fought for control, even as the tingle of her energy began to creep into him. Lav’s chest rose and fell beneath his, and she shuddered through an orgasmic aftershock that made her pussy clamp around his shaft.

The wave of power that produced had his cock expanding in seconds, and with a deep inhalation of air, Leo started to thrust into her heat once again.

Lavinia’s eyes stared into his as his cock sawed in and out of her vagina. She could feel every bit of his length, every throbbing vein, his size stretching her completely.
“Am I yours, Leo?” Lavinia whispered, hips rising to meet him.

“Yes,” was his forceful answer, punctuated by a particularly hard thrust.

“What if someone tries to take me from you?” she murmured, eyes searching the depths of his.

His answer was a hard breathy, “Never.”

She moaned as he plunged into her without rhythm, desperately seeking his second release.

“What will you do?” she pressed, snapping at his cock with her vaginal muscles.

Leo inhaled sharply, and his eyes bore into hers. “Kill them. Kill for you. No one will take you; no one will ever make you leave me again.”

His mouth closed on hers and he came, flooding her insides with his seed. Leo’s tongue plunged wildly into her open mouth while semen poured from his cock, and when the wild outpour finally receded, he lifted his head to gulp air.

Lav’s legs held him down in a tight grip as her pussy convulsed around his penis. The orgasm finally played out and her body relaxed, her heels sliding off his calves and his spent cock slipping out of her body.

His face moved down and he nuzzled her cheek, then touched her lips with a gentle kiss before rolling off of her. They lay next to each other, breathing deeply, until they began to feel cool air.

Leo sat up and grabbed the blanket that was crumpled at the bottom of his futon. Shifting close to Lav, he pulled the blanket over them and got comfortable on his side, lifting her head and placing it on his bicep.

His arm curved around her and his hand rested on one of her breasts. With a contented sigh, she wriggled closer to him and he draped his other arm across her stomach.

Leo’s mouth moved close to her ear and he whispered, “I love you, Lavinia. I always have and I always will.”

Turning her head to catch his eyes, Lav said, “I love you, Leo. No more living in fear?”

“No more living in fear; no more letting anyone else dictate our lives,” Leo promised.

Mikey was a little worried about his plan when he came home to a darkened lair. As the others moved to their bedrooms for the night, Mikey made his way to the kitchen.

Klunk’s bowl was empty and the cat presented himself, yowling raucously and with righteous indignation.

Mikey moved quickly to the dojo and stopped just inside. The bag of cat foot sat untouched and he spotted Lav’s tonfas lying next to Leo’s katanas. With an ecstatic grin, Mikey picked up the forgotten weapons and placed them lovingly on the wall.

Something gold reflected the shallow light and Mikey glanced down. A lock of Lav’s hair lay on the dojo floor; a large curl of fine, rich silk. Mikey bent to retrieve it, touched it to his...
nostril and churred deeply.

He would keep this as a reward.
Chapter Summary

Unity

Chapter Word Count: 4,824
Chapter pairing: Fivesome, Don/Mikey
Chapter Rating: NC-17 Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, Tcest, het sex, language
Chapter Summary: The time has finally arrived to put their team back together and to repair the broken clan. Mikey knows how to do this.

Much earlier than usual, Mikey rolled out of his bed, driven by curiosity. Donning his gear rapidly, he exited his room and crossed to the stairs. At the top, he listened and heard the faint sounds of voices coming from the dojo.

Darting over to Raph’s door, he pounded on it with the side of a closed fist, doing likewise to Don’s, then ignored the staircase and leaped to the floor below, bending his knees to cushion the landing.

“What the shell?” Raph jerked his door open and glared around.

Stepping back so he could look up at Raph, Mikey waved a hand and got his brother’s attention. Don’s door opened and he blinked sleepily, saw Raph looking down, and followed the direction of his gaze.

Mikey stood with his hands on his hips, an impish smile on his face.

“Come down you two. Leo and Lav are in the dojo.” Without waiting, he ran across the lair and disappeared through the open dojo door.

Raph and Don exchanged a look, then both ducked back into their rooms to grab their gear. Following Mikey’s excited example, they bypassed the stairs and headed in to practice.

Leo was standing behind Lav, his hands on her arms as he worked with her grip on a katana. They both glanced up as the final two brothers entered the room and Lav’s bright smile followed by Leo’s understated one told them everything.

The family was back together.

Practice began with katas and then moved to weapons forms, with Leo pushing them harder than he had in a long time. The air in the dojo buzzed with the energy of each of their individual personalities, turning practice into an almost living thing.

“Done,” Leo announced and their weapons came down.

Mikey groaned before saying, “And to think I wanted things to go back to normal. Who knew Leo would try to cram two months’ worth of practice into a single morning?”

Don stretched his shoulders and eyed his older brother. Usually they would stop for breakfast right about now, but Leo had that look in his eye.
“You guys are rusty,” Leo stated.

Raph shot him a dirty look. “Really. Ya’ want a replay of the other night?”

Leo ignored him. “We’re going to spend some time sparring before anyone gets to eat breakfast. Hand to hand, no weapons.”

Mikey’s hand shot up. “I get Lav first,” he said.

Raph snorted. “Seems ta me ya’ already got Lav first.”

Lavinia turned her head so they wouldn’t see her amusement. Mikey’s next words sobered her up.

“Right. And you got Leo, then me, and I got Leo and Don got Lav, etcetera. You know what we really need? We need group sex,” Mikey proclaimed in his most determined voice.

“What?” Don choked out.

“You heard me. All five of us in a big pile of loving. Call it a trust exercise,” Mikey suggested.

Lav told him, “Not yet, Mikey. Please.”

He eyed her, but before he could say anything, Leo interrupted. “Let’s just spar, okay Michelangelo? There’s time enough for the other later.”

Mikey huffed, “Fine. But I’m still taking Lav on first.”

“That’s okay with me,” Lav said.

Leo backed to the wall and said, “Begin.”

Raph and Don faced off on one end of the open floor; Mikey circled Lav at the other.

“How outta practice are you, babe?” Mikey taunted her.

“Why don’t you come a little closer and find out Michelangelo,” she flung back.

“I think I will,” he said unexpectedly and dove at her.

Taken by surprise, Lav tried to twist away from his tackle, but his arms spread wide in mid-flight, and one caught her around the waist, throwing her to the ground. Lavinia curled on landing, absorbing the blow and then started to roll away from him.

Mikey leapfrogged over her bent legs and smashed her flat against the dojo floor. With a wide grin, Mikey pinned her arms down and covered her mouth with kisses.

“Mmph, Mi . . . mm . . . Mikey!” Lav tried to talk around his excited mouth.

“What babe?” His lips shifted to nip at her earlobe.

“St . . . sto . . . stop that!” she insisted.

“Mikey, what are you doing?” Leo asked, finally noticing his brother’s antics.

“I’m, umph, practicing my take downs,” Mikey answered before plunging his mouth to
Lav’s neck.

Don and Raph had ceased sparring to stare at them.

Raph smirked before saying, “Looks like you’re just taking her ta’ me.”

Mikey mumbled, “Okay, that works too.”

“Mikey, I’m not ready for this,” Lav said in a hushed tone, trying to pull away from him.

“No one in this lair would ever be ready for anything if it wasn’t for me,” he replied loudly, releasing her arms to place one hand on her chest with which to keep her down. The other began pulling on the waistband of her pants and her hands instantly closed on his wrist, tugging hard to get him away.

Mikey looked up at his older brothers, who were simply standing around watching them. He snorted; this was why they needed the group sex, to get everyone back to normal.

They were either going to participate and help him, or this awkwardness was gonna last a whole lot longer. It was time to move them off of the fence.

“Raph, can you check the door?” Mikey asked while fighting Lav for control of her pants.

Raphael blinked and then a slow grin spread over his features. Leaping across the room, he flicked the lock and said, “All okay over here bro’. Door shut and locked, Master Splinter in his room.”

“Cool,” Mikey said, trying to find the leverage with one hand to get past Lav’s defenses. She had a tight hold on his wrist and he wasn’t making much progress getting into her pants.

Mikey glanced up and caught Don’s eye. His genius brother was wearing a blank look, a sure sign he was undecided on a course of action. Sometimes he just needed to be told.

“A little help here bro’?” Mikey urged, trying to keep their woman pinned.

Don was a little slow, but the idea caught on. He licked his lips and nodded, then he dropped into a squat and flattened both hands on Lav’s shoulders, holding her down.

“Don~ny!” she protested, but he didn’t budge.

Now with two hands free, Mikey pulled at her pants and managed to wrench them from her enough to pull them over her hips. She changed her tactics then and began to pinch the skin on the back of his hands and wrists; very, very hard.

“No, really babe?” Mikey grabbed her hands in one of his own and pulled them over her head, pressing them into the mat just under where Don squatted.

Mikey snaked his way into Lav’s underwear and jammed a finger inside of her. Lav screeched and wriggled under him, trying to get away. Mikey bit her nipple through her sports bra and she yelped, breathing hard and slowing her struggles.

Lav’s face was flushed, her eyes glowing and her hair in disarray. The sight was too much for Leo, who fell to his knees beside her and cupped her chin, turning her face towards him.

“Lav. Lavinia,” he moaned and leaned down to kiss her.
It was enough to bring Raph over. He quickly dropped to the ground, kneeling on her other side, and stole her face from Leo before searing her mouth with his kiss.

Mikey pulled his finger out of her vagina, slid it up to her clitoris, and began massaging that little bundle of nerves.

“Oh, shell,” Lav gasped, dragging her mouth away from Raph’s kiss.

Raph chuckled and looked across at Leo. “She’s definitely one of us, wouldn’t ya’ agree Fearless?”

“Don’t call me that,” Leo responded automatically, reaching across Lav to curve a hand around Raph’s neck before pulling him into a surprise kiss.

While Lav was distracted by his brothers, Mikey let go of her hands and quickly yanked her undies and pants off of her.

“Mikey!” Lav lifted her head and scowled at him. He gave her his biggest grin, his blue eyes twinkling with humor and lust.

Don saw a half-naked Lavinia and decided that wasn’t good enough. Lifting his hands from Lav’s shoulders, he placed one each against Leo’s and Raph’s plastrons and pushed.

“Excuse me guys,” he said apologetically as he forced them apart. Their kiss broken, they looked at Don, puzzled.

With a grin, he grabbed the hem of Lav’s sports bra and pulled it up, freeing her breasts. When her hands flew up to grab at the material, both Leo and Raph caught one, and then Donny pulled the bra over her head.

Leaning close to her he asked, “Will you fight me if they let go of your hands so I can get this the rest of the way off? ‘Cause if so, I’ll just tie you up with it.”

Lav shuddered, thinking about it for a minute. Tied up was exciting, but she wanted to use her hands.

“I’ll behave,” she said, giving in.

“Too bad.” Raph grinned and released her hand. As soon as Leo let go of the other one, she was naked.

Hands free, Lav reached overhead and grabbed the trailing end of Don’s mask, using it to pull him down to her. Her head tipped back and her lips caught his in a deep kiss.

Lav pulled her tongue from Don’s mouth long enough to say, “You’re so sexy when you’re forceful.” And then she was wrapping her tongue around his again.

“What happened ta ‘not ready for this’?” Raph teased as one hand groped a breast.

Mikey laughed and spread Lav’s legs apart. Crawling between them, he buried his face in her vulva.

Lav’s mouth jerked free of Don’s. “Ahh! Mikey!” she exclaimed at his abruptness.

Don placed a hand on each side of her head and tilted her face back up to his, recapturing her mouth. Lav moaned as Mikey’s tongue darted inside her vagina, his fingers working over her
Raph leaned down to flick a tongue over Lav’s nipple, watching as it sprang up in response. Not to be outdone, Leo did likewise and then sucked on the hardened nub, causing Lav to arch her back and grab at him.

With a grunt, Raph opened his mouth wide to inhale as much of one large breast as his mouth could take. Leo narrowed his eyes, saw the challenge in Raph’s, and latched onto the other tit.

Lav gasped into Don’s mouth and he pulled his head up to see his brother’s latest competition.

“I don’t believe you two,” he said with a laugh.

Lav’s hands were scrabbling at the pair, finally catching a shoulder on each of them and gripping it hard. Her back arched even further and she started to pant.

“Oh God, oh . . . Don . . . Donny, what are they doing?” she moaned, trying to lift her head enough to see them.

“Trying to see who can drive you over the edge first would be my guess,” he said with a twinkle in his eye.

“I’m already over the e . . . oh!” she yelped. “Mikey!”

He grinned up at her, a lubed finger buried in her rectum. Wriggling it a bit, he began a slow in and out motion, slicking her insides.

Face flushed, her head came back down on the floor and she stared up into Don’s brown eyes with such desire that he churred and immediately dropped down.

Seeing his full cock not even a foot away, Lav dug her heels into the floor and pushed towards him. Don’s knees hit the floor when he saw her intent and he crawled over her face.

Lavinia lapped at the head of his cock and then sucked on it.

“Oh yes,” he husked, eyes half shut as she pulled him deeper into her mouth.

The hand on Raph’s shoulder lifted and moved to grip the base of Don’s shaft. Pumping him, she then deep throat ed his shaft, swallowing around the head of his cock when it bumped the back of her throat.

Don shuddered and churred lowly. He looked across her body at Mikey and asked, “All p . . . prepped Mikey?”

“Yeah dude.” Mikey’s eyes were avid; bright points of blue light hazed with lust.

Don pulled his cock gently from her mouth and Lav groaned her protest. Carefully disengaging her fingers, he hooked both hands beneath her armpits and rocked backwards, falling onto his carapace and pulling Lav along with him.

Leo and Raph felt her sliding away and released her tits. They watched as Don held Lav down against his plastron, his cock rubbing at her rear end as his hands found a solid grip on each breast.
Mikey crawled up with her, and as soon as Don had her snugly against him, Mikey reached between them to grab Don’s dick. He lubed it quickly, and then positioned the head against her anus.

Don thrust upwards when he felt his cock touch Lav’s tight little hole.

“Ughh!” Lav cried at the sharp, quick shot of pain.

“Shh. It’s okay,” Don said and stopped moving, letting Lav get used to him and relax. His hands kneaded her tits as he waited, and when her head fell back against his collarbone, he knew he could begin to move again.

When Mikey saw Don’s cock sliding in and out of Lav’s ass, he pushed her thighs wide apart and kneeled between both of their legs. His own cock was out and fully erect, and he wasted no time lining up with her vaginal opening and pushing in.

“Ah!” Lav moaned, eyes squeezing shut.

Leo crawled next to Don’s shoulder and stood up. His cock had dropped down as he watched Donny penetrate Lavinia’s ass, and now he reached down, grabbed one of her hands and wrapped it around his shaft.

Lav’s eyes fluttered open and she turned to see Leo’s hard dick inches from her face. Tugging against Don’s hands, she managed to lean over enough to wrap her lips around the head of his cock and stroke it with her tongue.

Leo churred with pleasure and moved as close as he could. Lav wriggled a little more out of Don’s grip and pulled Leo’s cock deeper into her mouth, tasting his precome and humming with delight. The vibration sent a shiver up Leo’s spine and he began to pump his dick with her hand.

Raph stepped up to the opposite side of Don and watched Lav sucking Leo off. The idea seemed a good one so he grabbed her other hand and lifted it to his hard, aching cock. As soon as she touched him, her mouth came off of Leo’s dick and she turned to swallow Raph’s.

“Yeah, that’s it babe. Just like that. Ya’ know what I like,” he told her in a deep, guttural voice.

His eyes locked with Leo’s and a corner of his mouth went up.

Leo’s eyes narrowed, the amber glittering in challenge.

“Lavinia,” Leo whispered.

Lav’s head pulled away from Raph as if attached to a string, turning slowly to her Master’s voice. Her tongue darted out, trapped a pearly drop of precome as it oozed from the tip of his penis, and then she rolled her tongue under Leo’s shaft from base to tip, before taking his cock wholly into her mouth and deep throating him.

Raph grunted, staring as Lavinia worked over Leo’s dick. She was pumping both of their cocks simultaneously with the exact same rhythm and speed; her eyes half shut in concentration.

His hand started for her head and Leo rasped, “No hands, Raph.”

Their eyes met. A slow grin spread over Raph’s mouth, and he placed both of his hands behind his back. Leo followed suit, leaving Lavinia to stroke them both without assistance.
Mikey was thrusting leisurely into Lav’s pussy, enjoying the tight, wet heat and the salacious competition his older brothers had fallen into. Don felt Mikey’s unhurried movement and slowed his own pace to match, as he too began to enjoy the show. He was in absolutely no rush to relinquish Lav’s soft, constricting ass that was squeezing his cock so nicely.

“Hey babe,” Raph called in a low rumble, “bring that sweet mouth over here.”

Lav rolled her tongue over the head of Leo’s cock before turning her face back to Raph’s pulsating organ. She kissed the tip and then flattened her tongue against his slit, pushing hard and wriggling so that she spread the opening slightly.

Raph churred as the sensation sent a spark through his cock that made it jump.

“Go on Lav, suck me down,” he urged her.

Lav opened her lips wide and pulled Raph’s hard rod into her mouth until the head of it touched the back of her throat. Working her mouth around his organ, she swallowed, pushed forward and swallowed again.

Raph had to grip his own wrists hard to keep his hands behind his back, wanting nothing more than to grip her head and fuck her mouth. He groaned and settled for thrusting his hips forward.

Pulling her mouth back until her lips were just around the head, Lav pumped Raph’s cock with her hand, and then sucked greedily as precome flowed over her tongue.

She felt Leo’s cock jump and push at her other hand and once more focused her attention on his throbbing penis.

“Perfect,” Leo murmured by way of encouragement as her head bobbed up and down on his shaft and her hand pumped in an alternating rhythm.

Her movements stopped periodically as she took him far into her throat, hummed and swallowed, then continued to stroke him with her mouth. Leo’s head was down, his chin nearly on his chest and he inhaled long, slow breaths as he felt the pressure building in his groin.

Without missing a beat, Lav turned and caught Raph’s cock in her mouth, giving his juicy member a hard, suctioning pull that made his toes curl. With her lips locked tightly over Raph’s cock, she pumped him with her mouth until his head fell back and his eyes closed.

“Oh damn baby, good, good. Just like that. F . . . fuckkk . . .” Raph churred and gritted his teeth.

Mikey saw both his brothers dancing close to the edge and began to move inside Lav’s pussy at a much faster pace. When her body started to jump, Don thrust his cock into her ass harder, cupped her tits in his hands, and squeezed.

Looking up, he saw Lav move quickly between Leo and Raph’s organs, bringing them both to the brink with her tongue.

“Leo, here. Please,” Don keened to his brother. When Leo looked at him, Don lifted Lav’s breasts towards him, eyes pleading.

Leo grinned and said, “Raph. Don wants a favor.”
Raph’s head snapped down and he saw Don’s face and then Don’s gesture. “Together?” he gasped out.

One of Leo’s hands darted out from behind his back and took his cock away from Lav. Raph did likewise and in one perfectly synchronized motion, both turned and shot their loads over Lavinia’s tits.

Lav moaned and lapped at the twin streams, trying to catch their semen on her tongue. She managed to capture some of it before the jolting movement of her body and the feel of hot come splashing his hands sent Don into his own hard, shuddering climax.

“Oh yes!” Don squeezed his eyes tightly and rubbed his hands all around Lav’s breasts, spreading his brother’s come over her twin mounds.

The feel of Don’s come filling her ass, and the slide of Mikey’s thick cock against her clitoris made Lav throw her head back as her own orgasm surged through her.

“Mikeyyyyy!” she screamed, clamping down on his cock with her vaginal muscles. Her hands shot out to her sides and connected with Leo’s calf and Raphael’s hand.

Both fell to their knees as the electrical current passed from her into their bodies.

“Lav! Shell, again! Yes, YES!” Mikey rammed his dick in as far as he could and exploded his come inside her tight canal. Fingers gripping her hips, he kept pushing against her, grinding his cock as the thick stream of come continued to flow for several minutes.

Raph reached over and wrenched Don’s hands away from Lavinia’s breasts. His cock was twitching, starting to become erect again, and he pulled Lav’s upper body away from Don’s possessive hold.

Her arms swung up and around his neck as their mouths collided. Tugging on her, Raph dislodged both his brother’s cocks from her body and then he pulled back and drew Lavinia on top of himself.

Raph’s dick was jutting upwards, a solid pole of erect need. Lav quickly straddled him and lowered herself onto his cock, seating herself slowly because of his size.

“Damn Lav. That’s good,” Raph husked as their mouths fell apart.

“You like this?” Lav murmured, rocking her hips and rubbing her pussy against his plastron.

“Oh shell yeah I do. Ya’ know I do.” His eyes half shut, he wrapped his large hands around her waist and partially lifted her. “Ride me,” he ordered, pushing her back down again.

She’d barely begun to move when Leo dropped onto his knees between Raph’s thighs and she felt him pulling at her butt cheeks, spreading them. Slowing for a moment, she waited for him to penetrate her ass.

Leo’s cock pushed relentlessly into Lav’s tight anal cavity, spreading her as he moved inwards. Buried to the hilt in her warmth, he churred and began to pump rhythmically.

Lav matched his movements to a steady slide of her own atop Raph’s penis. Moaning, Lav gripped Raph’s sides and braced her body more solidly, accepting the penetration of two giant organs in each of her entrances.
“Lav.” Mikey churred from a position next to her face. His cock was rock hard again, precome leaking from the tip and his blue eyes were beseeching when she glanced up at him.

With a delighted smile, Lav tilted towards him, opening her mouth wide so that she could pull his dick partway into her mouth, licking him as she went.

Don watched Mikey’s ass move with each roll of his hips. Rising to his knees, Don positioned himself directly behind his brother, the tube of lubricant in his hand. He pressed a slicked finger into Mikey’s ass, stopping when his brother hissed, but Lavinia’s mouth on Mikey’s hot organ shifted his attention quickly.

With a churr, Don swiftly prepped Michelangelo and then rubbed the lube onto his own cock. Placing a hand to Mikey’s carapace, he bent his brother further forward and began to push into his ass.

Lav tipped her head down to maintain her hold on Mikey’s cock when Don shifted him. Lapping at the head with her tongue, she teased his slit until he groaned, and then swallowed as much of his shaft as she could manage, rolling her tongue along the underside as she went down.

Leo began to move faster, his thrusts into her rear harder and deeper. The pounding made her body jump on Raph’s cock and her inner muscles clamped down on his penis.

“’S good babe. Fuck me with that sweet cunt. Milk me dry,” Raph urged, his hands on her waist encouraging her to go faster.

She sucked hard on Mikey’s cock when she felt Raph’s dick swell inside of her. Deep throating him, Lav hummed loudly when both Leo and Raph exploded their come into her body.

The vibration shoved Mikey into his second orgasm.

“Aagh! Lav!” Mikey jerked and twitched through his climax.

Don was thrusting hard into Mikey’s ass, reaching for his peak when Mikey’s inner walls began to squeeze and pinch around his cock. With a strong convulsion Don came, filling Mikey’s ass with his sticky seed.

Lav drank down Mikey’s come greedily, his taste overwhelming her senses. She could feel the slow, relaxed movement of both Leo and Raph inside her body as they enjoyed the last minutes of their orgasms.

Finally, Don pulled out of Mikey and collapsed on the mat. Lav released Mikey’s cock with a final lick and a kiss to the tip. He leaned one arm on Raph’s plastron and bent down to grab Lavinia’s mouth in a strong kiss, tasting his own essence in her mouth.

“Mikey, get off. Ya’ ain’t no light weight ya’ know,” Raph grumbled, breathing hard.

“No appreciation,” Mikey said.

Don sat up and pulled Mikey down next to him.

“I appreciate you, Mikey.” His hand cupped the orange banded Turtle’s face and then he kissed his younger brother deeply.

“Aww,” Lav sighed as she watched them lock lips, placing her head on Raph’s plastron.
Leo pulled out of her and tucked his cock in before leaning over and giving her rear a resounding kiss. Raph’s dick was still embedded in her pussy and neither seemed anxious to shift.

Raph wrapped his arms tightly around Lav’s body and closed his eyes, enjoying her warm skin pressed against his rough shell and her delicious scent filling his nostrils.

“You guys can all go ahead and thank me now,” Mikey announced.

Don chuckled softly. “Isn’t that what we just did?”

Lav extricated herself from Raph’s grip, releasing his spent cock and making him growl low in his throat. He rolled on to his side to watch her slink over to Mikey, the view of her bare bottom painting a grin on his face.

“Mikey.” Lav rubbed her face into his neck. “Thank you,” she whispered.


“I think she gets the idea shell for brains,” Raph interrupted.

Lav giggled and then sighed, saying, “I missed this. All of it; even the two of you sniping at each other.”

“Betcha didn’t miss early morning practice,” Mikey proclaimed.

Lavinia was suddenly silent and Mikey mentally kicked himself.

Raph saw the opening and jumped in. “I guess now ya’ can decide if ya’ want ta get up at five in the mornin’ or just sleep in with me,” he said.

Don saw where he was going. “You’re your own boss now, Lav. You can do whatever you like while the rest of us slave away in a hot dojo.”

“Uh uh. Not me,” Raph said. “Seems ta me we’re gonna start gettin’ lax on the rules around this place, and I ain’t a stickler for ‘em anyway. We got ourselves a little dilemma.”

Leo stood up as his brothers bounced the hint around. He caught Don’s eye and the purple banded turtle stood up as well.

Raph and Mikey gained their feet a second later and Mikey pulled Lav up along with him.

“Can’t really call ourselves a clan at the moment,” Don observed.

“Yep, seems like a real problem,” Raph agreed.

“I can solve that,” Leo said. “On your knees, Lavinia.”

Lav hesitated, understanding where they were heading and not sure if she wanted to go there with them again.

“On your knees, Lavinia,” he repeated in his command tone.

Lav dropped quickly, unable to resist him when he used that voice on her.

“As leader of the Hamato clan, I restore your honor and your clan. Hamato Lavinia, swear
your fealty to me."

Lavinia’s mouth opened, then closed. If she did this, if she took this step, it would be a forever thing. The first time she had sworn this oath she was a frightened fourteen year old orphan and this commitment to family was a godsend to her.

She was thinking about this decision much harder now. Saying the words would lock her to the Turtles for the rest of her very long life. Could she give up her freedom for them? Could she take this chance one more time for a family and the love she desperately wanted?

Whatever doubts she felt, they were not echoed by Leonardo. He was sure of what he wanted.

“Hamato Lavinia,” he said again in the command voice, “swear it.”

Mikey spoke softly, “Just say yes, Lav.”

“Come on babe, do it,” Raph urged in his deep bass rumble.

“All the way back to us Lavinia, please,” Don said, smiling gently.

Leonardo. Donatello. Raphael. Michelangelo. She would be committing herself to all four of them. Forever.

Lavinia blinked and met Leonardo’s eyes.

“Yes, Master Leonardo. I swear it. I swear my honor and loyalty to the clan Hamato and to you as its leader,” she said without reservation.
The Games

Chapter Summary

The entire family sat down to lunch together, Master Splinter looking healthy and complacent as he glanced around. There was but one thing left to do to completely heal them and he announced his plan as they finished the meal.

“Please help Lavinia clear the table and then I wish for you all to join me in the dojo. It is time for us to form our circle and meditate together,” Master Splinter told them.

No one argued the point; not even Mikey, whose least favorite thing to do was sit and be still. Joint meditation would mend their minds and their souls, linking them beyond the limited boundaries of their physical acts.

It had been a long time since Master Splinter had been their guide in meditation and each one of the brothers found their own special joy in the anticipation of so simple an act. It reminded them of when they were young and small, and Master Splinter was their entire world.

Their love for their father was in their eyes as they sat cross-legged on the floor, surrounded by the candles that flickered and hissed with their own reminder of times before Don had given them modern conveniences.

Sitting next to Master Splinter, Lavinia was reminded of her own youth, when she was joined in her daily meditation by her ‘brother’, a rat called Splinter. He would curl up in her lap as she meditated, and sometimes, if she went deep enough, she would connect with the tiny creature. The bond they forged was very strong and she had missed him terribly when Master Yoshi forced his small clan to separate.

As they sank into their meditation the look of tranquility on Master Splinter’s face was soon copied by the other five. They could feel each other, the soothing touch of joined souls granting each an inner peace they hadn’t felt in a long time.

Deeply entranced, Master Splinter nonetheless began to become aware of an outside force pushing against the gentle serenity of his meditation. He could hear a familiar hiss, like the sound of whispered voices, drawing nearer. Alarmed, his eyes opened and he saw a dark undulating cloud hovering above them.

Before he could react, tendrils of dark energy streaked down into his sons and withdrew their conscious selves; each shiny orb carried into the enveloping blackness.
His sons’ bodies were husks, sitting frozen; immobile.

Lavinia was still locked in her meditation, held by a tendril of black energy that had dipped into her but didn’t move. The sibilant noises grew louder as the cloud wafted over their heads, seeming to roll from Lav to Master Splinter, and back again.

He could hear voices clearly now.

“Whicccch do we taake?” The voice spoke slowly, dragging out words in an unnatural cadence.

“The Massster sssaid there would beee five. We haaave prepared for only fiiiive.” The answering voice was deeper, with the same distinct pronunciation.

A different voice, higher and more clipped spoke, “Ffour would be alike; one would be different.”

“Two are differennnt.”

Master Splinter felt them trying to enter his body and he fought them back.

“Thisss one isss too ssstrong,” the first voice stated.

“Take the feemale,” the next voice spoke with determination.

“Yesss the feemale,” its brother echoed.

The third voice joined in, saying, “The game will be mmmore fffun with the feemale.”

As the tendril that was joined with Lav’s body began to withdraw from her, Master Splinter stretched his mind out and wrapped it around the glowing orb that represented her essence. He felt his spirit move into the dark cloud with her, while his conscious mind worked to keep part of himself grounded in his physical body.

Then blackness shrouded them both.

Raucous noise, loud laughter, ringing bells, shouting voices, the smell of dust and sweat; these were the things she loved. The excitement of the games made her feel alive, skin jumping in anticipation.

This was the largest tournament she had ever been hired to Proctor. Never had anyone so young or relatively inexperienced been asked to preside over a team at the games, and her blood flowed hotly at the thought of her advancement. She pressed forward through the milling throng inside the Proctor tent, moving to the Grand Proctor’s table to find out which team she had drawn.

All around her other Proctors jockeyed with one another to find their team assignments. Smaller and more lithe than most, she wriggled to the front of the crowd and spotted her color band, along with a video card containing information about the team she had drawn. They were Earthlings, just like herself.

“Good lot for your first draw, Proctor Green,” the Grand Proctor said, leaning across the table and eyeing her card.

“Yes,” she said, smiling. “I feel I am going to be very lucky with this draw.”
“That group is a lot to manage for a fresh,” the large beast next to her said.

Glancing up, she saw the lecherous grin that painted the face of the Red Proctor next to her. He was a gigantic Triceraton, scarred from many battles, and an experienced Proctor of the games.

“If I were a fresh I wouldn’t be here,” she told him. “I’d worry about your own team.”

He stroked his jaw, staring at her breasts rather than her eyes.

“I’m Sarvitek. Maybe you’ve heard of me?” he asked.

She nodded once and said, “Of course.” With that she turned, snatching up her color band and placing it around her arm before moving away from the table.

Her elbow was suddenly grabbed and she was pulled to a stop.

“I could help you,” Sarvitek said, “for a price.”

“No thank you,” she replied, trying to free her arm.

His grip tightened and he moved closer. “There are so many ways to lose here, Proctor Green. Do you want to discover them, or would you like some protection?” he asked.

Loudly, she said, “The games have rules for the protection of Proctors, or had you forgotten that, Proctor Red?”

Her voice brought the Grand Proctor over to them. With a glance, he took in Sarvitek’s hand on her elbow and her defensive posture.

“Are we having a problem Proctor Red?” the Grand Proctor asked.

“None at all, Grand Proctor. I was offering Proctor Green assistance with her team,” Sarvitek replied glibly.

The Grand Proctor turned toward the female Proctor. This was not the first situation between Sarvitek and a female he’d been forced to intercede in. The Triceraton was known to be a sexual deviant, but he usually managed to keep his escapades out of his professional life.

To be sure, Proctor Green was a tasty morsel, but she was a Proctor and had earned respect as such. The Grand Proctor didn’t need Sarvitek’s misbehavior disrupting the games.

The Grand Proctor asked, “Do you wish to register a formal complaint, Proctor Green?”

She looked meaningfully at her arm before answering. Sarvitek scowled and removed his hand.

“No, I don’t believe that will be necessary,” she said. “Proctor Red was simply being overly enthusiastic. I suppose he has been overcome with the excitement, despite the large amount of experience he has.” Her smile was bright, the words delivered with a deliberate edge.

“I will speak to him privately about how I might assist him with maintaining his professional demeanor. It is not seemly for someone of his ranking to behave thusly.” The Grand Proctor stared at Sarvitek.

Sarvitek bowed slightly and started to leave. The Grand Proctor’s voice stopped him.
“I mean now, Proctor Red.”

A flush crept across the Triceraton’s face as he turned to follow the Grand Proctor. His backward glare at Proctor Green was ugly and full of promise. She laughed lightly, the rush of adrenaline a wonderful narcotic to her body.

“Lavinia, can you hear me?”

The sound of a voice so close made her turn sharply. No one was near her and she frowned, sure she had heard someone speak. The voice had been faint, as though someone were whispering right against her head.

She shook herself slightly and turned to leave.

“Lavinia, find yourself.” She stopped moving as the voice sounded again. It was stronger this time, and not against her head, but inside.

Stepping out of the main thoroughfare, she stood against a wall and put a shaking hand to her forehead.

“Who…?” she began, speaking out loud.

“Think it to me Lavinia. Our minds are one. Know who you are.”

“I am a Proctor of the games,” she thought forcefully. “Get out of my head whoever you are.”

Once again the voice echoed in her skull. “I am your brother, Lavinia. You have been trapped. Fight your way back.”

Her head suddenly felt heavy, as though squeezed by a huge clamp. She squatted quickly, dropping one knee to the packed ground and placing both hands to her temples.

“Lavinia, Lavinia, why do you call me that?” she asked frantically.

“That is who you are. Hold on to me, Lavinia. I can lead you back. Hold on.”

“No, I am a Proctor. Leave me . . . .” Her thought was cut by a sharp explosion of light behind her eyes. The pain that followed was so intense she nearly cried out, almost forgetting where she was.

Panting heavily and pressing her hands hard against her head, she fought against the light even as she felt herself spiraling towards it. The brightness burned her mind as she drew closer; burned with an intensity that she could feel over the whole of her body.

She was powerless to stop herself as the voice pulled her closer, ever closer. It was an attack, she told herself, a jealous attack at her rank, at her stature --

“You are not that person, Lavinia. I will show you who you are.” The voice continued to pull her, but now it carried a tone that was familiar to her. Familiar and safe.

Her eyes snapped open and everything around her shifted and twisted. The tent, the people, the smells and sounds all flowed together like paint lightly stirred. Dizzy and disoriented, her eyes shut again and she found herself nearly swallowed by that blazing, all-encompassing light.

“I’m falling Splinter, help me!” she called out.
A force as bright as the light shot out and caught her, covering her being with warmth and comfort. It pulled her back, away from the edge of the inferno that had threatened to swallow her.

“You are safe now,” Master Splinter said.

Lavinia remained kneeling, eyes closed while her mind shed the last of its fog.

“Where am I?” she asked.

“I am not sure, sister. It appears to be an alternate reality. Open your eyes and let me look through them,” Master Splinter said.

Obediently she opened her eyes. Everything was back as it had been; the illusion once more solid and very real in appearance.

“Most interesting,” he said. “To all appearances quite real and extremely elaborate.”

“It’s more than appearance,” she said, “it’s everything. How am I here? How are you in my head? Where are the Turtles?”

“They are with you,” he answered. “You were all abducted during meditation by some form of ethereal manifestation. Only your minds’ were taken, your bodies remain in the dojo with me, all of you locked in a kind of suspended animation. Your abductors expected five, not six, and you were taken because I presented too great a fight.”

Lav slowly regained her feet as he continued, “As they took your essence Lavinia, I was able to attach my thoughts to you. I exist spiritually in both worlds. The Turtles are there with you and you must find them quickly. I fear their minds were altered as was yours. They do not know themselves and most probably exist under the persona created for them by your captors.”

“I know where they are now,” Lav said, suddenly enlightened. “They are my team. I can remember all of it; who I’m supposed to be, who they are here in this reality. This is some type of competition and they are entered as a team. I’m a facilitator; each team has one.”

“Then whatever is meant to happen requires you be together,” Master Splinter said. “Lavinia, they must be guided back into themselves slowly. I cannot attach to them there; I cannot even speak to them as their minds are closed to me now. You must help them find their way, and you must do so carefully. You must play out this game, pretending to be their Proctor and giving them the clues to who they really are.”

“I can’t just tell them?” she asked.

“No. Remember the light?” he asked. “If awareness comes too quickly, the light will take them. Because I had merged with you, I was able to pull you out of it when awareness suddenly hit. They will have no such safety net.

“Until we discover how deeply they are enmeshed in this charade, you must remain in character. Do not do anything that would destroy the illusion of who you are supposed to be. You will have to help them remember themselves in such a way that the light cannot reach for them.”

“Then the sooner I begin, the sooner we can leave here.” Lavinia took a moment to gather her bearings, located the exit, and moved in that direction.

Her path out of the center tent took her past a row of shields leaning against a wall. Glancing as she passed, Lav stopped dead in her tracks and backed up. She hadn’t paid much
Her body was encased in a light green material which looked like painted on latex. The completely seamless material hugged her legs all the way down into the small green boots she wore. A deep v ran down the front, and the material on the sides only touched the edges of her breasts. Crossing from one side to the other was a strap of material only an inch and a half wide, barely covering her nipples and part of the areola. The rest of her breasts were exposed.

There was no back. The material began at the top of her posterior and rounded over her butt, dipping down and following her curves without a hint of a crease in the fabric. She wore no undergarments of any kind, and the material molded against her vulva so tightly that if she stood a certain way, the folds were plainly visible.

Fortunately, the comforting weight of her tonfas nestled in their custom made holster pressed against her hips.

Looking around a little frantically, Lav tried to find other clothes to change into. No wonder that Triceraton had looked her over so possessively. Who had dressed her?

With a resigned sigh, Lav realized she wasn’t going to find anything else to wear in here. She was going to have to go outside like this, and she was probably going to have to face the Turtles dressed this way. She really hoped they’d know who she was.

Outside the Proctor tent was a carnival like atmosphere. Contestants mingled, greeting friends and enemies alike. Lavinia paused to make a quick survey, and not seeing her Turtles in the crowd, began walking towards the tent she knew had been assigned to them.

All around her vendors wandered, singing the praises of their wares. The more bawdy offerings were not permitted on the contest grounds, or near the tents assigned as living quarters to the contestants. However, the rules did not bar the vendors from hawking their merchandise through verbal enticements, which they did lustily.

Lavinia zigzagged her way through the ever shifting crowds. Several times, men made as if to speak to her, or shifted to intercept her. Each time the determined look on her face and the band on her arm stopped them. Molesting a Proctor in any way was dealt with very harshly.

The crowds fell away as she neared the living quarters set up for the contestants. This area was off limits to all but competitors, Proctors, and games officials. Surrounded by heavy woods, its tranquility was in sharp contrast to the scene she had just left.

A green flag atop one large solid tent showed her where she would find the Turtles and she hurried towards it. Stopping just outside, she called to Splinter with her mind.

“I am here,” he assured her.

“Is there any chance they will know me and this will end quickly?” she asked hopefully.

“There is always a chance. Do not count on it,” he said.

Taking a deep breath, Lavinia pushed through the tent flap and stepped inside to get her first glimpse of the Turtles since their abduction.

Leo and Don were close together, obviously in deep discussion. Raph was leaning against the tent's center support column, idly balancing a sai on his finger, and Mikey was sprawled across
one of the thick mats that served as beds.

Mikey jumped up at her entrance and let out a long wolf whistle. His brothers turned to see who had gotten his obviously favorable attention. By the looks on their faces, none of them recognized her. Lav’s stomach fell.

Forcing an air of confidence she didn’t feel, Lavinia moved forward to greet them.

“Please allow me to welcome you to the Level One Team Qualifying Games. I am your team Proctor, assigned to assist you through your competitions,” Lav announced.

“Sweet!” Mikey exclaimed, and promptly groped her ass.

Like lightening, Lav spun, grabbing his hand and pressing the sensitive point between his fingers.

“Ow, ow, ow!” he yelped in response, as she twisted his arm behind him.

“As your Proctor,” she continued with hardly a pause, “I will guide you through the processes involved with competition at this level. I will arrange your practice sessions and your meals. I will ensure the viability of your matches, and I will serve as your healer should you require medical attention.”

She released Mikey, who rubbed his hand, grinning at her sheepishly.

“I am not your entertainment, though you will find enough of that in the carnival atmosphere outside the lodging gates. I recommend strongly you do not explore those options if you are serious competitors. Those things are a distraction you can ill afford.”

“Tell us what to expect,” Don requested.

She caught his eye and nodded. “The winner of this tournament will proceed to the Level Two competitions. This is a team sport and your team must stay intact throughout the competition or you will be disqualified. If one of you becomes incapacitated or killed, your team is removed. If you lose a match, your team is removed. This competition is single elimination fighters; you do not get a second chance.”

“Peachy,” Raph growled.

“You will also compete individually or in pairs against other squads. This is for the purpose of points building. Winning an individual or doubles match earns points for the team. Those points will be used to determine standings for the final sixteen teams.”

She looked around at them and continued. “The top ranked squad will draw the lowest ranked during this segment of the games, proceeding in that order until every pairing has been decided. Losing a point match will not disqualify your team, but if one of you is irreparably injured or killed, your team will be disqualified.”

“This ain’t our first dance lady,” Raph snorted.

“Please correct me if I get any of your names wrong.” She nodded at Raph and said, “You are Raphael.” Turning, she nodded in turn at each of the others as she pronounced their names. “Michelangelo, Donatello, and Leonardo.”

“Call me Mikey, my most intimate friends do,” Mikey said with a mischievous grin.
“You may call me Proctor at all times when we are outside this tent. Within these walls you may address me by my given name if you wish. It is Lavinia.” She stopped speaking as a flash crossed Don’s eyes, but then it left just as quickly.

“When we are with other groups, you should address me as Proctor Green in order to avoid confusion. Green is the color designated for your squad.”


“I expect to be treated with respect. As you are aware, it is only after you achieve this level of skill as a team that you are assigned a Proctor. My assistance can be invaluable. I can assist you with your strategies and provide information and insight with regards to your opponents. If anything should happen to me an assessment will be made by the Grand Proctor as to whether your team will be allowed to continue to compete. It’s in your best interest that nothing happen to me,” she admonished them.

Leo’s eyes glittered and Raph crossed his arms.

“This tent will be our home for the duration of the games. The curtain in the back corner separates our sleeping spaces. That corner space is private.”

She looked around at them to make sure they understood. Mikey was smiling hugely.

“There are tents designated for bathing and other private functions. Male and female separations are necessary and everything is clearly marked. Do not stray as this will bring down serious ramifications for you personally and for your team.”

“Yeah, okay. We got your point. Lots of fuckin’ rules,” Raph said belligerently.

Lavinia looked him over, sensing his antagonism. His return look was challenging and she realized he resented her. In this world, she was just another authority figure to someone who did not respect authority.

“I will arrange a schedule for you that you must adhere to. Straying from the schedule can also have ramifications. You will of course be allocated free time to do as you wish. I will repeat my earlier warning; there are people here who do not care about your status as competitors and will afford you no respect in that regard. Many of those are outside the gates and they are waiting to prey on you.”

“Thanks mom,” Mikey said, earning a chuckle from Raph.

Ignoring him, Lavinia said, “If you will please come with me, I will give you a tour of the facilities and the games arena.”

Mikey grinned boldly. He bowed with elaborate politeness and said, “Please lead the way.”

As Lav passed him, he tipped his head to the side and ogled her rear, his tongue lolling out of his mouth. His antics earned him a laugh from Raph and Don. Leo walked next to her, his face inscrutable.

Lavinia’s tour was as much for her as for them. Somehow she knew where to find everything; understanding that the knowledge had been programmed into her mind by whoever had captured them, but still disconcerted by that fact.

This was Lav’s first experience with beings from other worlds although her Proctor persona
apparently had years of interaction with alien life.

The Turtles were quite at ease as they moved from structure to structure within the lodging area, and then further past the gates, into the crowds attending the games. Citizens stepped aside for them, waving and calling, excited by their presence.

Raph marched with his head up, a slight smile on his face. Don strolled casually, unconcerned by the turmoil around them and Leo moved with intent, studying everything and everyone.

Michelangelo was in his element. His smile was broad and his eyes were the brightest blue as he waved back at people, accepting backslaps and handshakes as though they were his due.

The games arena was a large space, partially surrounded by bleachers which rose in height to several stories. The earthen floor was hard packed and each of its long sides held a raised podium.

“That is my monitoring station,” Lavinia pointed out to them. “I must remain there for the duration of your battle. I am not allowed to physically interfere, but I can shout encouragements and advice. Please try to listen for me; the crowds get rather loud.”

“If I need your advice lady, I’ll ask for it,” Raph said, wandering over to look at the judge’s stand.

“Well, you can shout my name anytime,” Mikey told her, sauntering close to her and making a great show of studying her breasts.

Leo stood to the side, his arms crossed over his plastron, silently watching the group. Lav realized that he was studying her, and the thought was unnerving.

Of the four, Don seemed the least changed. Possibly bolder, but closer to his natural self.

“How can they be so different?” Lav pushed the thought out to Master Splinter.

“They are not,” he replied. “The qualities they are displaying are merely a part of themselves that is normally tempered by other traits. In this universe, they have been programmed to push aside the parts of their personalities which round them. They have been programmed to focus on some of their most base characteristics.”

“I was programmed to be ambitious,” Lav said.

“That is part of your personality, sister. It is tempered by humility. If that is removed, the ambition becomes an overriding emotion.”

Lav stood quietly watching her lovers explore the arena in which they would fight for a glory that wasn’t real, in a world that was a complete fabrication.

“Why?” she asked.

“I do not know. There is a plan in this, and I feel it is meant to destroy my sons and me. You were not meant to be here,” Master Splinter said.

“Good. That means that whoever is manufacturing this alternate reality isn’t all powerful. We just have to beat them before they can complete this farce,” Lav responded.
Master Splinter chuckled. “Our enemies have gotten more than they bargained for in you, Lavinia. I must pull back and rest now; maintaining our link is tiring. If you need me, call in your mind and I will return.”

“Thank you Splinter,” she thought to him as she felt his presence fade.

Lav felt very lonely and vulnerable without him solidly in her mind. He had expressed great faith in her ability to pull them out of this trap; she hoped she could live up to his expectations.

Their lives might depend on that.

As the sky darkened, Lav led her group to the dining tent and secured their table. At her direction, large trays piled high with food were set before the Turtles. Mikey was practically leaping in his chair as he attempted to pile his plate with a sample from each dish.

Before she seated herself at the table, Raph stopped her and waved his cup under her nose.

“Ain’t ya’ got something a little stronger than this?” he asked rudely.

She calmly took his cup and said, “As you wish Raphael. You are professional enough to know not to over indulge.”

Lav lifted a hand to signal for a drink cart, and Leo said, “He won’t be overdoing it.”

His assurance was a quiet statement of fact; delivered without looking at either Lavinia or his brother. Raph glared at him, then at Lav, but didn’t argue the point.

Another difference, one that tied a cold knot in her spine. This Leo had a much tighter control over his brothers. The Leo of this incarnation demanded and expected total obedience, and could apparently be quite ruthless in how he got those things.

As dinner progressed, the groups inside the tent became more raucous. Food was one thing, but these competitors were used to action.

A loud banging of drums heralded the entrance of a group of entertainers. The squad quickly divided and swept to occupy every open space that would accommodate them.

There were jugglers and wrestlers; musicians and mimes. Acrobats leaped and caroused, while dancers of every type cavorted in an enticing way before the appreciative games contestants.

Mikey shouted and pounded the table as one particularly buxom feline undulated before him. Raph leaned back, his hands behind his head and grinned lustily as she whipped her tail around her body, caressing herself to the beat of the music.

A hot flush brightened Lav’s cheeks and she got up from the table without a word and left the tent.

Outside, the cool night air helped ease the unexpected and totally alien feeling that had come over her. The wooded area was only a few feet away, the comfort of its solitude beckoning her. Lav walked into it quickly, dodging past overgrown bushes and the trunks of enormous trees until she came to a small clearing.

Crossing her arms over her chest, she stopped and breathed deeply, trying to exhale her jumble of negative feelings. Splinter expected her to bring the Turtles back in one piece. How was she supposed to do that when she didn’t even know who they were anymore?
The first tendrils of real fear curled themselves inside her gut. An implacable Leonardo, a contentious Raphael, an enigmatic Donatello, and an irreverent Michelangelo.

Lav sighed and said out loud, “What a fine mess.”

Turning, she nearly ran headlong into a giant plated chest.

Startled, Lavinia looked up into Sarvitek’s face. The Triceraton stood grinning down at her.

“Do you always talk to yourself?” he asked.

Backing up a step, Lav replied, “No. Excuse me; I’m turning in for the evening.”

She started to bypass him, but he sidestepped to block her path.

“You are having problems with your team. I told you before I would be willing to help you make a good showing – for a nominal price of course.” Sarvitek leered at her.

(Of course.” She eyed him warily. “I’m not in need of assistance with my team, Proctor Red, thank you.”

Lav tried to move around him again, but his swishing tail cut her off.

“Yes, and that is why you are in the woods talking to yourself.” He was smug. “All alone in the woods.”

One of his massive hands snapped forward and caught her by the neck.

“Let go of me!” Lav exclaimed, trying to pull away.

Sarvitek sneered. “You made a bit of a mess for me earlier, but I smoothed it over. I think you owe me little woman, and I want my payment now.”

Lav clawed at his hand as he pulled her closer; then lifted her off the ground. Holding her at eye level, he let his eyes rake over her body, and then looked back up as he ran a long tongue over his mouth.

“Stop it!” Lavinia croaked, her throat aching as her head was pushed back.

Sarvitek shook his head. “Shh, little woman. If you draw attention to us, I’ll say you lured me out here. That will get you locked up.” His voice sounded satisfied. “Locked up means you can’t Proctor your team.”

Lav’s eyes widened in horrified understanding. She had to stay with the Turtles, and in order to stay with them, she was going to have to submit to being raped by Sarvitek.

Sarvitek grinned lustfully as Lav stopped struggling. Reaching down with his free hand, he unbuckled his cod piece and let it fall to the ground. A low hum issued from his chest as his cock inflated to its full size. His grip loosened when he glanced down at himself, and Lav tilted her head sideways to follow his eyes. What she saw made her gasp.

He was easily four times the size of the Turtles. There was no way that thing was going to fit.

Lav started to fight again. Panting, she cried out, “You can’t, you’re too big! Oh God, you’ll tear me apart!”
“As long as you take care of me, I really don’t give a damn,” Sarvitek told her lecherously, no longer smiling.

An unholy light shined in his eyes as he pulled the struggling woman closer, pressing her small body against his giant frame. Her struggles seemed to excite him more; his hand moved to her backside and he grabbed her butt cheeks, squeezing them painfully.

Lav’s hands dropped to her tonfas but just as they were closing around the handles, Sarvitek punched her in the stomach. Her hands moved to protect herself from another blow and Sarvitek grabbed the buckle on her holster.

“Let me help you with that,” he said and she felt the weight of the holster containing her weapons fall from her hips. Lavinia cried out in frustration.

Her yelp caused him to tighten his grip once more, cutting off her oxygen. Lav immediately stopped moving.

“Such a smart little Proctor,” he rasped, the razor sharp points of his teeth glinting in the moonlight. “You are going to lie still while I enjoy myself. If you have fun, we can do this a few times.”

With a sinister laugh, he added, “We’ll do this a few times whether you have fun or not.”

Lav’s eyes rolled back, the lack of air making her head swim. With a lewd grunt, Sarvitek tossed Lav to the ground as though she were a sack of potatoes. As she gasped for air, her attacker dropped between her knees, his prey momentarily helpless. Flat on her back in the dirt, Lav could do nothing as he leaned in to lick her face and that’s when she felt his giant erection press against her stomach.

Her guts roiled in disgust. He was going to rape her, whether she put up a fight or not. He was too large and she was already down, and although she could probably scream and attract attention, what he said was correct. It would be her word against his, and she was a stranger. They would believe him and she’d be locked away. Away from her Turtles.

Breathing heavily, Sarvitek ran his tongue down her neck to her chest and licked the exposed skin. She shuddered and tried to push him away, but her hands were ineffectual; he was too heavy and simply leaned against her arms, bending her wrists painfully backwards.

“Stop, please, stop,” she begged, straining to dig her heels into the ground and slide from under him.

“I like that, keep begging little woman,” he said, his voice heavy with need.

Once again his tongue snaked out, rolling over the soft mounds of exposed breast. With a grunt, he pulled back and looked at the strip of fabric covering her nipples.

“You don’t need this,” he announced harshly.

Lifting a hand, he gripped the cloth in his fingers and yanked. The material was tougher than it looked, and his pull partially lifted her. A loud ripping sound, a sharp painful pop against her breasts, and the strip was gone.

Her naked flesh glowed under the Triceraton’s lust filled eyes. The cold night air and his hot breath competed as they blew across Lavinia’s nipples, and to her dismay, they inflated and perked under his gaze.
“Lovely,” he muttered, drinking in the sight of her bare breasts.

As his tongue moved to lick her nipples, Lav flung her hands across her breasts, covering herself protectively. Sarvitek lifted his eyes to her face and saw the flushed cheeks and the frightened look. Her fear and humiliation excited him even more and he laughed.

“Such a useless gesture. Keep your hands there if you wish. That isn’t what I need right now anyway,” he said.

Sitting up on his knees, he ran a hand over her smooth, tight abdomen and brushed over the mound between her legs. Lav jerked at his touch, her hands leaving her breasts unprotected as she flattened her palms against the dirt and tried to push away from him.

A gigantic hand mashing painfully against her stomach froze her. Looking up, the Triceraton watched the woman’s breasts bounce with her exertion, and once again his tongue flicked out to touch his lips. Lav saw the look and quickly crossed an arm over her tits.

Barely registering the movement, Sarvitek’s eyes drifted back down to the covered area between her legs. His fingers quivered in anticipation as he caught the material of her body suit and once more began to pull it away from her.

“I believe that’s my Proctor you’re molesting,” A mild voice spoke, quite close. “Back away from her now, or would you rather find out what my staff can do to yours?”

It was Donatello. His bo was out, just beneath the sensitive underside of Sarvitek’s enormous cock. To emphasize his point, he tapped his bo on the Triceraton’s erection.

“This doesn’t concern you reptile,” Sarvitek growled. He kept perfectly still, the bo staff’s placement an effective deterrent against hasty action.


Lavinia had never heard that tone in Don’s voice before. She was breathing hard; terrified by the impending rape and frightened by the current stand-off.

Sarvitek lifted his hand from her stomach and Lav hastily scrambled away from him. Without thinking, she darted behind Don, both arms crossed before her to cover her chest.

A low whine issued from Sarvitek to show his frustration and he began to rise. Don’s bo didn’t move from its target, his eyes wary as they watched the giant form regain his feet.

“How are you without that weapon, little Turtle?” Sarvitek challenged, his erection beginning to dwindle.

“No you want to find out?” Don answered, pulling his bo back and narrowing his eyes.

Something in his eyes and voice brought Sarvitek up sharply. The terrapin might be smaller than he, but he was an entrant in the games, which meant he was not a pushover.

And the way he seemed to dare Sarvitek to try something sent a chill up the Triceraton’s spine.

With bravado he was far from feeling, Sarvitek said, “I do not wish to lose my Proctorship by battling a contestant. Keep the woman; she is not worth losing my placement.”
Sarvitek shot Lavinia a mean look as he bent to retrieve his cod piece. Turning on his heels, he strode angrily away.

Don slipped his bo into place on his back as he watched Sarvitek disappear. Once he was convinced the Triceraton was gone, he turned to look at Lavinia.

He didn’t say anything for a moment and they simply stared at one another. Don’s eyes played over her body with unabashed approval and she found herself blushing as hard as when they first met. Her arms pressed against her breasts a little tighter, trying to hide even the shape of them as he studied her.

“I’ve already seen them.” Don tipped his head towards her tits. “When he had you on the ground.”

“How long were you watching?” Lav asked sharply, disgruntled at the thought he had let her suffer.

Laughing, Don answered, “Just until I got into position. There was a lot less of a chance he would put up a fight if I persuaded him he had more to lose than I did.”

Huffing, Lav said, “Thank you.”

Don’s laugh dwindled to a lusty grin. “No, thank you. The view was worth my efforts.”

Lav blushed again and then searched the ground for the strip of material Sarvitek had torn from her body suit. The ruined strip lay not far from them, and it was obvious it wasn’t going to do her any good.

“Great,” Lav said in disgust, picking her holster up off the ground. “How am I supposed to get back to the tent without drawing a crowd?”

Don moved closer and Lav skipped back, a little unnerved by his strange, out of character behavior.

“Don’t be so alarmed, woman. Walk back with me and I’ll keep you covered until we reach your space in the tent,” he told her.

Turning, he waited for her to step up next to him. Lifting his arm so his bicep was covering her breasts, he grabbed her hip in his large hand and pulled her solidly against his body. Startled, she wrapped a hand around his arm and looked at him.

“Just walk. No one will bother us,” Don instructed.

Lav nodded as they began to move. Her breasts pressed against his skin and her nipples extended until they were diamond hard. Don glanced at her when he felt her aroused nubs touch his arm. Blushing furiously, Lav looked straight ahead. There was nothing she could do about her bodies’ response to his nearness.

They made it to the tent unnoticed. Most all of the competitors were still in the food tent; Lav could hear the sounds of music and laughter even after she and Don were inside.

He released his grip on her and stepped aside as soon as they entered; so quickly that it took a second for her to cover herself. His grin told her he’d done it on purpose.

Lav dashed into the back corner and dove behind the curtain that screened her section from
his. Don’s chuckle followed her, and she heard the sound of him removing his gear for the evening, and then stretching out on his bed.

Curiosity overcame her embarrassment. “Donatello,” she called, “how did you know I was in trouble?”

She heard him turn over. “I saw you leave and noticed that Triceraton was watching you. A few minutes later he stalked out like he had a purpose. You did say it would be in our best interest to make sure nothing happened to you.”

Lav had no response for that. Instead she took the opportunity to explore the area designated as her ‘bedroom’. A small trunk was placed against the tent wall, and opening it she found clothing, of a sort.

Everything was some shade of green. Picking through the trunk, Lav discovered that every garment was similar to the shredded outfit she was currently wearing. They were all tight and hopelessly revealing.

Sighing, she lifted out something she assumed was meant to be slept in. It was practically see-through and very short. Nowhere in the trunk was there anything resembling undergarments.

Just as she closed the trunk she heard the sound of the other Turtles returning. Raph and Mikey were loud and boisterous; Leo as silent as ever. A low murmur told her that Don was relaying to them what had occurred and she cursed her misfortune. Raph already had very little respect for her position; this could only make that situation worse.

Shaking her head, she began to peel off what was left of her clothes. The sounds on the other side of the curtain suddenly stopped, and Lav realized her light was on and it was throwing her shadow on the screen between rooms.

Reaching over quickly, she doused the light.

“Oh shell!” Mikey’s voice was followed by a deep, bass chuckle.

“Goodnight, Lavinia,” Don said, his voice full of humor.

She didn’t bother to answer.
Chapter Summary

Lav trundled the small food cart into the tent early the next morning. She had passed Leo outside the entrance flap, performing katas as was his usual habit, and that bit of normality was comforting.

He followed her inside and silently accepted the cup of tea she offered. If the familiar gesture awakened any kind of memory in him, he didn’t show it.

Mikey rushed the food cart with his usual enthusiasm and Don joined him after donning his gear. Raphael, however, lay propped against a pile of pillows, one arm behind his head and a defiant look on his face.

“Ya’ can bring me a plate woman. Make sure it’s full,” he told her in the rudest possible way.

Lavinia decided it was time to establish her authority, before his lack of respect got them all into trouble.

“I believe you are quite capable of rising and preparing your own plate of food, Raphael,” she said calmly.

“Yeah, I’m capable. That don’t mean I’m gonna do it,” he growled at her.

Lavinia shrugged with feigned indifference. “Then you shan’t eat.”

His eyes narrowed. “Far as I can see ya’ got one purpose woman and that’s ta make sure we get taken care of. That includes bringing me my food.”

She turned to look him fully in his eyes, her posture straight, shoulders back. “I told you before competitor, I am not your entertainment, nor am I your servant. My primary purpose is to facilitate and assist your ability to compete in the games. I earned that right by being very good at my job.” Her words were met by a golden flash from Raph’s eyes.

“If you wish to eat,” she continued, “I suggest you do so now. In twenty minutes we will have a practice session and you are required to attend. This afternoon the competition begins and we will be expected to be in the spectator’s box with the other teams who are not competing today. Is that clear?”

He sat up quickly and Lav tensed.

“Raphael,” Leo’s voice was low and dangerous, “don your gear and eat.”
Muttering under his breath, Raph rose and swiftly pulled on his pads, sliding his sais into his belt before moving to the food cart. He purposely passed close to Lav, brushing against her shoulder with a heavily muscled arm while she held her ground.

His truculent attitude continued as they left the tent to walk to the outdoor training area. The space was a cleared field and several such areas existed, although each was out of view of any other to ensure privacy.

Mikey walked next to her and told her in detail about the entertainment she’d missed the night before. From what she gathered during his enthusiastic descriptions, the cat woman dancer had somehow masturbated with her own tail all while moving to the accompaniment of music. Lav didn’t want to hear it, but Mikey seemed to get some pleasure out of making her uncomfortable.

Probably, she realized, it was his way of disrespecting her as well. That and his unfailing habit of showing outlandish appreciation for the clothing she’d been provided. The body suit she wore today was similar to the one that had been destroyed, with a touch more material over her breasts, and a bit less along her hips and thighs.

When they reached the field, Lav said, “It would be best if you warm up first with some stretching exercises, then I want to see each of you run through basic katas. I need to know what your abilities are.”

Raph’s head came down as he spun to face her and Lav knew she was in trouble.

“We know what our abilities are woman. Ya’ don’t need ta see anything,” he said.

Outwardly calm, Lavinia said, “It is my job to assess the abilities of your opponents and balance that against yours. I can’t very well do that if I don’t know your style.”

“Ya’ know what? We made it this far without your help in a fight and we don’t need it now. Assigning ya’ to us was a freakin’ joke and an insult by the commission ‘cause they don’t like how fast we’re movin’ up in the rankings. The other Proctors don’t even take ya’ seriously.”

Lav’s blood was starting to boil and she had to keep reminding herself that this wasn’t her Raphael.

“Would you care to explain that statement?” she asked, her tone measured and cautionary.

If he understood that he was pushing too far, he didn’t indicate that he cared. “Yeah, I mean they assigned us a fresh, and a female ta boot. A real Proctor understands how ta fight ‘cause they actually been in a few. Instead of givin’ us a good, experienced man, we get stuck with the milk maid.”

“I see,” Lav said with deliberate care, “you are concerned with my ability to defend myself because of what occurred last evening and because you obviously have no respect for women.”

In the back of her mind, Lav kept expecting Leonardo to intervene in what was turning into a showdown. He appeared content to stand back and watch their argument play out.

“I ain’t got no respect for women who pretend ta be somethin’ they ain’t,” Raph snapped. “Your play actin’ is gonna lose this tournament for us.”

Lavinia suddenly felt Master Splinter’s strong presence. She hadn’t called to him so he must have sensed her increased tension.
“Lavinia, think hard before you act,” he advised.

“I have to get control,” she told him. Aloud, she said, “I have more than enough experience to do this job.”

“Then let’s see what you can do against me.” Raph’s sais were suddenly in his hands.

“If you insist.” Lav’s hands came down on her tonfas and she heard Master Splinter’s voice in her head.

“If you start this, you must win Lavinia,” he warned.

“I know that.” The tonfas sprang from the holster and she said, “I don’t have a choice.”

Raph rushed at her, thinking to end it quickly. Lav waited for him and spun out of his path at the last second, swinging her tonfa back as he passed and clipping his elbow.

He skidded to a stop and changed direction, coming after her. Before he could manage much momentum, Lav darted at him, springing into the air and kicking him in his plastron with both feet.

The move and the loose dirt under his feet combined to knock him flat on his shell. Lav back flipped away as he jumped up with a roar.

“I’ve never beaten him,” Lav told Master Splinter with something akin to panic.

“Listen to me Lavinia. You can defeat Raphael.” His voice in her head was confident.

She ducked a sai, batted aside the other and flipped her tonfa at his skull. He tugged his head away and snagged her weapon in the wing of his sai, but she slid it loose, turning the front head on the other to jab the muscle at his armpit.

With a grunt, he lashed out with a fist and caught her with a glancing blow on her temple as she rushed out of his way.

Lav saw stars and concentrated on staying out of his reach until her head cleared.

“He’s too strong,” she fretted.

Master Splinter responded, “Strength alone will not determine the outcome. I will help you beat him.”

Raph yelled and came after her, jabbing at her with his sais. Lav stepped back with each lunge, bending back away from the tips of his weapons. Then she dropped into a sudden crouch, coming under his arms, and sprang through the gap between his legs.

Rolling forward in the dirt as she made her exit, she kicked at the back of his knee and brought him down on one leg.

He spun on that knee and tried to sweep her feet from under her, but Lav cart wheeled to safety.

“If you have any secrets, I need to hear them now,” Lavinia told Master Splinter frantically as Raph charged her again.

“Lavinia, I am with you, but you must let me further in. You must open your mind and let
me have control of your body. You can defeat him if we are joined.” Master Splinter’s voice echoed in her mind.

Even as she dodged Raph, Lavinia felt a sudden disorienting push in her consciousness. Trying to concentrate on staying on her feet, she willed herself to lower her mental guard.

Raph almost flattened her. Too dizzy to backflip away from him, she settled for lunging awkwardly to the side and swinging her tonfa in his general direction. A lucky strike caught his side, and threw him off balance for a moment.

Her vision was suddenly divided and then began to swim together slowly as another set of eyes focused through hers. The calm that settled over her body and coursed through her muscles was as nothing she’d ever experienced. Surprised, she asked her hand to rise and when it did, she stared at the familiar appendage, knowing it was hers even though it felt completely different.

“Together, Lavinia. Relax and focus on my thoughts and upon Raphael. Allow nothing else to interfere.” Master Splinter’s voice was strong in her mind, and she looked up.

Raph came at her again, low and quick, a determined look on his face. Lavinia saw his movements in slow motion, and a little side step at the last moment put his body next to her.

“Jab the pressure point below the arm.” Master Splinter’s voice guided her hand.

The tonfa came up and she thrust the head into the spot just below Raph’s armpit. She didn’t know how much pressure to apply, but her hand, guided by Master Splinter, did.

Raph hit the ground with a loud cry, his right arm trailing the dirt, completely useless. Rolling away from her, Raph regained his feet, the sai in his left hand clutched tight. His eyes narrowed as his prey stood and observed him serenely.

“I got hi . . . !” Her elation pushed Master Splinter’s control momentarily aside and Raph attacked, sweeping her legs out from under her. Only by rolling quickly through the dirt was she able to escape being stomped.

“Do not count victory yet,” Master Splinter warned her.

“He’s still mobile,” Lav thought to him, jumping up and dodging a swing from Raph’s left arm.

“Focus sister. Give me the control,” Master Splinter reminded her.

Lav focused again and felt Master Splinter’s energy envelope her once more.

“Quickly, quickly sister. We must end this. The energy required to stay this close to you is leaving me. Force him to circle; we must strike at the pressure point on his upper thigh.”

Lav circled Raph, trying to draw him around to her. Wary now, Raph moved with her, turning his body to keep his weakened right arm out of her reach.

The positioning put the side of his leg completely open to her.

Without conscious thought, Lav’s tonfa spun upward, momentum driving powerful force into her swing as she struck his thigh dead on. Master Splinter’s control immediately faded and left her.
The effect of the blow on Raph was instantaneous as his leg collapsed under him. Infuriated, he swung hard with the hilt of his sai and caught her with a solid blow to her ribs.

It felt like a thousand knives driving into her side. She shouted and stumbled back, her eyes filling with pain response tears. Through blurred vision, she watched as Raph dragged himself towards her, using his one working arm and leg.

“Make him angry Lavinia. When he drops his chin, he will tilt his head slightly to the left, exposing the pressure point on his neck below his ear slit,” Master Splinter urged; his voice weak in her head.

Lav’s hand clutched her side and she panted, pain shooting through her middle. Drawing on all her reserve energy, she taunted Raph.

“Down already big guy? How will you manage the games if a female Proctor can take you?”

Raph responded with a growl, lunging at her, but she backed away, laughing.

“I heard you were the strong one,” Lavinia teased.

His chin went down and Lav reacted instantly, snapping her tonfa precisely against the sensitive point on his neck.

He fell flat, the last strike freezing him to immobility. Lavinia sank to the ground, hissing in pain.

Don rushed to her side as she pushed her tonfas into the holster.

“Wow.” Mikey released a puff of air through his mouth in amazement and said, “She took him down.”

Leo’s eyes were locked on her. Concentrating on her injury, Lav willed her body to heal. The pain slowly grew more bearable. Don hovered anxiously, asking, “Did he break your ribs?”

“Damn, it feels like it,” Lav thought. Shaking her head, she said aloud, “No. I’m all right; just bruised and winded.”

She started to rise and Don’s hand came out to help her.

“Leave her alone Donatello,” Leo ordered; his voice quiet and predatory. “She doesn’t need help.”

Don backed up a step, his face unsure. Lav stood up, the feeling of glass shards rolling around her innards dissipating.

“I have to concentrate to heal myself,” Lav told Master Splinter incredulously.

“It is because your physical self is not really injured Lavinia. It is a manifestation and must be dealt with in your mind,” he explained.

“Then I’d better not get knocked out,” she thought back grimly.

Straightening, she looked over at Raphael, whose body was working out of the momentary
freeze. He returned her look, grudging admiration in his eyes.

“Are you all done challenging me? Can we continue with your practice?” Lav asked, staring straight at Leonardo.

He raised an eye ridge. “Of course.”

The remainder of the morning went smoothly enough, though each time Lav looked towards Leo, she found him watching her. His face was unreadable as always, but something was different about him. She felt what could only be described as a low level hunger coming off him, and it was frightening her.

= = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

Master Splinter took a deep, cleansing breath and then another. The effort to control Lav’s mind inside the alternate reality where she and his Turtles were trapped had been exhausting.

His eyes remained closed and he held onto the small, tenuous link he had with her. He could not afford to move; his fear of accidentally breaking that link and not being able to recover it made him overly cautious.

When he heard a familiar sound in the lair, he could only focus a small portion of his energy in that direction to determine who had opened a portal into his home. If it were some enemy; if it were the enemy they currently faced, then he would have to break his link to protect the defenseless bodies of his family.

What he sensed stepping through the portal was not an enemy. In fact, it was more than he could have possibly hoped for.

“Miyamoto Usagi,” he said, his eyes still closed, but his head turning in the ronin’s direction.

“Master Splinter,” Usagi called, somewhat breathlessly.

The aged rat could hear Usagi moving quickly in his direction.

“I am too late,” Usagi said as he looked at the frozen forms seated in a circle.

“You have some knowledge of what has occurred here?” Master Splinter asked.

“Yes. It is a bounty placed on your sons by Lord Hebi. He has hired wizards to entrap their conscious minds. I learned of this through Gen; he warned me that a price had been placed on my head as well. I had hoped to arrive before the wizards could accomplish their task.”

“They have taken my sons and my sister, but all is not lost friend samurai. I have established a link with my sister, and together we are attempting to guide my sons back into themselves. Your presence is fortuitous; I was greatly worried that we might be attacked while in this helpless state,” Master Splinter said.

“And so you will be honorable sensei. That is another reason for my appearance; I hoped to help fend off an attack on your home meant to be launched through the portal,” Usagi said.

“Please accept my gratitude Usagi. I do not know how long it will take to free these five, but while they are frozen I cannot move for fear of breaking my only link. I will be useless to you,” Master Splinter told him.
Usagi bowed, knowing that the Turtles’ father could sense the gesture without seeing it. “I will fight with honor and all my skills to protect your family until that time, Master Splinter. Do not worry.”

“Thank you, Usagi,” Master Splinter said, and returned to his deeper concentration.

Usagi stood and looked over the group assembled in a circle before him. Master Splinter looked well and healthy, despite the worry and intense focus required to deal with the current situation. The woman, seated next to him, he had called ‘sister’. Usagi had never heard a ‘sister’ mentioned in context with the mutated rat and former Battle Nexus champion.

Studying her, he thought she looked healthy enough; trim with good muscle tone. His eyes took in the tonfas on her hips and the unusual holster arrangement; deciding that she was probably a master with that weapon.

Dismissing her, he glanced over the Turtles in turn, noting how well they all looked before his eyes rested finally on Leonardo.

The sight of his close friend made his heart pound hard in his chest and his breath quicken. He looked exactly as he had when they last parted, more than three years ago.

Three years since Leonardo had told him they could not be together. Three years since he had accepted that Leo could not belong to him; that he would forever belong to his brothers.

Three years and he was still in love with Leonardo.

They took lunch in the dining tent. The space was as filled as the prior evening, but much more subdued. Fighters were edgy, excited, and anxious. Following the opening ceremonies, first matches were to take place and contestants knew that after today, some of their number would no longer be with them.

Lav directed food servers to her teams table with ruthless efficiency, ensuring their meal arrived hot and fresh. Raph watched her with more respect than challenge; and she surprised him by rising to retrieve a pitcher of ale from a service cart and filling a cup for him, walking back to place it in his hand.

From across the tent she felt eyes boring into her and glanced up to see Sarvitek staring at her. She looked away from him and from the corner of her eye, noted that Don had also seen the Triceraton. Lav saw Don nudge Leo with his elbow and when Leo lifted his head, Don twitched his lips in Sarvitek’s direction.

Leo’s head lifted and he met Sarvitek’s eyes. The challenge was obvious, and the Triceraton shifted his gaze quickly. Leo’s face slowly turned towards Lav, knowing she had seen the exchange.

His expression was indomitable and she suddenly felt a strong surge of fear and longing. Lav turned her eyes back to her plate, but not before a deep flush colored her cheeks.

Opening ceremonies for the games involved a procession of teams, and Lavinia carried a green flag as she led the Turtles past the viewing stands and the bleachers filled with excited fans. Mikey pumped his fist in the air and waved with non-stop enthusiasm, quickly becoming a crowd favorite.
When they took their places in the seating area reserved for contestants, Lav found herself between Leo and Raph.

As the first two teams faced off in the arena, Leo leaned close and whispered in her ear, “Tell me what you know, Proctor.”

Her head turned and she found his face was inches from hers, his amber eyes boring into her.

“Master Splinter,” Lav called hurriedly.

The answer was immediate. “Yes, Lavinia. I am here.”

“Can you tell me anything about these contestants?” she asked.

“Of course,” he responded, understanding her need. “Repeat what I tell you.”

Master Splinter began speaking through her and Lav was once more astounded at his vast knowledge. Both Leo and Raph listened with rapt attention as she pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of each opponent’s fighting style and made observations as to strategies from both sides.

When the match was won by the team Lav had predicted, Leo once more leaned close.

His voice was so low she had to strain to catch his words. “You are perfect,” he said, and then moved away, leaving a blush on her cheeks and confusion playing with her mind.

There were three more matches that day and with Master Splinter’s assistance, Lav was able to correctly assess each team for her Green squad. Leo listened with sharp concentration, his focus trained on the fighters as his experienced eyes noted and memorized individual characteristics.

The other brothers also studied each of their potential future combatants, each after their own fashion. The intensity of their scrutiny told Lavinia how tightly Leo held the reins on his team; his expectations driving their deliberations.

The day ended with four eliminations and the drawing of bouts scheduled for the following day. The Green squad was given an early afternoon match and Lav watched with some trepidation as their opponents were drawn.

A yellow card was placed next to their green one on the matchup board and Lav scanned the field trying to find the team belonging to that color. When she spotted them, Master Splinter gave her their name and all the information he had.

Master Splinter heard the portal open. His body tensed knowing that whoever walked through now would not be a friend.

He heard Usagi; the samurai swift footed as he moved to intercept the intruders. There were three; Master Splinter heard each step through the gateway, and he also heard Usagi draw his sword.

It took all of his powers of concentration to maintain the link to Lavinia as he listened to Usagi address the interlopers. Most of Master Splinter’s life had been devoted to protecting his
children and being unable to rise and face the attack was difficult even for a Master ninja to resist. He was only able to do so because he knew from firsthand experience what the young samurai was capable of.

Usagi watched with narrowed eyes as three masked Neko ninjas slipped through the portal and then froze at the sight of him.

“Go back to your Master and tell him he shall not have the Turtles,” Usagi warned them.

“Ronin, there is a nice price on your head. Just your head,” one of the ninjas hissed.

The Neko’s separated, moving to flank him, and Usagi stepped back; his katana drawn and at the ready as he kept wary eyes on them.

“It shall not be my head he has this day,” Usagi said in a low tone and then he leaped.

The move was sudden and unexpected and it caught the Neko’s by surprise. Usagi had looked at the Neko directly in front of him, but when he moved, it was to the left. His katana came down in an arc, driven by powerful muscles hidden beneath his fur, and the ninja barely had time to deflect the blow.

Usagi whirled around to his left, away from the other two as they sprang, placing his body to the right of the first ninja. As the Neko twisted to face him, Usagi slashed upwards with his sword and sliced into the ninja’s side, his weapon cleaving through skin, sinew and bone as it traveled, nearly separating the Neko into two halves.

With a spray of blood the dead ninja fell into the path of his brethren, giving Usagi a moment to reposition himself. Quickly and ferociously, the two remaining Neko fell upon him, their katanas striking from both right and left.

Usagi caught the blow to his right upon his katana and simultaneously drew his wakizashi with his left hand. Turning his body and pushing back against the first ninja, he felt the katana from the second pass within inches of his head. The forward momentum brought the Neko close to Usagi, and as he slid his katana away from the first ninja, he drove his wakizashi with all his strength into the second ninja’s exposed neck.

As the Neko fell, he took Usagi’s wakizashi with him, the blade embedded deeply. Usagi released his hold on it, concentrating instead on the final Neko ninja, who now moved with more caution.

The two opponents eyed one another as they moved in a slow circle. Usagi’s katana was at center, tipped up towards his opponent’s throat as he looked for an opening. The Neko held his sword high and close to his shoulder, watching Usagi intently.

The ninja’s knee twitched and then he lunged forward, swinging down in an arc meant to slice through Usagi’s body but the samurai pulled his weapon up and deflected the strike. Sliding his weapon along the ninja’s katana, he pushed the Neko’s sword back in the direction from which it had come, twisting the ninja sideways and off balance.

Pulling his weapon back to center with lighting speed, Usagi surged forward and drove his katana into the Neko ninja’s throat.

With a hard jerk, he yanked the weapon loose and stepped back. The ninja’s sword hit the ground a full second before he did.
Breathing hard, Usagi stood still for a few moments; his katana down at his side. Then drawing a deep breath, he stepped over the dead bodies until he reached his wakizashi. Grasping the hilt, he pulled it free of the dead ninja’s neck.

Squatting next to the body, Usagi wiped the blood from both his weapons and sheathed them. He would borrow a cleaning kit later to properly cleanse his swords, but now the task of dealing with three dead ninja needed to be handled.

As much as Lav hated to do it, she needed a bath. This place might be altered reality but the dirt and dust from the arena felt real on her skin.

Tucking a clean body suit under her arm, Lavinia took her leave of the Turtles, telling them she would join them in the dining tent.

The women’s facilities were surprisingly clean and Lav quickly found a stall with a shower attachment. Taking a towel from a nearby stack, she draped both it and her body suit over the door. Stripping, she stepped under the spray of warm water and scrubbed herself vigorously with a bath gel she found mounted to the wall.

Hair and body clean, Lavinia felt more confident as she prepared to deal with a second night in this strange place.

Until she reached for her body suit and found it had been replaced with a different garment.

No one had come in so the exchange had to have been done by whatever entity had decided she needed to be dressed in the least possible clothes. The new outfit was dress like; there were long panels of light weight material at the front and back, barely wide enough to cover her rear, with a panel of cloth connecting the two which ran between her legs.

A thin covering of material stretched tight over her breasts, leaving most of her skin exposed save for the necessary couple of inches. Her arms, back, legs, and center front down to her navel were completely bare. Lavinia huffed with resignation as she put on the garment, sliding her feet into a pair of ankle tied sandals to complete her wardrobe.

The magical exchange of wardrobe she could deal with; the greater blow was what she discovered next. Her tonfas were gone.

“Shell,” she hissed, unnerved by that particular loss. Closing her eyes, her fists clenched by her sides, she took a deep breath and willed herself to remain calm. They would turn up or they wouldn’t; they weren’t the real thing anyway. Their weight on her hip was reassuring, but she could deal with not having them. It looked as though she wasn’t going to be given a choice.

Lav made her way directly to the dining tent. As she approached she could hear the sounds made by the group of entertainers from the previous evening, hard at work keeping the contestants happy and out of mischief.

She entered the tent as surreptitiously as she could, trying not to draw unnecessary attention to her presence. Her path to her team’s table took her past several other group tables, including Sarvitek’s. The calls and whistles that followed her progress made her blush; the unwanted attention went against her innate modesty.

As she approached the Turtles, she saw that the cat dancer from the previous evening was once more cavorting before Michelangelo. Her orange fur was nearly a match to his mask, and she
seemed to be completely focused on him alone as her tail made a slow sweep up between her legs to caress her own womanhood.

Mikey’s lecherous grin slid off his face as he noticed Lavinia’s presence. It was quickly replaced by a look of obvious appreciation, without the hint of disrespect he’d held before and Lav shot him a quick smile. His return smile was full of his usual guileless delight, as the real Mikey peeked through for a moment.

From the corner of her eye, Lav saw the cat dancer frown at the loss of her audience. With renewed vigor, she whipped her tail around her body and undulated nearer the table and Mikey.

Without a word, Lavinia turned to face her, taking a small step which placed Lav between the dancer and her audience.

The cat’s tail slashed the air menacingly, a low growl issuing from deep in her throat. Turning slightly sideways, Lav planted one foot, bent her knees and brought her fists up.

Looking with wide eyes at the Green Proctor’s fighting stance, the cat dancer abandoned her attempts to seduce Michelangelo and moved on to another table. Her spot was quickly taken by a pair of jugglers and Lavinia relaxed.

When she turned around, she found Mikey leaning far forward over the table, his eyes bright and excited.

“Gonna fight over me, Proctor?” he asked with obvious glee.

In a carefully modulated tone, Lav said, “That was one of those dangerous enticements I warned you about.”

With a laugh, he responded, “Well, she’s obviously not as dangerous as you are.”

Lav moved around the table to join them, and Mikey jumped up to grab a chair and set it next to his. As she sat, Lav glanced down the table directly into Leonardo’s eyes.

Turning her head quickly, Lav cursed herself. What was it about him that so unnerved her in this setting? What was it about his constant silent observation that made her heart race and her face feel like it was on fire?

Donatello was seated to her right and leaning nearer he said, “You look extremely nice tonight, Lavinia.”

Not Proctor. She looked at him, trying to read his expression but it gave nothing away.

“Thank you, Donatello,” she replied, her eyes looking directly into his.

A murmur from Raph took Don’s attention and Lav turned back to her plate, staring at it with unseeing eyes. She could reach them; somehow that small exchange with Don bolstered her confidence, because in it she was sure she had seen the real Don.

When they had finished their meal, the Turtles left the tent to stroll around the camp grounds. Lav went with them, pulled along by Mikey who insisted she join them if she wished for them to stay out of trouble.

Outside the dining tent which was reserved for contestant teams were the cook fires and small tents of the servants and games crew. They were a rough bunch, full of loud living and
bawdy tales. The Turtles fell in with a group and began exchanging stories which Lav soon found she didn’t care to hear.

Stepping away from them, Lav glanced around to ensure no one was watching her and once more moved into the woods, pushing her way to a secluded spot far from the one where she had encountered Sarvitek.

Lav leaned back against a tree, her head up to look at the few visible stars, and sighed. It was cooler here, and the air fresher away from the giant cook fires and the strange things some of the men smoked.

“This is a dangerous place to be alone.”

She flinched and turned towards the voice, recognizing it as Leonardo’s. It was low, pitched in a menacing tone, and sent a shiver down her spine.

Lav finally picked part of his figure out of the shadows, knowing she only saw that much because he allowed it.

“I didn’t think anyone saw me sneak away,” she admitted.

“I was watching you.” The same tone, direct and unlike the Leo she knew.

Splinter’s voice rang suddenly in Lavinia’s head, “You must get away from him Lavinia. We do not know what he has become. Do not let him know you are afraid.”

Lav’s heart was beating fast and she thought back, “It’s a little late for that.”

Nevertheless, she remembered Leo’s training and took a deep breath, holding and releasing it to slow her heartbeat.

“What are you afraid of Lavinia?” Leo asked.

“Damn.” Aloud she told him, “You startled me. I’m not afraid of anything.”

“Are you sure?” A deep, husky whisper and then he was no longer visible.

Lav felt her heart jump again, despite her efforts to quiet it. She stood completely still, instinct telling her to run, but not knowing which way to go made instinct useless.

She pulled herself away from the tree and took a couple of steps into the small clearing, listening intently. “Oh God, maybe he’s gone,” she thought to Splinter.

A hot breath on her neck and hands on her shoulders told her she was wrong.

“I can hear you trying to control your heartbeat,” he murmured against her ear.

Lav couldn’t quite contain a quiver, trying to cover it with speech. “I’m not used to being stalked.”

His hands slipped down her arms, then back up, a possessive caress. “I would think that wouldn’t be new to you.” The side of his face touched the hair above her ear.

“I’m going back to camp,” she stated as forcefully as possible, but trying to pull away from him proved futile.
His laugh was dark. “Not just yet.”

“If you want to talk to me, then talk; I still have duties to perform,” Lavinia said.

“Yes you do.” He nuzzled into her hair and stepped closer, pressing his plastron against her back.

She held herself rigid, trying to exert her authority. “I am your Team Proctor Leonardo, nothing more. I’ll thank you to remember that.”

“During the day you are. Tonight, you are a beautiful woman.” His mouth pressed close to her ear, nipping at her lobe.

“Splinter…” Lav called in her mind, needing an anchor of some sort as Leo’s desire began to spread its warmth over her.

“Be firm my sister,” he responded, his voice in her mind strong.

“I am the same at any time, day or night. You need to let me go.” She turned her head away from him.

His grip on her shoulders tightened. “You are a beautiful woman. The way you smell, the way you look, the way you feel . . . .” His mouth came down on her neck.

Close to a panic, Lavinia tried to twist away from his tongue on her skin. “This isn’t proper behavior, Leonardo. Stop this and let me go.”

“What will happen if I don’t? Will you scream? Don’t you know how far away from camp we are?” Leo hissed against her neck. His hands moved on her arms again, this time letting his fingers brush the sides of her breasts.

“Do not let him give in to carnal desires Lavinia. We will lose him,” Splinter called.

“This can’t be Leo,” Lavinia thought.

“This is the Leonardo they have created in his mind,” Splinter answered. “Do not let this one take over the other.”

Becoming desperate, Lav struggled against his grip, telling him, “I don’t have to scream, I can defend myself.”

“Good.” Leo spun her without warning, pinning her arms to her sides with his and grabbing a thick handful of hair to pull her head back. “I want you to fight. I like strong, beautiful women.”

Lav saw the shine in Leo’s amber eyes when she glanced into them. His breathing was irregular, jacked up by his actions, and a half smile curved his mouth.

Lavinia lifted a foot and stomped towards his instep but he kicked her foot aside, and as he did, she raised it higher, aiming for his knee.

With an almost sinister laugh, Leo pulled his leg in and her foot skimmed past his outer thigh. And then he set his knee between her legs.

Pulling her hair harder, he bent her head back so that her throat presented itself fully to him. A deep bass churr rolled out of his chest as he fell upon the little hollow at the base of her neck.
“Stop it! Leonardo, stop this now!” Lav cried out, feeling his knee begin to grind into her vulva, the thin wisp of material between her legs no barrier against him.

He lifted his mouth. “Fight me, Lavinia. Try to get away.” His voice was hazed with lust, coming out several octaves lower. “Fight and scratch and bite me,” he urged her.

“You will not take me by force!” She was struggling in earnest now, trying hard to find a purchase for her foot, pushing it against the edge of his shell.

“Yes, take you.” He churred again. “I will take you.”

His free hand slid down her back, his arm still tight to allow her no escape, and grabbed her ass, kneading it through the gossamer dress.

Lav groaned despite herself. This was not Leo’s mind, but it was his body and trying not to respond to it was hard. She was panting; his mouth as it climbed towards hers was leaving a trail of heated kisses on her skin. His hand on her rear ground her pelvis into his and his knee was driving wicked pleasure into her sex. She felt herself getting wet, and knew he’d feel it soon, too.

“Lavinia, do not let him tarnish his honor. If he does, he will belong to them,” Splinter warned, loud in her mind.

She reached for that thought, clinging to the image of her Leonardo drowning in this one, waiting for her to pull him free. Her mind jumped quickly from one alternative to the next, trying to find a way out of this predicament.

Her eyes snapped open as Leo reached her mouth.

“Donatello!” she nearly shouted.

Leo stopped moving. His mouth came up slowly. “What?”

“I c . . . can’t do this. With you. B . . . because of Donatello,” she gasped.

His eyes narrowed and he allowed her head to come forward enough to stare into her face. She worked to achieve an expression of earnestness, needing him to believe the lie she’d just come up with.

“Good, sister. Continue,” Splinter encouraged from the deep recesses of her mind.

“What of Donatello?” Leo asked, concentrating on her features.

“I . . . care for him. I think he returns the . . . feeling. I came out here hoping he would follow me,” Lav said, meeting his eyes.

Leo said nothing for several moments as he studied her. She kept her expression open, honest, and a trifle naïve.

When he released her hair, she almost sighed, but caught herself.

“How?” he wanted to know.

“Our first night. He told you how he saved me from Proctor Red. He’s strong and brave, unlike other men I have known and I want him.” The words came out in a rush, but they were believable because she was talking about the real Donatello.
Leo nodded slightly, telling her the words and tone were good enough to make him buy it. He slowly released her, stepping back a foot, but still well within her space.

She saw a touch of the real Leo then, the one whose honor would not allow him to take from a brother.

Looking at her, his lust still apparent, he told her in a guttural voice, “I give you a day. Make him yours or I will come for you.”

In a flash, he was gone, disappearing into the shadows without a sound. Lavinia started to shake, walking on rubbery legs to the nearest tree and leaning on it.

“Get it together woman,” she told herself.

A warm laugh in her head reminded her that Splinter was still connected. “You did well sister. Donatello was the perfect choice.”

“But now I only have one day to set Donny’s mind free,” Lavinia replied.

“A day may be enough. Go somewhere safer now. Leonardo was correct; the woods are much too dangerous for you.”
Chapter Summary

At their morning practice Lavinia passed along all of the information she had on the opponents they were scheduled to face later that day.

“They are called the Kopblick. The Kopblick are large, heavy and lumbering; speed will not be a factor in their fighting style. They are thick limbed and very difficult to knock off their feet. All four members of the team use clubs and the force behind their swing could shake a mountain. Most contestants who are hit by a club do not survive,” Lav told them.

“Weaknesses?” Leo asked, his face concentrated.

“Besides being extremely slow they rely almost exclusively on the power of that swing. They don’t seem to tire and a swing and miss will not take them off balance. They have no other skills to speak of and are almost always bested in a fight by a more intelligent fighter. You just have to stay away from their clubs,” Lavinia said.

Lunch was served by Lav in their tent. Leo spoke to his brothers in an undertone, laying out his plan of attack as Lav filled plates and brought them their food. Raph’s eye ridges lifted as she set a plate in front of him and she kept her face neutral as she caught his eye momentarily before turning back to the service cart.

The Turtles entered the arena for the first time that afternoon. The stands were filled to capacity as the brothers took their places and Lavinia mounted her podium. She was very happy to have discovered her tonfas next to her bed when she rose that morning; with the holster belted around her waist, she felt much more confident.

When the Kopblick lumbered onto the field of battle, the stands erupted in cheering. Clearly these were the crowd favorite for this match against a group of unknown Earth terrapins.

One of the five judges lifted his hand and the Games starter official sounded his horn to signify the beginning of the match.

The fight was over almost as soon as it had begun.

Lav watched in stunned surprise as the Turtle’s coordinated attack drove their opponents back into an immediate defensive posture. Her team was quiet, focused and synchronized; communicating in short, terse sentences unlike how they normally fought.
Here there were no individual personalities; even Mikey was restrained and intense under Leo’s iron control. Leonardo seemed to know exactly where each of his brothers were, issuing clipped commands, “To me Raph,” “Mike, to your left,” “Don, cover Mike”.

Those brothers were in turn equally as sharp, their communication nearly wordless. As a team they were predators; skilled and relentless. And they were bloody.

Within a matter of moments, the fight ended. The crowd was shocked to silence at the speed with which the Green squad won their first bout. They had come into the arena as a completely unknown factor and with one fight they had made a statement to the onlookers and judges alike.

They were here to win.

The silence gave way to a ground swell of sounds; screams, shouts, chanting and applause. Spectators began to stand, arms raised in a cry of “Green, Green, Green!”

Lav watched as medics entered the field to remove the unconscious Kopblick. She hoped they weren’t dead; although the rules of the game did not forbid killing an opponent, it was generally accepted behavior by most competitors to avoid doing so. Lav did not want to discover that killing someone, even a hallucinogenic creation, would forever trap the Turtles.

Mikey was waving and bowing to the enthusiastic crowd, back to his normal jovial self. Raph and Don were both smiling, slapping each other on the shell and looking up at the raucous crowd.

Lavinia slowly brought her gaze around to Leonardo.

He stood apart from his brothers, katanas crossed in front of him, staring directly at her over the blades. His face was immobile; the look hard and unyielding. Only a slight glitter in his amber eyes registered any kind of feeling and it gave nothing away.

Her world diminished in that moment to just Leo. His eyes locked with hers as he lifted his swords and slid them back into their sheaths. Ignoring the crowds and the sounds of his brother’s loud celebrations, he focused on her alone.

Lav’s breath caught. The look he was giving her was challenging and promising; full of intent. That look made her pulse race.

The mesmerizing stare was broken when Leo’s brothers rushed him and pulled him back to acknowledge the crowd.

Free from his gaze, Lav forced her legs to move and she stepped down from her podium to await her fighters. When Mikey saw her, he rushed over and swept her up into his arms, spinning her wildly, much to the crowds delight.

She let him have his moment before gently pushing against his shoulders. He let her down slowly, making sure to rub his plastron against her front as she descended. Lav chose to ignore his lascivious behavior; scolding him would serve no purpose and she wasn’t really bothered by his action.

His arm was tightly around her waist as they moved aside for a maintenance crew arriving to rake the bloodied ground in preparation for the next contest.

Don must have seen the look on her face as they exited the field.
“We didn’t kill them,” he told her quietly.

She looked at him, startled. “What?”

“We didn’t need to, so we just incapacitated them,” he said.

“Yeah, they’ll live ta fight another day,” Raph added.

“But not against us, right guys?” Mikey said, laughing and squeezing Lav.

Leo said nothing and Lav kept her response to herself. She had seen the blood on his katanas.

Pulling lightly against Mikey’s grip, Lav said, “You can let me go now.”

Mikey grinned and rubbed his thigh against her hip. “Aw, but you’re so warm and soft.”

“Mike,” Leo said softly.

Grin firmly in place, Mikey released Lav’s waist, sliding his hand down to cup her ass before moving away.

Usagi had scrubbed away the blood left behind from his fight with the Neko ninja’s after disposing of their bodies in the most expeditious way possible. He had tossed them back through the portal.

He found oil, cloth, and powder in the dojo and carefully cleaned his daisho, the ritual soothing the tension from his body.

With that task done, Usagi patrolled the lair. He was sure he would know if a portal opened to release yet another danger, but he was nervous around the frozen forms of his friends. He also needed to stay alert; neither he nor Master Splinter had any way of knowing how long it would take to defeat the evil magic which held the small family in its grip.

Usagi’s feet took him down the hall towards Leonardo’s room. The door was open but Usagi did not enter, feeling that would be an intrusion of his friend’s privacy. He had been inside the room once, and it looked almost exactly the same as it had on that occasion three years ago.

Almost the same in its Spartan cleanliness and sparseness of possessions; however, several items were new and piqued the samurai’s curiosity.

A painting hung on the wall now, and a photograph in a frame stood on the table next to Leo’s bed. The painting was of all four Turtle brothers, their sensei, and the woman. The framed photograph was of the Turtles and the woman, seated close together on a couch, their arms around each other as they smiled for the photographer.

Usagi stepped back from the doorway. Master Splinter had told him the woman was his sister and from her position in the meditation circle, she was an honored member of the family. Now he wondered if she was something more.

As he stepped away from Leo’s room, Usagi spotted another open door further along the hallway. Moving in that direction, he stopped once more in the entrance to a bedroom. This was obviously feminine; even the smell told him the space belonged to a woman.
His position in the doorway did not afford him much more than a small view of the room, but he did note the framed sketch sitting on a table next to her bed. It was of all four Turtles.

Usagi stood frozen, mesmerized by what he saw here and what he had seen in Leo’s room. He knew he should not find hidden meaning in three pictures and a new family member; of course Master Splinter’s sister would be treated with honor and respect and given a room of her own.

It was the fact that the room happened to be next to Leonardo’s that worried the ronin.

Lav was not surprised to discover her tonfas had once again disappeared as she stepped from the shower stall. The body suit she had chosen for her evening attire had again been replaced by a short, tight dress; the bottom barely covered her rear and there was just enough material on either side of the deep v cut to cover the essential parts of her breasts.

She was coming to understand the meaning of the revealing costumes she was forced to endure in this altered reality. The thing their enemies would most need to overcome if they were going to defeat her was her stubborn pride, and the fastest way to that goal was to humiliate and demean her.

With understanding came determination. Since nothing here was real other than her Turtles, she could stand the costume changes. It was enough work to concentrate on keeping her change in attire from negatively affecting those around her, including her lovers.

The day’s bouts had diminished the field of contestants by eight more teams. Sarvitek’s squad had prevailed in their battle, and he tipped his head at her and winked as she passed him. It was a subtle reminder, but a reminder nonetheless.

Her team was enjoying the attention of a large group of admirers, mostly female, who surrounded their dining table. Somehow they had gotten past the guards who were supposed to keep non-participants out of the tent; probably someone had been bribed.

Seeing a woman bending over Leo with her hands on his shoulders caused a quick flash of heat to cover Lav’s face. Striding forward, she gripped the woman’s wrist in a tight fist and twisted her completely away from the blue banded turtle.

“Time to leave,” Lav announced to the entire group, although her eyes were locked on the woman who had dared to touch Leo.

The woman pulled at Lav’s hand, her face scrunched up in pain at the pressure Lavinia was exerting on her wrist. Shoving hard, Lav released her hold and the woman fell flat on her butt before twisting to get her feet beneath her. She didn’t look back as she ran from the tent.

The display of force sent the rest of the fans scrambling as Lav turned back to the table. She stood straight, her shoulders back as she took several deep breaths to calm herself. There had to be a name for what she felt upon seeing another woman touch Leonardo.

The turtle in question was turned in his chair; staring at her with unbridled admiration and desire as she controlled herself enough to glance over at him. One corner of his mouth lifted; the look in his eyes sending a clear message. The clock had almost run down.

Deliberately, Lav moved a chair close to Donatello and seated herself. The purple banded turtle was staring at her with intense curiosity.
“You wanted to hurt that woman,” he said, positive in his assessment.

Lav wasn’t going to lie. “Yes,” she told him.

“And the cat dancer from last night,” he said, his eyes blinking as he processed her actions.

“Yes,” Lav once more admitted.

Don passed a hand over his forehead, and Lav turned to look at him.

“Are you all right?” she asked.

He nodded, although there was a hint of pain etching his face. She’d seen it before; Don was getting a headache.

“Why?” Don asked and it took Lav a second to understand he was asking about the women and not her concern over how he felt.

She instinctively knew to answer as herself, not as Proctor Green.

“Because I don’t like other women touching my men,” she said firmly.

His eyes bored into hers and she didn’t flinch from his stare.

“You have the most beautiful green eyes,” he told her in a hushed, gentle tone. She knew in a flash that observation did not come from pseudo-Don.

“Only for you,” she responded, her own voice held a caress and when his eyes opened wide, she knew he’d felt it.

Throughout dinner, Don continued to rub at his forehead and look around the tent in a perplexed manner. He was fighting something internally, or it was fighting him; either way Lav knew Don was struggling for awareness. She needed to help him find his way back, just as Splinter had instructed, and she needed to find the way to do so that wouldn’t leave him falling into that bright, white light.

The Turtles didn’t linger over dinner. Tomorrow they were to face their first individual matches and since the draw wouldn’t take place until just before the match, they didn’t know which of their squad would be fighting.

Lavinia held back as the Turtles entered their tent so that she could deliver instructions on their morning meal and to have a strong word with the head of the security team. She made it quite clear to him that another such blunder as allowing groups of screaming woman to come near her team would call down a punishment much harsher than any the Games administrator might apply. Her message was received.

Upon entering the tent Lav stopped just inside and looked at her Turtles. Leo was in his seiza, carefully cleaning his katanas, while Mikey and Raph were intent upon some card game which had Mikey grinning madly and Raph scowling in frustration.

Don sat on his mat, away from the others as his hand rubbed heavily against his forehead. Both his head and shoulders were down, his pain palpable.

If they were ever going to get out of this realm, Lavinia was going to have to get bold and she was going to have to do it now. Her deadline, as issued by Leonardo, had reached its end and
he was watching her sharply.

She was pretty sure she knew why Don’s head ached. He had seemed confused about this place from the first, as though the cognizant part of his mind had been fighting the entire time against the illusion.

Lav knew that the headache might indicate inner turmoil and if that were the case, he was ready for her to guide him back. She now knew how to do just that; in a way that would keep him completely focused on her and away from the white light.

Crossing the tent with deliberateness, Lav dropped to her knees on the mat in front of Donatello and asked, “Your head hurts?”

Surprised at her action, he looked up and said, “Yes.”

“I can help with that,” she told him and firmly but gently placed the tips of her fingers against his temples.

Concentrating, Lav began to push her healing energy into him as her fingers traced a circular pattern on the painful area.

His eyes had closed at her initial touch, but now they opened and she heard his gasp.

Lav had purposely placed herself so that her breasts were at eye level. They were Don’s favorite part of her anatomy and she wanted his whole, undivided attention.

If she was going to seduce him, then the ‘twins’ as he liked to refer to them were her first weapon.

When total awareness returned, he didn’t need to be in his head, he needed to be with her.

Dropping her voice into a husky undertone, Lav asked, “How does this feel?”

“Perfect,” he replied breathlessly.

The sounds inside the tent behind them had ceased as soon as Lav had joined Don on the mat. She knew his brothers were watching, and could only hope they wouldn’t decide this should be a family affair.

Lav shifted closer to Don, bringing her breasts nearly up against his face. In something akin to a purr, she asked, “And this?”

With a groan, Don buried his face between her breasts and his hands came up to cup them. Lav dropped her hands to his shoulders as he began to squeeze and nip at her through the skin tight material of her dress.

Lav’s head fell back and she moaned low in her throat. From the corner of her eye, she saw Mikey start to rise and then heard the loud hiss of Leo’s voice. Mikey slowly sat back down.

Don’s arm snaked around her waist and pulled her tighter as his other hand began to pull the material away from her tits. Lav tipped her head forward and whispered, “My bed.”

With one smooth movement, Don stood and lifted her, his face still buried in her breasts.

As he spun towards her curtained space, Lav looked up to see Leo watching her through hooded eyes as he continued to polish his katanas.
Don shoved his way through the curtain and tossed Lav down on her bedding, falling directly atop her. His hands were working on her clothes almost before she landed; his face determined as he slid the material off her shoulders and yanked it down. Lav pulled her arms free and Don bunched the material at her waist stopping to turn his attention to her bare breasts.

His eyes were bright as he gazed down at her, and then he filled his hands with her naked skin. He pressed her tits together, pushed and squeezed them before turning his attention to her nipples.

Leaning down, he touched his lips to one and then pulled back to watch it lift and harden.

Lav felt his body shake just before he repeated the process on the other nipple. A loud churr rolled up from his throat, and opening his mouth wide, he wrapped his lips around as much of one tit as he could manage.

Lavinia wriggled beneath him as he sucked at one breast and groped the other with his hand. His thumb found her nipple and passed over it again and again; teasing the nub and driving Lav mad with desire. The material between her legs was soaked and her hips jumped and pushed at him of their own accord.

“Don-ny,” she moaned, wanting nothing more than the press of his hard cock inside of her.

His head came up when she said his name, his eyes seeking hers as confusion clouded his vision.

“Lav?” he asked, a moment of clarity pushing past the created persona.

She saw the ripple on his face as the illusion fought for control of him. Determined, Lav pushed him back so she could sit up. On his knees between her outstretched legs, he stared into her eyes, caught between two warring personalities.

Lav wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled his mouth to hers.

Her kiss was almost desperate as she pushed her tongue past his lips and into his mouth. Don’s hands circled her waist and then his tongue pressed back passionately, lapping at the inside of her mouth as another churr rose up from his chest.

Lav could feel the churr rumble beneath his chest plates as her breasts rubbed against them. Reaching for his bo, she slid it out and tossed it next to the bed before leaning into him, and then she pulled her legs back to give herself leverage to slowly shove him down onto his carapace.

She broke the kiss and stared into his warm brown eyes for a moment. The return look was still part Don and still part pseudo-Don; but she could see that second part was fading. She could also see that the pain in his head was returning.

Knowing she had to move faster, Lav stood up and forced the rest of her costume off her body. Turning slightly to toss the sandals into a corner, she caught sight of a dark bulk shadowed against the curtain and realized her light was still on.

Until they were all hers again, nobody was getting a free peep show. Lav stepped quickly to the lamp and doused the light. Her reward was a low groan of protest from the other side of the partition.

Turning, she saw that Don’s head had followed her movements, and that he was lifting himself on to his elbows. Moving swiftly, she dropped to her knees between his legs, spreading
them wider with a push of her hands. She heard Don’s gasp as she placed her palms firmly against
the skin of his inner thighs and slid her hands towards his tail.

His alternate personality grabbed her wrists, halting her just as she placed a warm hand
against the underside of that sensitive appendage. Lav looked up at him and saw the cocky,
lecherous grin that was so unlike the turtle she loved. That was not the Donatello she was going to
make love to.

Reaching deep, Lav found her ‘voice’ and used it. “Don-atello . . . .”

The effect on him was immediate. Don shuddered and his hands left her wrists. His eyes
closed part way as the echo from that voice played through his head.

Lifting a hand, Lav placed her palm against his plastron and pushed. Don fell back on the
bed and relinquished control.

Bending low, Lavinia took the tip of his tail into her mouth and sucked on it while one hand
carressed the underside. She used her other hand to press firmly against the growing bulge that hid
his cock, her thumb teasing the slit that housed his manhood.

His cock unfurled from its hiding place and slid into her hand.

Releasing his tail from her mouth, Lav leaned forward and pressed a soft kiss to the head of
his dick. Don’s responding churr was loud and his penis filled completely.

Crawling further forward, Lav mashed her breasts together around his cock and began to
stroke his shaft with her tits.

“Yes, Lav, yes!” Don called to her, his hands clenching and releasing as he fought the urge
to grab for her.

Dropping her chin, Lav lapped at the precome oozing from the slit on his dick, and then
she quickly enveloped the head with her mouth, sucking and licking him all over.

Lifting her eyes, she watched the changes cross Don’s face. One minute she could see only
Donny, the next it was pseudo-Don. Whatever evil had him in its grips was fighting for control;
trying to make him remember his role as competitor, self-involved and arrogant.

Lavinia was having none of that. Her mouth came off his cock and he moaned with
frustration, staring wide eyed at her.

She continued to squeeze his cock between her breasts as she purred at him, “Donatello.
Talk to me, Donny. Tell me what I want to hear.”

“Lavinia,” he moaned. “I don’t understand.”

Lav released his cock and crawled upwards, over his plastron until her face was inches
from his. She straddled his body, holding herself above him as she met his eyes and his hands
found their way to her cheeks. Touching her soft skin made his brow furrow and Lav saw a dark
mist drift across his vision.

“Tell me you want to be with me,” she said, urging him to meet her eyes.

As his brown eyes turned to her, Lav willed her energy to envelope them. Concentrating
hard, she forced herself into a mild meditative state and touched his mind with hers.
Lav could see the dark mist rolling and twisting, pushing Don’s true consciousness into a corner while the puppet Don cavorted for its pleasure. Far to the back was a pin point of white light, waiting to devour one of them.

Lavinia pushed herself upright, holding Don’s eyes as she reached back and found his hard, hot cock. Pumping him slowly, she repeated, “Tell me, Donny.”

The true Don pushed against his captor and called to her, “Lavinia, I want you!”

“Yes!” Lav cried out with joy and sank onto his dick.

Don’s hands grabbed her breasts as she began to slide her body up and down on his rigid shaft. His hips lifted to meet her; desperate for release he concentrated on the tight knot in his groin and his conscious mind reached out to her, shoving the dark mist aside.

She grabbed him with her thoughts and held on, pulling him to her with her mind and body. The dark mist rolled out to chase Don when suddenly its puppet was seized by the white light. Screeching loudly, pseudo-Don lashed out and caught the mist in its grip.

The mist tried to grab a piece of Don as it was drawn into the light, but Lav moved faster, riding his cock and yanking his consciousness to her. The white light flashed brightly as it swallowed the fake Don and then blindingly as the dark mist fell into its open maw.

Lavinia moaned as she came back to herself, dragging Don with her.

“Lavinia, ahh . . . ahh, ungh!” he shouted, climaxing with a final hard thrust into her body.

The spray of his hot come and the feel of his shuddering body pushed Lav into her own orgasm.

“Umm, Don~ny!” she cried breathlessly, continuing to ride his massive organ as wave after wave of pleasure shot through her system.

On the other side of the curtain, Mikey lay face down on the floor, head cocked to hear the sounds from within the private space. Raph snatched up a tin cup and launched it at him, bouncing it off his carapace.

“Get your head away from there Michelangelo. Don’s got a long reach with that bo staff,” Raph warned.

Mikey grinned, moving away from the barrier as he said, “From the sound of things I think he might be using that staff on her.”

Time passed behind the curtain for the mutant woman and her turtle lover. Their second coupling was wholly them; no outside influence trying to bind Donatello or destroy Lavinia.

When Don caught his breath enough to speak, his first question was, “What happened? Where are we?”

Lavinia lifted herself from his plastron where she lay snuggled against his chest.

“How much do you remember?” she asked.

“I remember being locked inside my own body while some strange part of me lived another life,” he answered. “I don’t remember how we got here; but from just before I saw you enter the
tent for the first time until now is all still in my head.”

“Strange feeling isn’t it? Like acting in a play with a script that writes itself as you go,” Lav said.

“Or a video game.” Don rubbed her back thoughtfully.

Looking him in the eye, Lav said, “Whatever it is, we have to get out. Splinter is with me; he attached to my psyche when we were all kidnapped. They couldn’t take him because he’s too strong, so they took me instead.”

“Does he know why?” Don asked.

“Only a guess. He knew I was going to try to bring you back tonight and told me to tell you Usagi is with him in the lair. That Lord Hebi is responsible for this attack. Does that make sense to you?” Lavinia’s face wore a puzzled frown.

“Usagi’s there?” Don was surprised. They hadn’t seen the samurai in over three years.

“Splinter said he came to warn you guys but arrived too late. He’s watching over our bodies because someone is supposed to come retrieve them for Lord Hebi.”

Don’s arms tightened around Lav as he worked through the mystery. “This is a very elaborate alternate reality to throw us into if Hebi wanted us dead. He’s after something else.”

“That’s what Splinter says. He keeps telling me to make sure you guys don’t do anything to soil your honor,” she told him.

Don’s eyes narrowed as he thought about that piece of information. “Damn,” he uttered in a low voice so that their conversation wouldn’t be overheard.

“What?” Lav could tell he’d figured something out and she slid further up his body so her face would be close to his.

“If they can fracture our consciousness; make us do something completely against our character, then they can kill our true selves while holding onto their ‘creations’. They can put anything they want back into our bodies and have complete control,” Don explained.

“Why?” Lav whispered. “Why would they want to do that?”

“Perfect killing machines,” he said. “Everyone he hates in his world is either a friend or ally of ours. They trust us completely.”

“Assassins? He wants to turn you into assassins?” she asked incredulously.

Don nodded. “I’m just guessing Lav, but it’s the only thing that makes sense. Break us; break our will, and rebuild us into what he needs most, killers.”

“I have to contact Splinter and tell him,” she said, eyes wide.

Startled, Don asked, “He’s not with you right now?”

Lavinia blushed furiously and Don started to grin. “My God Don, with what I was planning to do to you? Do you think I would have let him stick around for that?”

Don chuckled softly and lifted his head to kiss her nose.
Master Splinter drew in a deep breath and exhaled loudly. His eyes didn’t open, but the sound was a satisfied one and caught Usagi’s attention. The samurai was seated near the circle of his friends, leaning back against a pillar as he allowed himself to relax for just a bit.

He sat so he could watch Leo.

“Donatello is once again himself,” Master Splinter informed Usagi, who he knew was close by.

Usagi sat forward, looking from Master Splinter to Donatello and back. He saw no difference but did not doubt the Turtle’s sensei.

“How?” he asked.

“Lavinia, my sister, she helped him to drive the wizards from his mind. Her methods were unconventional, but effective.” He chuckled, a pleased sound combined with one of happy memories.

Usagi wondered at the unconventional aspect of the woman’s approach, but it was not his place to question.

“He has not rejoined his body,” Usagi observed.

“No,” Splinter said and then sighed. “They were taken together and must return together. I believe I know how to make that happen when the time comes, but for now Lavinia and Donatello will have to work towards driving the wizards out of the other three.”

“A slow process,” Usagi said.

“Yes,” Master Splinter acknowledged. “She has relayed from Donatello the hypothesis that Lord Hebi desires my son’s to be killers under his control, just as you guessed. You worry that Lord Hebi will send another force through the portal?”

“I am sure he will try. My warning will not dissuade him from his goal of having your sons as his personal assassins. Nor will the loss of one of the four. You understand honorable sensei that your sister is now in greater peril?”

Master Splinter frowned and said, “I do. She understands as well and will continue to do what she must. Donatello will keep watch over her.”

“It is good then.” Usagi settled back again, shifting to get more comfortable, his eyes seeking out the form of his beloved. Whatever methods the woman would use to bring Leo back did not concern the samurai. His only concern was to see Leonardo once more.

Both Leo and Raph drew individual bouts on this fourth day of the Games.

Lavinia had warned Don to behave as if nothing had changed in him and his swagger upon leaving her bedroom the next morning was so perfectly pseudo-Don that she wondered for a moment if he hadn’t been reacquired. The wink he tipped her over breakfast reassured Lav that Donatello was still hers.
Leo’s match was scheduled to occur first. He had drawn an Ambales named Tri and Lavinia moved close to Leo to give him the information relayed to her by Splinter.

“The Ambales are centaur like creatures with wings. They are strong and fairly fast but the important thing to remember is that their wings allow them to move in directions you cannot. They favor a long whip in battle, using it to trip and bind opponents. The whip is made of an incredibly strong native material and cannot be cut easily. Some Ambales are experts at using two whips, and if given the chance they will strike down from the sky. If he gets you down he will stomp you with his hooves.”

“Weaknesses,” he asked, always his first question.

“His large body makes it difficult for him to see directly beneath himself. Line of sight will be a major issue; his neck is too thick to turn well so he cannot see things directly behind him either. He will move continuously to overcome that weakness,” she answered.

Leo nodded. Standing side by side as they waited for Tri to enter the arena, Lav felt the heat radiating from the blue banded turtle. Feeling his eyes on her, she turned her head slightly, expecting another question about his forthcoming match.

“Did Donatello satisfy you, Proctor?” he asked in a low tone, not meant to be overheard by his brothers.

Her head turned away and she lifted her chin. “That is hardly an appropriate question.”

She could feel his smile without having to see it. “My own desire hasn’t diminished,” he informed her.

Lav took a step away as Leo’s Ambales opponent entered the arena. “Concentrate on your match, Leonardo,” she instructed him and climbed the stairs to her podium. His dark laugh followed her.

The pair stepped to the center of the arena and faced one another as they awaited the starter’s horn. Lav’s stomach knotted as she watched Tri uncoil two whips, one of which was tipped with a short, sharp blade.

Leo’s katanas slid from their sheaths and he held them ready, his face a perfect mask of intense focus.

Almost before the sound of the horn receded Leonardo was moving, his body a green blur. Tri snapped a whip at him, striking the ground near his feet and Leo caught the bladed whip on a katana, pulling back against the weapon with the sharp edge of his sword.

Tri snapped the first whip at Leo’s legs while they tugged against each other and Leo sliced down with his other sword, slapping the whip aside. The bladed whip slipped undamaged off the steel of Leo’s weapon and Tri pulled both his whips back quickly.

Before he could snap either forward, Leo charged him. Tri danced aside nimbly, his four legs moving with incredible speed. Spinning quickly, he managed to keep Leo’s form in front of him.

With a quick shift, Leo changed direction, throwing himself to the ground and rolling on his shoulder until he was close enough to Tri to slash at his front legs.

Tri leaped up and his wings extended, taking him airborne as he avoided the katanas.
Pulling his front legs back, he dove down at Leo, who waited for him.

As the twin coils of Tri’s whips reached out for him, Leo bent his knees and lunged directly beneath the Ambales. Striking out with the katana in his left hand, he slashed a long deep trench into Tri’s right rear leg.

Tri screamed out in pain and pulled up and away from his adversary. Leo landed on his feet and spun to watch the Ambales fighter turn in mid-flight, his whips lashing the air as he once more dove towards Leonardo.

The moving whips forced Leo to back flip away from the attack. Tri landed in front of him, crying out at the pain in his leg as he put his weight on it, and charged at Leo, the whips crisscrossing the air before him.

Leo followed the arcing pattern of the whips as they approached and with a quick turn, presented his carapace as the whips reached him. Both glanced off his hard shell, although the blade added a new nick to the already scarred carapace.

As soon as the whips hit him, Leo turned and somersaulted off one closed fist directly towards Tri. Before the Ambales could react, Leo sliced into his left shoulder and then spun along his side, bouncing off Tri’s flank.

Tri kicked with his rear leg, trying to catch Leo before he could move aside, but the Turtle bounded into the air away from the leg. Slashing down as he moved, he carved a thin line across Tri’s ankle.

The wound wasn’t debilitating as the Ambales opponent pulled the leg down quickly, but it slowed him further; the cut radiating pain with each step. Angered, Tri tried to turn to find Leo, who had positioned himself at Tri’s blind rear quarters.

Unable to move as fast as he normally would, Tri spread his wings and Leo leaped onto his back.

Feeling the weight hit his withers, Tri reared up onto his back legs with a roar. The cut on his ankle made him drop back down immediately and he dipped his wings preparatory to flight.

Leo dug his knees into Tri’s sides and sliced into the humerus on both wings.

With a shrill cry, Tri began to spin in a fast circle and Leo leaped off of him. Both whips cracked out simultaneously as Leo moved back into Tri’s sights, but the Turtle dove beneath them, rolling dangerously close to the stomping hooves.

Leaping to his feet, he brought his fist down with all his strength on Tri’s right arm and the snap of bone was clearly audible throughout the now quiet arena.

The bladed whip fell to the ground and Leo scooped it up quickly as he jumped away from the Ambales warrior.

Blood ran from the cuts to his legs, his wings hung useless and one arm dangled as Tri attempted to continue the fight. Leo moved to his rear once more, and when Tri tried to turn and locate him, Leo dove forward and ruthlessly sliced into his other ankle.

Tri’s head lifted skyward as he cried out his pain and collapsed to one hock. Leo leaped onto his back again, dropping his katanas to either side of the Ambales as he grasped both ends of the stolen whip and dropped it over Tri’s head, pulling it tight around his neck.
Crossing the ends over each other at the back of Tri’s neck, Leo leaned forward and pulled with all his might in opposite directions, drawing the whip tighter and cutting off Tri’s air.

Tri dropped his other whip as he reached up and tried to find some purchase on the constricting cord around his neck, but there was absolutely no play in the whip; it was biting too deeply into his flesh.

Leo was unrelenting. Tri staggered forward, dragging his useless rear leg as he attempted to shake Leonardo from his back, but Leo’s knees were locked tight. Slowly, the Ambales fighter succumbed to the lack of air; his eyes slid shut, his hand fell away from his neck, and then he collapsed.

Leo released his choke hold on the whip and rolled off of Tri as the body hit the ground. Bending to retrieve his katanas, Leo spared barely a glance at his fallen adversary.

The crowd went crazy. They were screaming and clapping, shouting their approval of the fight and once more chanting for the Green squad.

Leonardo ignored them as his eyes searched for his brothers and found them. They clapped together in a slow rhythmic pattern; seemingly a secret message the four shared, and Leo’s lips twisted slightly upwards.

And then Leo’s eyes sought Lavinia. The small smile was still on his face, but the message it held had changed. His face, his eyes and his body language, spoke of challenge and possession; a promise to be kept.

Spinning suddenly, Leo leaned down, lifted Tri’s tail and sliced it in half.

The crowd noise doubled at his gesture and he lifted the tail high into the air. Cries of protest from the fallen fighter’s teammates were barely registered over the din from the spectators.

Turning to face Lavinia, Leo stood completely still, the tail clutched in one clenched fist. His face was once more unreadable; only his eyes, locked on hers, showed hidden fire in their amber depths.

Striding purposefully forward, he leaped up to the podium. Perched on the edge, he wordlessly presented the tail to her.

Lav’s hands shook slightly as she accepted the offering. Leo’s lips twitched and then he back flipped down and away, landing easily near his brothers.

Lav slowly descended the podium and joined the Turtles. Together they walked to the board where the next pair of contestants would be announced.

Don leaned close to Lav as they separated from the others. “What was that all about?”

Maintaining a neutral expression despite her inner turmoil, Lav said, “I don’t know. He’s made it clear he wants me; but he backed away when I told him I wanted you. Now he keeps offering these little challenges. Has he said anything to you?”

Don shook his head, keeping his eyes on his brothers. “No. Raph asked if you were a good fu . . . umm, you know what he asked.”

Lav almost smiled. “I hope your answer was in character.”
“It was and you’re not going to hear it,” Don told her, the grin in his voice. “Mikey wanted details but Leo hasn’t said anything at all. He isn’t treating me any differently.”

Lav let out a low sigh of relief. “That’s good at least. He’s frightening Donny. He’s so immersed in this character. I simply don’t understand.”

They stopped just outside of the ring of fighters gathered around the board. The other three Turtles were further forward, but Lav and Don continued to converse in low tones, fearful of being overheard.

“I think I do. It’s the allure of total control, Lav. None of us fights him in this reality; not even Raph. He directs everything with a tight fist. There’s no struggle for survival, no hiding from people, none of the responsibilities he has to face in the real world. His focus is on becoming the perfect combatant, the ultimate warrior, and he’s thriving on that narrow purpose.”

Lav’s blood ran cold at Don’s analysis. He was so precisely correct.

“How can I get him back? What will make him want to leave?” she asked with a touch of panic in her voice.

Don reached over and took her hand, holding it for a moment and releasing it before anyone saw him. “We have to give him the thing that is more important to him than anything else, Lav. The thing this reality can’t and won’t provide.”

She looked at him, one eyebrow arched. “And that is?”


Just then a cheer went up and the fighters moved back to the waiting area. Stepping forward, Lav saw that Raph had drawn the next bout.

“While we work on that, there are other things I have to do,” Lav whispered as the other Turtles turned back towards them.

Don turned sideways, grinning as though she’d just shared a naughty secret. “And those are?”

“Work on bringing one of the other two back,” Lav hissed out and then looked up into Raph’s face as he stepped up to her.

“So, ya’ know how ta beat my opponent?” he asked with a slightly impudent tone of voice.

“Yes I do,” she answered, tilting her head as she smiled.
Usagi stood in the middle of the lair and chanted.

Another portal had tried to open and Usagi had jumped to his feet to speak the counter spell which would keep the gateway closed. He had not known there was such a spell until Master Splinter had told it to him.

The Turtle’s sensei was very gifted Usagi thought, not for the first time, as he labored against the dark forces intent upon invading the lair. The ninja Master had not broken his link with the woman; they were at some critical point in their own fight, and yet he was able to deliver to Usagi a means to fight the battle here without the further drawing of blood.

Finally, after nearly a half hour of chanting and concentration, Usagi felt the evil pulling away. The hum of a gateway attempting to open disappeared and Usagi let out a long, shuddering breath.

Stepping slowly back to the dojo, he glanced over the family that was frozen in stasis. He could not even see the rise and fall of their chests as they breathed, so deep was the level of wizardry that had captured them.

Usagi moved to stand next to Leo and peered down at his friend and one-time traveling companion. The desire to reach out and caress Leo’s face was so strong that the ronin actually started a hand in that direction before recalling himself.

“How does he seem to you?” Master Splinter asked, sensing Usagi’s dilemma.

The samurai would have felt embarrassed around anyone else. It helped to know Master Splinter had not actually seen his gesture.

“He has not changed,” Usagi answered simply.

“And what of you, friend Usagi?” Master Splinter’s voice was gentle as he asked the delicate question.

“I too have not changed,” Usagi told him truthfully, once more looking with longing at the sensei’s eldest son.
“You will face a Grajatte named Joff,” Lavinia informed Raphael as they walked back to the center of the arena.

The crowd had grown larger for this match; news of Leo’s sensational victory had spread and the stands were packed to overflowing. Those who previously had no interest in the unknown Terrapins now fought for a place in the stands in order to watch one of them fight.

“I am sure you have noticed the Grajatte in the dining tent; they are the ten-foot tall giants who occupy the table near the kitchen,” she added.

“Yeah.” Raph stopped when they reached the battlefield. “Those purple and gray striped guys.”

Lavinia nodded, glancing at Leo as he moved to stand next to them. “You will have noted they have only one eye?” It was a question.

“I noted it all right.” Raph wore a cocky grin, pulling his sai and spinning it between his fingers.

“Don’t consider that to be a weakness,” she said. “The eye is covered by a hard protective film, and if needed, another clear shield can drop in a split second to protect his sight. The Grajatte prefer to battle with either a mace or broadsword, and usually choose just before they enter the arena, so be prepared for either.”

“Cut to the chase,” Raph said impatiently.

“Grajatte move with deliberation but not quickly, because they do not have a good center of gravity. They rely on brute force and their thick hides, which are very difficult to pierce. In a battle they will be intent and intelligent, unless . . . .” she broke off as the sounds of Raph’s opponent entering the arena reached them.

“Unless what?” Leo asked.

With a slight smile, Lav looked directly into Raph’s eyes. “Unless you can make them angry.”

Lavinia walked backwards away from Raph, her eyes still locked on his. His grin was even broader as he turned to face his adversary and Lav moved to climb the stairs to her podium.

As she touched the railing, Leo’s hand came down on top of hers. Halting on the first step, she glanced at him quizzically.

“Apparently Donatello did not satisfy you,” he said before sliding his hand off hers and walking over to join his brothers.

Lavinia raced up the steps as the horn sounded to begin the match. Raph’s sais were in his hands as he faced Joff and his broadsword. The giant held his sword low, the tip pointed upward and with a great bellow he lunged, swinging his weapon to the left in an attempt to gut Raphael.

Raph’s dart to the right and in took the giant by surprise. The broadsword missed and Joff moved forward two steps in an attempt to regain his balance. Raph thrust his sai directly into Joff’s belly only to have it slide across the thick fur without doing any damage.

Turning and ducking quickly to avoid the fist that was aimed at his head, Raph jumped and kicked Joff directly on his rear.
The Grajatte fighter stumbled a bit before catching himself and the crowd broke out in laughter.

A deep rumble came up from Joff’s chest and he swung around with his sword, slicing across with a sweep that would have beheaded the Turtle if he had stayed to wait for it.

Raph lunged under the blade, feeling the wind from the cut rush over his head as he drove shoulder first into the Grajatte’s middle.

A loud grunt and Joff staggered back but managed to pull his sword up high and slice down towards Raph’s skull. Raph sidestepped the attack easily; years of fighting against Leo’s much faster katanas made dodging the broadsword a game to him.

He jabbed down on Joff’s arm with his sai and was once more deflected by the thick hide of his adversary. Moving under another swing, Raph stayed close to Joff’s body and began to pummel his chest and stomach with fists driven by hard muscle.

Joff backed away from him, trying to distance himself from Raph’s onslaught and create enough space to maneuver his sword. Raph moved with him, striking him hard enough to illicit pained grunts and to keep the Grajatte off balance.

In frustration, Joff moved one hand off his broadsword and shoved against Raph’s shoulder. The push slid Raph backwards and Joff took the opportunity to swing his sword.

With no time for finesse, Raphael threw himself back onto the ground and spun on his carapace to avoid a downward slice. Jumping quickly to his feet, he leaped up and slammed a foot into the back of Joff’s hand as the fighter pulled his broadsword back around for another swing.

A loud snap echoed through the arena as something in Joff’s hand broke. With a cry, Joff’s hand fell away from the broadsword’s grip, and he was left to manipulate his weapon one handed.

“Let’s see if I can bust the other one,” Raph taunted as he crouched in his attack stance.

Infuriated, Joff howled and lunged at the Turtle, who once more ducked under his attack and then Raph slapped his ass with both sais.

As the crowd once more broke into hilarious laughter, Joff spun and barreled after Raph. Moving faster than was his norm, he swept his broadsword back and forth, trying to slice open the offending Turtle.

Raph shifted away from him with ninja speed, back flipping or spinning out of the range of each strike, making the Grajatte warrior lean far forward in his rage.

Dropping quickly in front of a charging Joff, Raph swung a leg out and around, sweeping the Grajatte’s feet from under him.

Unbalanced to begin with, Joff fell forward with a terrific crash and his broadsword skittered across the dirt and far away from his outstretched hand.

Before he could rise, Raph jumped on his shoulders, and brought the hilts of both sais down on the back of Joff’s head with the powerful driving force of his steel like muscles.

Joff’s eyes rolled back and he passed out. Raph stepped off his adversary, breathing deeply, and then grinned as the audience broke into wild applause.
Lav caught the tip of her tongue between her teeth, her eyes glowing with delight. Watching Raph fight had always turned her on, and despite the situation, it still had that effect on her.

Raphael looked up at the podium and saw the look on her face.

“Yo Lav, ya’ like that babe?” Raph called up to her.

Lavinia’s smile grew radiant at the use of her nickname and she started down the steps to meet him.

Without warning, a missile flew towards her, faster than the eye could follow. Pure instinct caused Raph to leap with an outstretched hand directly into its path and he caught the arrow meant to impale Lav.

A second one was just behind the first and it struck Raph’s wrist.

With a grunt of pain, Raph came down on his knees and Lav leaped over the railing, dropping in a crouch next to him. He released the first arrow and clutched his arm; the arrowhead protruded from one side of his wrist and quivered at his movement.

The sudden attack galvanized the crowd with fear and in a panic, the stands began to clear. Security officials raced onto the field, surrounding everyone inside the arena and trying with little success to find the shooter.

Don stood over Lav and Raph, his bo staff out and ready as he scanned the viewing area. Leo’s katanas were out, as were Mikey’s nunchucks; both brothers wearing a look of pure fury.

The Grand Proctor and one of the Game’s officials strode towards them.

“What happened?” the Grand Proctor demanded of Lavinia.

Looking up, she squeezed out through bared teeth, “Someone tried to kill me and this fighter was hit instead.”

The Game official signaled to a security officer as Lav once more turned her attention to Raph.

Clutching his arm in her hand, Lav held the other out towards him. “Give me your knife,” she told him as calmly as she could manage, even though she was seething.

With a look of surprise, Raph’s free hand dipped into his belt and extracted his small backup blade. Lav took it, locked his injured arm between her knees, and sliced carefully through the wood just behind the arrowhead.

“Think it’s poisoned?” he asked curiously as the tip hit the dirt.

“No,” she told him positively so that he wouldn’t dwell on it.

Lav heard Leo’s clipped tones as he demanded they question the Grajatte team, sure the attack was launched out of pure spite. Mikey was backing him, vocal and threatening as the Game official tried to calm them.

Don remained close to his injured brother, his body taut and alert.

“This is going to hurt,” Lav told Raph as her hand closed around the fletching.
“It already fucking hurts,” he said and then grit his teeth as she yanked the arrow from his skin.

Both of her hands circled his wrist so quickly that they cut off the flow of blood from his wound. Lav closed her eyes and concentrated; this was her first try at healing one of them of an injury in this altered reality and she prayed her powers would work.

Raph’s low hiss of surprise told her he had seen the green glow of her healing energy even as she felt it flow from her and into his arm. She continued to push her powers into his wound until she knew there was nothing left to heal.

Pulling her hands away, Lav released his now uninjured arm.

“Will he be able to continue, Proctor Green?” The Grand Proctor approached and leaned over them.

“Of course,” Lav told him, rising. “The injury was slight. Have you no idea who fired these weapons at us?” she asked, distracting him from Raphael.

“None.” The Grand Proctor was clearly agitated. “A thorough investigation will have to be made.”

He was quickly pulled aside by the Game official and security personnel. Nothing had been found and they were determined to bring about enough order to continue with the matches scheduled for the remainder of the day.

Lav turned away from them and saw Raph standing between his brothers, studying his wrist and speaking in a low tone. Don turned and caught her eye, quirking an eye ridge to tell her questions were going to have to be answered.

Stepping up next to Don, she spoke before anyone else could. “I told you I was a healer.”

“Yeah.” Raph was staring at her with a gleam in his gold eyes. “I figured that meant stitches and bandages, Proctor.”

“So now you’ve learned not to make assumptions,” she told him.

“I sure have learned not to make any about ya’,” he said in return.

“That arrow was meant for you,” Leo stated, his eyes narrowed as he watched her.

“Yes,” she acknowledged. “There are so many possible motivations I would rather not dwell on them. I shall simply have to be more cautious.”

“We’ve got them scared,” Mikey announced in positive tones. “It was one of the other teams; you take my word for that. Seeing how easily we win our bouts has got somebody worried.”

Lav’s hands were clenched into fists at her sides as she listened to the Turtles discuss that point. She didn’t know if dying in this universe would kill her in the real one, but she had a dreadful feeling it would.

Don watched her sympathetically. He wanted desperately to pull her into his arms and comfort the fear he knew she was experiencing. Just looking at the rigidity of her stance and the carefully controlled face she was presenting to them told him she was frightened and worried. He knew her.
She glanced at him and her face relaxed for a split second. Don’s heart melted at her look; the love and quiet determination in her eyes told him she was going to continue her fight.

“Let’s get out of here guys,” Don suggested. “This place is starting to bore me.”

“They have made their first attempt to destroy Lavinia,” Master Splinter said, his eyes closed and a worried expression on his face.

Usagi’s head lifted. He had dozed a bit, propped up by the pillar which proved to be the best vantage point for his watch over the lair and his friends. He had not slept for three days other than a few quick naps to refresh himself. There had been no time to sleep as he tried to stop the plot against those he cared about.

“She is a danger to their plans and not enough of a useful tool to be worth keeping,” Usagi observed.

“An excellent assessment. I believe she is attempting to pull Raphael back to reality as we speak; the allure of that world is not strong in him.” Master Splinter allowed himself a slight chuckle. “Raphael does not need altered reality in order to find a good fight.”

“You do not know for certain that he is her next target?” Usagi asked, clearly puzzled.

Master Splinter shook his head. “She has found the means to pull them back into themselves that prevents the light of awareness from consuming them. Her method is not something, as her brother and the Turtle’s father, that I wish to observe. My consciousness will recede from her until she calls for me. Let us hope she calls soon with news of further success.”

It was the second time Master Splinter had spoken of the woman’s methods and now his allusion to their being private made Usagi wonder again at her place in the family. Was she only a revered ‘sister’ and member of the clan Hamato, or did she have a closer bond with the Turtles, a physical bond?

Leaning back, Usagi decided he would have to think about how that made him feel.

The stifling confines of the dining tent did not appeal to the Green squad that day so they took their midday meal outside at the cook fire of some of the workers. Lavinia was silently pleased by their choice; she knew that Leo was still seething at the earlier attack and Raphael was easily provoked.

If Don was worried, he didn’t let on. His demeanor, words, and actions were exactly as they had been before she rescued him. That he was more cautious and wary were obvious, but that was attributed to the attack.

They decided that they would go back to the arena and watch the bouts slated for the afternoon in order to observe potential adversaries. Lavinia had other plans for one of them.

Catching Don’s eyes, she lifted her brows, signaling her need to talk. He tilted his head back and laughed aloud at some anecdote Mikey has just told, and then turned to her and said, “Come here Proctor.”

His hands stretched out to her and Lav rose and sauntered over to him. Grabbing her wrists,
he pulled her onto his lap and buried his face in her neck.

With a slight moan, she tipped her head to his and whispered, “I’m going after Raph now. We can’t afford to wait.”

Moving his mouth a fraction, Don whispered back, “Is he ready?”

“Yes.” Lav grabbed a wandering hand and set it on her hip, laughing as though he’d just proposed something racy. Then she moved her cheek to rub against his and whispered, “Make sure the others go to the arena as planned. I’ll find a way to get him alone.”

She dared say no more because she had seen Leo watching them. Pushing back from Don, Lav moved away from him; lightly batting his hands aside as he tried to pull her back.

Seating herself next to Raph, she announced, “There is a traveling market open today. I am in need of some herbs for my training kit so I shan’t be joining you at the arena this afternoon.”

Leo eyed her suspiciously. Mikey blurted, “How am I supposed to survive the afternoon without something nice to look at?”

Don rapped him on the shoulder, “You’re meant to watch the fights, slacker.”

“Who are you calling slacker? I can pin you in five moves,” Mikey retorted in good humor.

They had started walking back towards the arena, and Don moved ahead of Lav, directing remarks to Leo and Mikey that pulled them towards him. Lav quickly stepped in front of Raph and he was forced to stop.

“What now?” he asked, his tone holding none of the belligerence of the first day.

“Come to the market with me,” she said, tilting her head back to look into his eyes.

“Why me? Why don’t ya’ get Donatello ta go with ya’?” Raph asked.

Lav tucked her arm into his and his eye ridges came up in surprise. “Because I’m desirous of your company,” she told him, a teasing laugh in her voice.

Raph looked slightly stunned as he let her lead him away. Looking back over her shoulder, she noted that Leonardo watched them leave together and this time when their eyes met, Lavinia smiled with satisfaction.

Since Leo was famous for his ability to focus, she was going to give him something besides this altered reality to focus on.

The traveling outdoor market was quite large and Lav spent an hour wandering about with Raph in tow. His boredom was palpable at first until Lavinia, who knew him well, began to pull him towards things she knew would interest him.

They watched a staged wrestling match, the opponents more acrobats than fighters, then moved on to listen to a man trumpeting the miracles of his strength elixir. Raph tried a sample and said it tasted like “pig fat dipped in piss”. Lavinia couldn’t help but laugh as the salesman watched all of his potential customers groan and walk quickly away.

Their next stop was a pub, where Raph quaffed a large tankard of ale to wash away the taste of the elixir. Lav sipped at a cup of tea while her eyes wandered over the crowd. She was in
They stood facing each other, close because of the sheer number of individuals who had come to the market. Raph was admitting to her that he might be enjoying himself when a tall, heavy set alien attempted to rudely push him aside.

Lav saw immediately that the creature wasn’t trying to start anything; he was on his way to the bar and had chosen the direct route through people rather than around them.

Because of his size, everyone before him fell to the side with a hard shove from his hand. The exception was Raph. When the creature pushed the Turtle, Raph didn’t even budge.

He did however turn bright, gold eyes on the alien, and a corner of his mouth lifted.

A fight was not in Lavinia’s plans, no matter how much enjoyment Raph might get from one. She quickly placed a restraining hand on his arm and tried to pull him towards her.

Lav was so used to seeing Raph that sometimes she forgot just how solid he was. Her effort was futile; easier to move a mountain than a provoked Raphael.

Changing her strategy, Lav turned so the alien could see her Proctor band and told him in a low tone, “Best to go around stranger.”

When she saw his eyes she realized he was slightly drunk. His expression did not change; his head turned back to the bar and his single minded mission to get another drink, and he proceeded to go around Raph without further incident.

Turning back to Raph, Lav found that he was smirking at her. “Female Proctor,” he said, his tone tender.

She smiled at him, her heart pounding in her chest. Her true Raphael was shoving his way out; she should have known nothing could keep him caged for long.

Lavinia proposed they cut through the woods to make their way back to their tent and Raph quickly agreed. As soon as they were out of sight of anyone, Raph grabbed at her.

Lav danced away from his hands with a laugh. “You should know I’m not that easily caught, warrior,” she taunted him.

His growl was low as he asked, “Ya’ wanna try me again, Proctor?”

Smiling, Lav said, “Give me a challenge this time.”

He rushed her even before she’d finished speaking and she almost didn’t move aside in time to avoid him. Quickly springing backwards, Lav kicked straight up at his chin.

Raph’s arm came up to deflect the kick, hitting the inside of her leg and shoving it to the side. The force spun her and she allowed the momentum to carry her down, lifting the other leg and kicking at his face a second time.

Her foot connected; a glancing blow but it took his head back and when she hit the ground, she rolled up and over. Raph was already coming at her, and lifting into a squat, she kicked sideways into his gut.

The kick was hard enough to shove him back and give her time to spring to her feet. Then
he was at her again, swinging his heavy fists at her face and body. Lav moved fast to block his strikes, deflecting blow after blow as he pressed forward.

Raph swung a hard right at her chin and as she leaned back to avoid it, he twisted slightly to the side and kicked her hard in her stomach.

It knocked the wind out of her for a moment and she saw his fist coming straight at her. Her best defense seemed to be to fall and that’s what she did.

Hitting the ground, Lav kicked with all her might at his ankles, hoping to at least tangle him. He leaped and skipped over her feet with coordinated skill and Lav jerked her legs up high and flipped over, springing on her hands to push herself upright.

Spinning back around, Lav’s hands came up defensively as Raph threw his entire body at her in a full blown tackle.

When they hit the ground, Lav stabbed at his eyes with her thumbs, but he caught her arms and slammed them down.

With his hands pinning hers to the ground next to her head, Raph lay on her body, one knee wedged between her thighs. They were both panting heavily from the exertion and Raph lowered his face to within inches of hers.

“I win this time,” he said triumphantly, his hot breath blowing across her cheeks.

Lav made a token pull at her at her arms and found that he was holding her firmly.

His grin was wide as his eyes left hers to travel over her face to her mouth, and then back up again. Lav made no other attempt to escape; lying quietly beneath Raph she watched his eyes.

“I guess ya’ know what I’m gonna do ta ya’?” he asked in a low tone.

Her response was equally low and challenging. “Tell me.”

The smile left his face, desire too strong to maintain the pretense. “Teasin’ me ain’t such a good plan,” he said. “Teasin’ me will get ya’ fucked.”

His gold eyes were glittering above her and Lav opened hers wider, holding his gaze as she responded, “What makes you think I’m teasing?”

Raph grunted as his eyes narrowed. That’s when Lav saw the dark mist swirl across the whites and pull back, letting her know she was getting through to him.

“Ya’ know I ain’t gonna go easy on ya’,” he told her.

Lav sighed, her mouth curling up slightly at the corners.

“Rou~ghhh,” she drawled, her voice husky and seductive.

Raph’s breath caught. “Just the way ya’ like it, right babe?” he asked, and then a confused looked crossed his face. Tipping his head to the side, he stared at her as though trying to recall a thought.

The mist swirled again, agitated, and Lav knew she was gaining control.

Where Don was a creature of logic and intellect, Raph was pure feeling. His emotions so
close to the surface gave her the ammunition she needed to drive the sorcery out of his head.

One word reached a memory chord deep inside the hot blooded turtle. One word riled up the true spirit of her most passionate lover. That one word pushed back against the demon in Raph’s head and let Lavinia in to pull him free.

“Yes, Raph. I like it rough,” she moaned, lifting her head and pressing her lips to his in a crushing kiss.

Raph responded in kind, the challenge of her tongue as it pushed into his mouth firing his competitive nature. He lifted himself a bit higher on her body and bore down on her mouth, deepening the kiss to the point where she felt the sharp rake of his teeth.

One of his hands left her arm and traveled down the length of her body. She felt his knuckles tickle her stomach and then heard the rasp of a sai being withdrawn from his belt.

Before she understood what he was doing, Raph sank the tip of his weapon into the dirt, catching her wrist between the wing and blade; driving it deep enough to bury the wing tips.

“Yes, Raph,” she gasped as her mouth left his. She pulled up against the heavy metal but the ground was hard packed and she didn’t budge it.

He quickly repeated the process on her other arm, ensuring both wrists were so tightly pressed into the dirt that Lav couldn’t slide her arms free.

“Fight me now wildcat,” he told her, deeply satisfied with his action.

Lav felt a wild burst of ecstasy at the use of Raph’s special endearment. With renewed energy, she lifted her free leg, caught the edge of his shell, and shoved.

The move rocked him to the side and he threw his head back and laughed, repositioning himself on top of her.

“Nice try babe. Time ta pay a forfeit,” he said, reaching behind her neck to untie the strings holding her top up.

Lav wiggled against him as he slid the material of her body suit away and exposed her breasts.

His breath caught at the sight of her firm, full breasts with their jaunty nipples. Placing both hands over them, he squeezed hard and rolled them against each other before running his tongue first over one then the other of her nipples.

A long churr pushed its way out and Lav moaned in response.

“Seems ya’ like that,” Raph said as he tipped his head up and saw her watching him.

“Wonder what else ya’ like.”

Moving down her body, Raph caught her kicking leg in his hand and shoved it to the ground. One handed, he released the buckle on her holster and then he squatted over her knees, trapping both between his legs as he grasped her body suit and pulled it down over her hips, yanking hard to get it off her butt as she ground herself into the dirt to fight being stripped.

When he lifted his body to peel the suit off her legs, Lav pulled her knees back, put both heels on his chest and shoved with all her strength.
Raph grabbed her ankles and lifted her skyward. With a dark chuckle, he wrapped one large hand around both ankles and removed her boots, then finished taking the rest of her body suit off of her.

Lifting her higher so her rear was no longer touching the ground, Raph looked over her exposed vulva and ass. He grabbed her ankles in both hands, forced her legs apart and draped them over his shoulders as he crawled forward.

His grip on the tops of her thighs was tight as his hardened erection dropped down. Licking his lips in anticipation, Raph once more looked into Lavinia’s eyes.

Lavinia was panting as she squirmed beneath him, hungry for his huge cock inside of her. The desire must have showed on her face; Raph’s grin faded and was replaced by one filled with tender need.

She felt his throbbing shaft press into her opening and arched her back, keeping her eyes locked on his. As he pushed forward, stretching her to her fullest, Lav reached into his mind.

The pseudo-Raph was wrestling for control with the real one, and the wizard’s mist swirled around them. The puppet looked in her direction and snarled as the mist swarmed towards her.

Lavinia lifted her hips and pushed herself against Raph, calling in her most sultry voice, “I need you, Raphael!”

His conscious mind spun towards her and leaped, plowing through the mist and shoving his pseudo creation aside. Her mind caught his and they wrapped around each other tightly as the white light began to glow behind them.

“No, Raph, now!” she cried and he thrust into her with all his might.

His mind and body became one, connected completely to Lav, and when the white light grew in intensity, swallowing the pseudo-Raph and the wizard’s mist, Raph fell fully into his own body, focused and intent on the need building in his groin.

“Yes, oh yes!” Lav shouted as he plowed into her, moving faster and harder.

Her hands grabbed onto the handles of his sais and she moved her hips against him, feeling the ever tightening pressure in her womb.

“Fuck, Lav! Give me what ya’ got babe!” he yelled, thrusting without rhythm, driving himself into her as deeply as he could.

Her vaginal muscles snapped around his invading cock and milked his shaft; bearing down with all her power, she tightened her canal to the point where she could feel every vein in his huge organ.

“Oh, fuck yeah . . . oh, shit L . . . Lav . . . come with m . . . me!” Raph threw his head back and howled as his orgasm hit.

“Mmph . . . ah! Raphael!” Lav cried out in unison, her climax blasting through her body with blinding force.

He fell forward and jerked against her, his ejaculate streaming into her body in hard waves. Their eyes were still locked together as he expelled every drop of his fluid and then his hips stilled their forward momentum.
Breathing harshly, the pair stared at one another and Lav began to smile.

“I . . . I’m back,” Raph panted, a look of astonishment on his face. “Ya’ pulled me back.”

“Of course I did,” Lav told him, trying to catch her breath as she felt his cock stir back to life within her.

Reaching up, Raph yanked his sais out of the ground and released her wrists. Leaning back, he took her legs off his shoulders and stretched himself on top of her, his forearms on the ground to either side of her body.

As his cock swelled and he began to move inside her once more, Lav wrapped her legs around the backs of his thighs and circled his neck with her arms. His slide in and out of her was gentler, and his mouth came down on hers, his tongue moving in a matching rhythm to their sex.

Lifting his head he gasped and pressed his face to the side of her head.

“I love ya’, I love ya’, I l-ove ya’,” Raph moaned against her ear as his second climax hit.

“Oh, Raph,” Lav sobbed, moved to tears by the depth of his declaration. “I love you too. I’ll love you forever.”

They lay entwined as their bodies recovered and their breathing slowed. Raph’s face was buried in Lav’s throat, his hot breath on her skin made her tighten her grip on his neck.

He finally shifted, kissing her neck as he pulled out of her and tucked his cock away. Lavinia sat up and felt around for her body suit; the daylight fast fading and the trees overhead trapping what little was left.

Raph found it first and handed it to her.

“Wanna tell me what’s goin’ on babe?” he asked.

“We got kidnapped,” she said, pulling the body suit onto her legs. “Wizards grabbed us and pulled our conscious minds into this alternate reality. Splinter was too strong for them, and when they went after me as his replacement, he tagged along and rescued me from them.”

“I could feel that shit in my head the whole time,” Raph responded. “How come I couldn’t get out?”

“It’s not that easy. They appeal to some darker part of us and feed that need while restraining the rest. They’re trying to destroy the part that tempers our personalities. If that happens, we get turned into slaves, puppets for Lord Hebi. Someone named Usagi is at the lair with Splinter and told him who was behind this trap.”

“Hebi, that damn snake?” Raph growled. “He sent an assassin after Leo once before. We should’ve gone back to Usagi’s world and killed the snake then.”

Buckling her holster into place, Lav reworked her braid, smoothing her disarranged hair back into place. “For now, let’s concentrate on all of us getting out of here. According to Splinter, we came in together and that’s the only way out. He says he knows what to do once everyone is themselves again. Don is with us, but I still have to reach Mikey and Leo.”

“Can’t we just smack ‘em and tell ‘em ta snap out of it?” Raph asked, rising to his feet.
Lav looked at him and saw he was joking. “God, I love you. I wish it was that easy. My way seems to be the only one that keeps you intact and out of that white light.”

Raph surrounded her waist with his hands and pulled her tight against him. “I ain’t complaining.”

His kiss was deep and passionate and Lav let it consume her. After several minutes, they broke apart.

“We need to get back to the tent. I don’t want Don to worry,” Lav said, catching Raph’s hand as they hurried back to the encampment.

“Raphael is free,” Master Splinter announced in a deeply satisfied voice.

Usagi was moving through his forms, trying to stay limber. Stopping for a moment, he watched the aged rat shift into a more comfortable position.

“She is moving swiftly,” he noted.

“It is necessary to move faster,” Master Splinter commented. “I fear the longer this altered state is left in place, the stronger the wizard’s hold becomes. Michelangelo is captivated by the attention and admiration bestowed on him in his guise as Games champion. His deepest desire to step into the light and let it warm him is becoming his new reality in this place.”

“And what of Leonardo?” Usagi asked, the blue banded Turtle always his first concern.

Master Splinter frowned. “My eldest son is also being pulled by the allure of complete control. His power in that realm is not limited by the boundaries of honor; yet he still clings to his honor. I am afraid I do not know how much longer he will be able to hold out against the pressure of those dark forces surrounding him.”

Usagi felt a deep dread roll through his gut and asked, “Who will your sister go after next?”

“I do not know,” Master Splinter answered with a small shake of his head. “I do not believe she knows. There is some sign, something she sees or feels that has allowed her to make her choices to this point. She will wait for the correct timing to choose which of my sons to rescue next. I can only hope she will not have to wait long.”

Usagi glanced at Leo and found himself hoping for the same thing.

Don’s look was questioning as Lav and Raph walked in to the tent together. Raph threw himself down on his mat, assuming his cocky, belligerent pseudo personality and Lav moved towards her space, lifting an eyebrow at the purple banded Turtle as she passed him.

He understood the message and glanced over at Raph. His brother’s head turned towards him lazily, and he said, “She’s a real sweet fuck.”

Don was nearly shocked into showing some emotion until he realized that statement was in complete character with the Raph who had previously been in control. He never knew the hot head could be such a good actor.
“Glad you got to find that out,” Don replied, leaning back with a great show of nonchalance.

Lav drifted past them, on her way to the showers, and Mikey jumped up in front of her.

“So, does that mean we all get a turn?” he asked impishly, his eye ridges lifted.

Placing her palm against his scutes, she pushed past him and said, “I suppose you’ll have to wait and see.”

His low whistle followed her out of the tent.

The shower felt good and she was happy this altered reality provided the small luxury. Wrapping a towel around herself, Lav stepped out of the shower stall and began to pull a comb through her wet hair.

Her hand was grabbed in mid-stroke and she spun around, wide-eyed, to find Leo directly behind her.

“W . . . what are you doing?” she spluttered.

“I could ask you the same question, Proctor,” Leo said, his amber eyes glittering. “Are you working your way through my team?”

She pulled her hand out of his grip and replied, “I haven’t heard any complaints.”

His eyes drifted to her neck, where she knew he could see her pulse beating. Stepping forward, Leo pressed against her, forcing her to move backwards. A protruding water basin cut in to the small of her back and stopped her.

Leo’s hands came down to grip the basin on either side of her and he leaned into her body, dipping his head so his mouth hovered just above her pulse point.

“There is nothing to hold me now, Proctor, since you have decided to share,” Leo said just before his tongue flicked across her skin.

Lavinia forced herself not to panic. If she could see one iota of the real Leo here, she would gladly give herself over to his lust, but there was nothing. The pseudo-Leo was in complete control and scaring the hell out of her.

“D . . . don’t do that,” she told him as forcefully as she could manage, despite the thrill his tongue sent down into the pit of her stomach.

Instead of stopping, he pushed more of his body against hers, pressing his lower plastron against her vulva and grinding his hips into her.

His teeth gripped the skin on her neck and he pulled back slightly, his tongue licking the stretched segment in long, erotic swipes.

Lav pressed her palms to his plastron and tried pushing him away, to no avail.

“Leonardo, s . . . stop,” she stuttered as a long spike of desire shot into her sex and made her vagina clench with need.

His churr was her only answer. Reaching up with one hand, Leo gripped the top of her towel and pulled.
Lav’s hands shot up and grabbed the edge, fighting him for the small piece of cloth that separated her body from his. His mouth came off her neck and he stared into her eyes, a satisfied look on his face as she fought what they both knew was a losing battle.

She wanted to call Master Splinter, desperate for his aid, but she did not want him to witness his beloved son raping her. Lav understood this was an attempt by the dark forces to destroy her efforts; if Leo ravished her he would forever belong to them and she would be lost, leaving Don and Raph trapped and Mikey and Leo the property of an evil task master.

“Leo, not like this!” she screamed at him and lifting her foot, kicked his knee as hard as she could.

The surprise at her shout and the unexpected blow made him stumble and she slipped out of the towel and darted to the side, away from him. Running for the door, Lav didn’t worry about her nudity as much as saving herself from his attack.

He was much too fast. She only just managed to reach the door before feeling the touch of his fingers on her bare shoulder.

The door opened and Lav slammed straight into Raphael.

He caught her and spun to the side, swinging his carapace directly into Leo’s path. Leo pulled up short just before colliding with his brother and his eyes swung from Lav to Raph.

“Shell, Leo, what the fuck?” Raph demanded, keeping his body between the two.

Lav was panting, her eyes wide and skin flushed. She didn’t try to cover herself; the attempt at modesty seemed pointless in the face of a greater danger.

Leo’s eyes burned and his head turned slowly from his brother to his prey.

“Move aside, Raphael. This is a private matter,” he ordered.

“No it ain’t,” Raph told him.

Leo’s head lifted, shocked that a direct order had been disobeyed.

“Raphael, stand aside,” Leo demanded again, his voice harsh.

“Ya’ wanna fuck her, fine, but not in here Fearless,” Raph accented the pet name, making Leo’s head jerk. “This way gets us thrown outta the Games, and I didn’t come this far ta lose over a piece of ass, I don’t care how fine it is. If we get caught in here, we get tossed out on our cans. Let’s get the fuck out of here now.”

Lav knew she had to assert herself or forever be dodging him. Stepping away from Raph’s protection, she drew herself up and pulled her shoulders back, no longer worried that he see her naked.

In fact, she wanted him to look.

“I don’t like aggressive men, warrior,” she told him flatly.

Leo’s eyes ran over her body and then narrowed.

She continued, “And I didn’t work this hard to have my career ambushed by a fighter’s lust.”
Stepping nearer, Lav looked him straight in the eye. “I believe you have as much to lose as I do.”

Glancing over her shoulder at Raph, Lavinia walked away from them, back towards the showers and her clothing. She heard Raph mutter something in an undertone, and Leo’s muted response, and then the door was closed, presumably with them both on the outside.

Lav managed to pull on her clothes before the reaction set in. Squatting, she curled in on herself; her arms over her head and her forehead pressed against her knees as she started to shake.

She was afraid, truly afraid, that Leo was forever lost.
Battling Within

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 10,145
Chapter pairing: Mikey/Lavinia
Chapter Rating: NC-17 Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult situations, alternate reality, violence/gore, het sex, language
Chapter Summary: The second team match is as much a battle between the brothers as it is against a dangerous opponent. Lav works to bring Mikey back.

Their second team match was scheduled for mid-morning and Lav left earlier than usual to get the breakfast cart. Dinner the evening before had been exactly as usual; Leo behaved as though nothing unusual had occurred and Raph maintained his persona, somewhere between contentious and smug.

Don remained quiet and alert, nothing overtly out of the ordinary from the original pseudo-Don, but Lav could tell Raph had gotten the chance to tell him of their altercation with Leo. Don’s eyes roamed the crowd for hidden danger, but he also glanced in Leo’s direction with more frequency. His brother was becoming a huge obstacle in the path to their survival.

Only Mikey remained the same, basking in the attention he was receiving and overjoyed at their success.

Leo watched her silently as she left the tent and again when she returned with their breakfast. When he stepped up to the breakfast cart the first thing she did was hand him a cup of tea.

His eye ridge lifted slightly and her eyes lingered on his for just a moment, hoping to see some glimmer of awareness. There was nothing.

“So who did we draw?” Raph swaggered over and began to slap food on a plate.

Lavinia stood back as the other Turtles joined him. “You are fighting the Akje team this morning. They are very, very good.”

“How good?” Don looked up, a bit of concern in his voice.

“They have made the finals every year for the past seven,” Lav said, “and they are highly favored to win this level.”

Mikey perked up. “What are the odds? I wanna bet on us.”

“What do we need to know?” Leo asked, his eyes capturing hers. The desire was still there; it made Lav’s mouth go dry and she took a quick sip of her tea to cover that fact.

“You’ve seen the brown squad,” she said and he nodded a confirmation.

Raph interrupted, his voice dripping disgust, “The bugs? We’re fightin’ the bugs?”
“Yes, you are.” Lav held back a smile. Akje looked almost exactly like giant beetles. They were easily ten feet in length with reddish black skin, six legs and three eyes mounted on short, squatty stalks.

“I hate bugs,” Raph said, somewhat unnecessarily.

“The Akje are capable of shifting their weapons from their front two legs to their back two in seconds, always balancing on the two center feet. If they stand up on two legs, it is to put power into their swings; when they are moving on four legs it is to accomplish speed.”

“Weapons?” Don asked.

“They carry two; one is similar to a rapier, it is light weight and has a long reach. Theirs are sharpened along the edges, not just the tip, so watch out for sweeping strikes as well as thrusts. The other weapon is a broader small sword used for close in attacks. They have no finesse when they are fighting with that sword; it is basically a slash and finish weapon. They also have a huge row of sharp teeth just below the front set of legs so if you decide to roll under them for a shot at their legs, be prepared to be bitten.”

“What else?” Leo’s voice was low and Lav knew what he was asking for.

“They’re not very strong, hence their choice of light weight weapons. If you can take out the middle two legs, they’ll have to resort to standing on one of the other sets. In that more upright position they are much slower. Their eyes rotate on the stalks and they can move independently of each other, but they rely almost solely on sight as their hearing is very poor.”

“Humph! Fuckin’ bugs,” Raph muttered before he took a bite of his food.

Lav glanced at him, and then turned back to Leo. “Leonardo, they don’t fight in the coordinated way you do. When the fight begins, each Akje usually chooses one opponent from the opposite team and sticks to that one fighter until the match is complete. Even in the dirtiest, dustiest arenas they never lose the target they’ve chosen.”

“Scent,” Don said, his head down as he tossed his empty plate back onto the cart. He looked up when he felt everyone’s eyes on him. “They probably identify the scent of the adversary they choose and bond to him that way.”

“Great, bugs with noses,” Raph said.

“Not noses, Raph. The little hairs covering their legs. I watched them at dinner; they lift one leg each time a food cart reaches their table and sweep it over the food just before they make a selection,” Don responded.

“I sure hope you’re not saying they plan to eat us,” Mikey said, his mouth shifting into a smile as he watched Raph’s face.

“Yuck.” Raph’s face twisted in disgust and he tossed aside the remainder of his breakfast.

“No,” Don smiled, “not eat us, just beat us. The way they key to each of us will make it hard to shake them. They’ll probably match us move for move.”

Lav poured a cup of coffee and handed it to Raph. His finger brushed across her hand as he accepted the cup, the gesture one of tenderness and Lav pursed her lips at him as she gave a small shake of her head. That was a slip that was too out of character.
Fortunately, Leo had not seen. But Mikey had.

He quirked an eye ridge at them, but before he could say anything, Lav lifted the fruit bowl and asked, “Do you want some fresh fruit Michelangelo? Or would you prefer juice? I’d be happy to squeeze some for you.”

Mikey’s mouth spread into a wide smile. “Juice would be great, babe.”

As soon as he said that, his brow furrowed and he glanced down at his hands, then at Lav. She almost dropped the bowl when she saw the quick slide of black across his eyes. It was so fast she was afraid she might have imagined it, but then she saw Don looking at Mike and knew he’d seen it to.

“Huntress,” Leo murmured and Lav looked over at him, startled. A slight smile arched his lips and she realized he thought she was now pursuing Mikey.

She allowed herself a small, satisfied smirk in response. He had decided something about her character and she wasn’t going to dissuade him at this juncture. Especially since he was correct; she was going after Michelangelo next.

However, there was nothing to be done about that now. There was just time enough to have a quick warm up practice before their scheduled bout, and Leo made use of it; pushing his team through their routine with relentless determination.

Before they were done, he spent an equal amount of time with each of his brother’s in a one on one combat situation. Pulling his katanas he attacked each, ruthlessly pressing them into defensive postures that tested their skills to the utmost. Lavinia had never seen him so driven and so unforgiving.

There was a high level of anticipation from the enormous crowd as they entered the arena. The attack on the Green squad the previous day had added a spark of mystery to their team, and spectators fought for places from which to view their match.

Lavinia surveyed the mob with trepidation. It would be impossible to see another attack before it was launched and she had no doubt another attempt would be made. When she glanced at Don, she saw that he too had realized the danger.

“Do you have to stand on the platform?” he asked quietly.

“Yes,” she said, glancing into his eyes, then away. “It’s a requirement of the Games. The Proctor must be visible at all times during the match.”

“Fuckin’ marvelous,” Raph muttered as he joined them. “Maybe we should paint a big target on ya’ while we’re at it.”

Lav couldn’t help a giggle as she said, “Since sex seems to work to push the wizards out, if something happens to me, you’ll have to seduce Mikey.”

Raph grimaced. The Akje were entering the arena and his lip curled in disgust.

“Somehow, I don’t think I’m gonna be in the mood,” he said.

“Just be careful,” she admonished both he and Don before she walked quickly to her viewing platform.
From the top of the platform, the difference in size between the Akje and the Turtles was more sharply defined. For the first time since they faced an opponent, Lav began to feel a tendril of dread move through her. She was pretty sure that losing was not going to be an option.

Leo glanced at his brothers and then drew his swords. He brought them down, swept outwards with the tips, and then pulled them back to center. The silent command to his brothers was instantly obeyed and the team fanned out around him.

One of the Akje shrilled loudly and all four lifted one leg each in unison, pointed towards the semi-circle of Turtles. The raised leg shook and lowered, and the Akje pulled their weapons to ready.

The horn sounded and the match began.

The four Akje charged the Turtles, their forward movement fast and synchronized. Mikey and Don darted left and right, respectively, and their Akje counterparts spun to give chase.

Raph stood his ground, holding to a low crouch as his Akje opponent bore down on him. Their weapons clashed, separated and crashed against each other again.

Leo leaped high just as the Akje who had chosen him got close. The Akje lifted itself up on its two back legs as it swept its rapier at the airborne ninja, but Leo tucked and flipped in mid-air and the sword cut through empty sky.

Twisting his body, Leo slashed down at the Akje with his katana and sliced a long, shallow cut across its back, drawing first blood.

The crowd went crazy at the sight, rising to their feet and screaming as Leo landed behind the Akje fighter.

Mikey’s nunchucks whistled as they spun through the air and blocked a cut from the Akje’s rapier. When the Akje rushed him, Mikey jumped high, slapped aside the Akje’s weapon a second time and spun a kick directly against one of its eye stalks.

The Akje screeched loudly and drew the injured eye back against its body. Infuriated, it darted after the Turtle with amazing speed, and Mikey dashed back towards Don.

Donatello flipped his bo up and batted his opponent’s rapier off center, then brought the staff around in a fast sweep, striking the leg holding the small sword. The strike was hard enough to make the Akje drop his weapon, but then it swarmed over the fallen sword so quickly Don almost didn’t have time to react.

Flicking his bo forward, Don sent the sword spinning across the arena and under the bleachers.

The Akje made a grab for the end of the bo, but Don pulled it away too quickly. Out of the corner of his eye, Don saw Mikey coming towards him, his own Akje opponent hot on his tail.

Raph ducked to the left and saw the flash of metal sweep just over his shoulder. Twisting quickly, he jabbed down at the leg holding the rapier and the sharp point of his sai pierced the appendage.

The Akje made a high pitched buzzing noise and pulled its leg away from Raph, taking his sai with it. Its other leg swung into Raph’s body; the small sword glancing off his shell as Raph instinctively turned to take the blow there.
Ducking and rolling under that leg, Raph leaped towards his lost sai, but missed as the Akje shifted onto its rear legs, rising up to its full ten foot height. With no hesitation, Raph jumped again, aiming a back kick at the injured leg. He struck it hard enough to cause the Akje to drop its rapier and Raph scooped it up.

The sound of metal striking metal sang for the crowd as Leo’s katanas crashed against the Akje rapier. On its back legs, the Akje was putting its entire body into the blows it rained down on the Turtle in blue. Leo discovered that Lavinia had been correct in her assessment; even bearing down on him with its full body mass, it was not as strong as he was.

He shoved forward, working to take that advantage but the Akje was an experienced fighter and changed tactics quickly. Dropping to four legs, it suddenly skittered sideways, moving with such unexpected speed that Leo was hard pressed to turn in time to avoid the thrust of its small sword.

Mikey was also discovering how fast the Akje was on four legs; his was nearly on top of him as he raced across the arena.

Then he heard Don shout, “Here, Mikey!”

Turning to the sound of his brother’s voice, Mikey saw Donny lunge forward with his bo and jab it into his Akje’s underside. The force pushed the Akje up off its middle two legs and Mikey threw himself carapace down onto the dirt and skid completely under the creature.

His nunchucks out, Mikey spun them both and swung upwards, breaking bones in both of the Akje’s middle legs before he slid out the other side and leaped back to his feet.

Don pushed hard against his opponent as Mikey went under it; his muscular legs driving the Akje sideways and toppling it directly in front of Mikey’s opponent. With a sickening thud, they crashed into each other.

“Wicked,” Mikey grinned admiringly, slapping Don on his shell.

“Time to move;” Don said as Mikey’s Akje crawled over its fallen brethren and came after them.

When Lav saw that Don’s Akje wasn’t moving, she realized it was out of the fight. Her grip on the railing of her podium tightened and her heart was thudding in her chest.

“Three more…” she whispered, unwilling even to blink.

From her podium, Lav had an excellent view of the overall fight. She watched as Don and Mike split to face Mikey’s opponent, and saw the Akje spin directly towards Mikey. Don jammed his bo between the Akje’s back feet and its legs flipped up instantaneously, slinging dirt into Don’s face.

Don moved quickly; though momentarily blinded he knew better than to remain a still target. But the Akje did not take advantage of its own tactic; it bore down on Mikey instead.

Heart racing, Lavinia yelled, “Leo! They can’t work as a team! They can’t change opponents!”

Leo ducked under the sweep of a rapier and threw his body to the side to avoid the thrust of his opponent’s small sword. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the clash between Mikey, Don, and the Akje and immediately understood what his Proctor was trying to convey to him.
“Mike, Don! To Raphael!” he shouted the order as his swords clanged against his competitors.

The two brothers moved in unison as they broke off the battle with their Akje counterpart and raced back towards their red banded brother.

Raph heard them coming and maneuvered his Akje around to put it on an intersecting course with its brethren. Mikey’s Akje shifted its run to avoid the other Akje warrior while keeping its focus directed on Michelangelo.

“Our eyes!” Lav shouted, almost jumping in her excitement.

Mikey spun on his heel, leaping between the Akje’s front legs with twirling nunchucks and popped a second eye stalk. The Akje roared and settled on its two back legs, lifting quickly to its full height and nearly catching Mike with its slashing rapier as he dove back towards the ground.

Don dashed forward when he saw the Akje turn to pursue the orange banded ninja. His bo up, he struck the remaining eye stalk a tremendous blow.

Rearing back, the Akje’s front legs clawed at the air as it screamed in pain. All three of its eyes were closed tightly as it pulled them back against its body. It began to thrash the air with its rapier, sweeping back and forth in an attempt to keep attackers away.

Don rolled across the ground to get out of the Akje’s range as it twisted wildly, trying to pick up Mikey’s scent.

“Don, move!” Raph shouted.

Looking up, Don saw Raph’s opponent was nearly on top of him. Rolling back on his shoulders, he got his hands down and sprang quickly out of the way as four sets of legs landed on the spot he’d just occupied.

Raph’s Akje wasn’t after Don; it was moving to avoid the red banded Turtles onslaught. Raph pushed towards it, the rapier in one green fist and a sai in the other.

Suddenly, the Akje twisted in a semi-circle and pulled Raph’s other sai from its front leg with one of its back ones; taking the small sword in the other rear leg it made a quick shift to remove the disadvantaged and useless appendage from the fight.

“Blind it Raph!” Leo yelled at him.

Sai held tightly, Raph hesitated. He wanted to put the Akje warrior out of commission for the fight, but not for life. Even knowing the creature wasn’t real, the thought of blinding it felt dishonorable.

Leo darted to the side, pulling his own Akje counterpart with him, purposely bringing it closer to the remaining two. He saw Raph waver and felt a flash of anger that his brother had once more balked at a command.

“Now Raphael!” Leo ordered.

Don saw Raph’s predicament and darted forward, jabbing the Akje’s side as hard as he could with his bo. When the Akje swung at his attacker, Raph saw his opening and sprang at the creatures eyes.
Wrapping one arm around a stalk, Raph spun his sai to grip the hilt in his fist and punched the Akje’s eye’s.

The reaction was immediate; all three stalks receded towards its body and the eyes closed. With little to cling to now, Raph was easily thrown off the thrashing Akje as its cries of pain echoed through the arena.

Leo turned his full attention on his opponent and saw that his Akje had already drawn its eyes back into the protection of its body; the cries of its teammates having warned it as to what was happening. Relinquishing speed for safety, it rose up on its back two legs and struck down at Leo’s head with its rapier.

Ducking low, Leo chanced the Akje’s gnashing teeth to slash at the middle, balancing set of legs. He managed to inflict a long, painful cut along one before the teeth snapped down at him.

Thrusting up with his second katana, he embedded the top fourth of his sword in its mouth. With a wild scream of pain, the Akje threw itself to the side and only Leo’s tight grip on the hilt of his sword kept the opposing warrior from carrying it away.

The Akje rolled over onto its back, moving swiftly away from Leo, before regaining its feet. With one injured balance leg, it was now forced to fight with its front half down. Its eyes remained tucked in tight, offering no target as it backed towards the two remaining Akje fighters.

Mikey was fighting a running battle, his nunchucks spinning and batting aside the Akje rapier as he kept his opponent close to the central group. He noticed that the Akje seemed to prefer to separate their prey; a simple divide and conquer strategy. Since Leo had urged them to draw their opponents together, Mikey assumed his leader had seen the same thing and was taking the Akje out of their comfort zone.

Raph rolled over in the dirt and regained his feet quickly after being thrown from his opponent. Blinded, it was slicing the air as it scented Raphael, turning with his movements as its rapier sought him.

Raph glanced around to see Mikey holding his opponent nearby and yelled, “Yo, Mikey! Herd it over this way!”

Mikey jumped up and spun over the Akje warrior, turning it as it continued to blindly trace his scent. “Herd? You got it bro’!”

Darting forward, he slammed his nunchucks into the Akje rapier and dodged back away from the quick flash of the small sword. He moved back, watching over his shoulder as he neared Raph and the second Akje.

Don raced over to stand with Raph, shoving against the Akje combatant with his bo. When it slashed at Don, Raph reached out and stabbed at its leg. Drawing its leg around to counter Raph’s attack left it open to Don’s. Unable to defend blindly against two foes, the Akje began to move away from them.

Mikey leaped out of the way as the two Akje’s backed into each other hard. Falling, their legs tangled for just a moment, and Raph took advantage of the lapse in order to throw himself at the leg wielding his sai. Latching on, Raph braced himself on the Akje’s underside and pulled back on the leg, his arms locked and muscles bulging.

Screeching, the Akje tried to jab at him with its small sword, but Don deftly swept in with
his bo and snapped the weapon from its grasp.

A loud crack and wild scream told the audience that Raph had broken the Akje’s leg. Yanking his sai out of his opponents grip, he jumped up and fell on his side into the Akje’s sensitive underbelly, driving his elbow into the soft flesh as hard as he could.

The loud exhalation of air told him his instincts had been on target. The Akje shook violently twice, and then stilled completely.

Before he could even stand up, Raph heard “Pardon me!” and saw a flash of sea green as Mikey leaped over the fallen Akje.

The second of the two Akje who’d fallen together had recovered quickly, and was flowing mercilessly after Mikey.

With its vision still intact, Leo’s Akje opponent neatly sidestepped the pileup at center arena. The leader of its group, this Akje was stronger and more cunning than its brethren. Injured and knowing two of its fighters were down, it began to make loud clicking noises as it backed away from Leo and his brothers.

Instantly, its remaining teammate swung back towards the leader.

Lav yelled, “He’s calling the blind one! Don’t let them meet!”

“Don, here!” Leo ordered almost simultaneously, having seen the same thing.

Racing to Leo’s side, they rushed the Akje leader. Pushed to fight against two foes, the Akje had to stop emitting the clicks it was using to guide its teammate as it worked hard to protect itself.

When the blinded Akje turned towards its leader, Raph lowered his shoulder and with a loud shout, slammed his entire body into the warrior’s side. Spinning and sliding on the dirt, the Akje scrabbled for purchase, trying desperately not to fall.

Mikey leaped on top of it and swung the end of one of his nunchucks under a front leg, catching the other end deftly and pulling back.

“Yee hah!” he shouted as the Akje bounded backwards, shaking and bucking; trying to throw him loose.

Gripping both ends of his nunchuck in one hand, Mikey fished the other out of his belt and spun it quickly, gathering momentum. His arm stretched out and back and then he swung the end of the spiraling nunchuck straight down, the impact a *whump* that could be heard even over the crowd noise.

A fine spray of black thick ooze painted the air before the heavy droplets fell on the arena floor. The Akje hit the ground with a loud thump and lay there motionless. Mikey remained where he was for a moment, trying to catch his breath, and then leaped off to rush towards their final opponent.

The crowd noise grew to a tremendous roar as the four Turtles of the Green squad charged the hapless Akje leader. Injured, it backed steadily away from them.

With a final desperate roar, it dove straight at Leo. Tossing aside the small sword, the Akje used five of its legs to bolster its speed and agility, relying on the one leg holding the rapier to do
Leo yelled, “I’ll draw it! Attack its sides!” Running backwards, his katanas met each stroke of the rapier as it swung down at him.

As it rushed past them, Mikey and Don plunged their weapons against its vulnerable right side. Raphael drove into its left, his sais leaving bloody black trenches.

The Akje screamed and flipped its back end to the side, whipping out hard and catching the back of Don’s right leg. With a loud cry, Don hit the ground and Mikey immediately broke from the fight to pull his brother to a safe distance.

Lav clapped a hand to her mouth. There was too much dust for her to see how badly Don was hurt and she could only hope the fight would end quickly.

Raph leaped onto the Akje leader’s back and pulled himself forward by digging the tips of his sais into its skin. The pain made the warrior cease its forward momentum and rear back in an attempt to shake Raphael loose.

Leo dove between its front legs and stabbed upwards, driving his katana into the Akje just below its eye stalks.

Black blood ran down the steel of his blade and dripped onto his arm as the warrior convulsed above him. Leo yanked the blade free and danced aside as the Akje hit the ground and lay still.

The Games official sounded the horn to signify the end of the match amidst a deafening cacophony of sound.

In an instant, Lavinia raced off her podium and sped across the arena to Don’s side. Falling to her knees, she asked, “Where?”

Don was stretched out, panting, his face scrunched up with pain. “My ankle.”

Lav crawled down to assess the damage and gasped. A piece of bone protruded through the skin and it was bleeding freely.

Clamping her hands around his ankle quickly, Lav pushed her energy outward, letting it flow from her and into Donatello. She felt Mikey, Raph and Leo draw close around them as she concentrated her healing power; drawing the bone in and sealing broken veins and skin.

As the pain began to ease, Don settled back onto his carapace and draped an arm across his eyes. He was hot, tired and mentally exhausted. He had but one wish at the moment, and that was to escape this reality and go home.

And then Lavinia’s sweet breath caressed his face as she leaned over to whisper, “Are you okay, handsome?”

He smiled and sat up. The urge to pull her into a deep kiss was strong, but he fought it off.

“Good as new,” he said, giving his ankle an experimental twirl.

Raph put a hand out and Don grabbed on and was lifted. Medics were already caring for the fallen Akje and a maintenance crew was hard at work preparing the arena for the next bout.
“You disobeyed a direct command,” Leo pushed past Don and confronted Raph.

“What the shell are ya’ talkin’ about?” Raph looked at him, puzzled.

“I told you to blind that fighter and you didn’t do it. When I give a command I expect it to be instantly obeyed. Explain yourself,” Leo demanded, seething.

“Well, shit Leo,” Raph said as he pulled up to his full height, starting to get angry as well, “I guess I got the job done without havin’ ta fight dishonorably.”

“The only dishonor is in losing,” Leo asserted, stepping close enough so that his plastron almost scraped Raph’s. His face was inches from his red banded brother’s, his manner aggressive and authoritarian.

Unfortunately, Raph responded from instinct rather than reserve, despite Don’s warning hiss.

“I’d rather fuckin’ lose than win a fight your way Fearless. Least when ya’ fight with honor ya’ can walk away with your head up,” Raph told him.

“Who are you to define honor to me, little brother?” Leo’s words were more to antagonize than to question, his face livid as he asserted his leadership.

Lav saw what Don had; Raph was too far gone in his anger to remember his role. He was slipping out of character and something had to be done quickly.

Edging close to Mikey, Lav slipped her hand around his arm and pressed her body against him. Producing enough of a quiver so that he could feel it, she whispered to him, “We have to stop them.”

He turned his head and looked down at her. Lavinia opened her eyes wide, the look of fear on her face not entirely manufactured.

It reached the real Mikey. He was the one she turned to when her emotions were in turmoil and he responded immediately to her need.

Stepping forward, he brought his face close to the snarling brothers and said, “Look bro’s, I’m pretty sure there’s someone you need to talk to if we’re gonna withdraw from the Games.”

That got both of their attention.

Leo said, “We are not withdrawing.”

Raph protested, “I ain’t quitting.”

Mikey grinned humorlessly. “Well, it sure as shell looks like it to the crowd, guys. Both of you standing here arguing in front of everybody. They can’t even start the next match ‘cause we’re in the way.”

Startled, Leo looked around and saw the Games officials and judges were staring at them. Moving fluidly, he spun away from Raph and began to leave the field, his body language telling them he expected they follow.

The rest of the squad meekly did so, their elation at their win tamped down by the element of discord in their group.
Don slowed down and caught Raph’s eye. When his brother fell back with him, Don said, “Raphael, we can’t afford to step out of character here. Leo and Mikey are still in danger of being lost forever. One slip and that white light will take our brothers.”

“I know that, Don,” Raph snarled in a low tone. “He just fuckin’ got ta me, okay? At least our damn control freak Leo knows he’s gotta sometimes let us make our own split second decisions. If we had ta wait on him ta tell us what ta do every second, we’d be dead.”

“But this isn’t our Leo, this is the one who has a team of brothers trained to jump at his every command,” Don reminded him. “Let’s stay on target until we can get ours back and get the shell out of this world.”

Meanwhile, Lav caught up to Mikey and fell in step with him.

“That was absolutely brilliant,” she told him, her eyes glowing with admiration.

His answering smile was genuine and guileless. “I have my moments,” he said.

“Yes you do.” Lavinia returned the smile, so happy to have a glimpse of the real Michelangelo that she didn’t notice Leo had stopped just outside of the arena entrance.

Other combatants had taken the field and the horn blew for the next match to begin when Lav found herself face to face with Leo.

Coming to an abrupt halt, Lav met the fearsome glare of his eyes with her own unwavering resolve.

“Stop interfering with my team, Proctor,” he told her in a low voice.

“I don’t know what you mean,” she said, tossing her head back.

He stepped closer. “You pushed Michelangelo to stop me from disciplining Raphael. Did you think I wouldn’t notice?”

She searched his eyes as she carefully answered, “I’m not interfering. My job, my career, depends on how well your team does in this round of the Games. Discipline is a private matter not to be witnessed by an audience or other competitors. The next group you fight will have heard of this break in your unity. Do you think they’ll hesitate to use it against you?”

The glare slowly left his eyes, replaced by grudging admiration. “Your action may have been mercenary, but the reasoning is sound. Raphael will have to be punished for disobeying me on two occasions now. One of those involved coming to your aid, and now you have gotten another brother to assist you. Will I have to make an example of him as well?” Leo asked.

“Hey, Leo,” Mikey came up close to them. “I’m right here bro’. You don’t have to threaten me behind my back. We all know you want a piece of our Proctor and we also know she doesn’t like your style. Lose gracefully, dude.”

Before he could turn on Mikey, Lav said, “Save your aggression for the battlefield, Leonardo. I know I’d prefer it stay there.”

Narrowing his eyes, Leo gave her a last, deep look before storming away.

Mikey was chuckling. “Shell, I’m in for some major crap during practice for that. You really owe me now, Proctor.”
Lav sighed and turned her attention to him. Pseudo-Mikey was fully in evidence.

“What exactly do you think I owe you, Mikey?” she asked, using his nickname.

His mouth opened, a lecherous reply hanging there as he processed her use of his shortened name. She saw the black mist again and the words died on his lips.

“I want you to take a walk with me after dinner this evening,” he replied with exaggerated politeness.

Usagi heard Master Splinter sigh and he straightened from his doze. Accustomed to short power naps, Usagi was instantly alert.

“You have some news, Splinter-san?” Usagi asked.

“Lavinia has made her decision; she will attempt to retrieve Michelangelo next. She has seen the sign that tells her he may be ready,” Master Splinter answered.

“She is unsure?” Usagi wanted to know.

Master Splinter took a deep breath and released it. “She does not feel there is sufficient time left to be absolutely sure. I agree with her. Leonardo has begun to show signs that his sense of honor and duty have become blurred.”

Usagi’s heart skipped a beat. “Should she not then try to pull Leonardo back? I mean no disrespect in questioning her choices, honorable Splinter-san,” he hastened to say.

“There is no disrespect in an honest question, friend samurai,” Master Splinter said.

“Lavinia cannot retrieve their imprisoned consciousness until she makes some connection with it. Michelangelo has responded to her as himself at least twice.” He stopped, hoping to spare the ronin’s feelings.

Usagi was intelligent enough to understand. “Leonardo has not.”

Master Splinter wore a deep frown as he said, “The fantasy that has been spun around them offers him certain challenges. He is able to pit the skills he has honed over a lifetime against worthy opponents there. Skills which he can rarely use fully here as they oftentimes require the taking of life. There are no such constraints upon his talents in the place his captors have placed him.”

“There are other things which are more important to Leonardo-san, honorable Splinter,” Usagi said softly.

“Yes,” Master Splinter agreed, “his love for family. Let us hope that the circle they form around him can break the spell he is under.”

For the first time since they’d arrived in the altered reality, Lavinia purposely chose to wear something revealing. She had Michelangelo in mind as she pulled an extremely short dress from the clothes trunk. Hopefully her kidnappers would not catch on to her new tactics; otherwise she could find herself with a trunk full of army fatigues.
Raph and Don were standing outside of the tent waiting for her; they had told Mikey and Leo they were meeting a bootlegger who had offered Raphael a ‘special ale’. Leo had frowned but said nothing, believing that Raphael was still under his control enough to avoid getting drunk.

When Lav stepped out of the tent on her way to the showers, Don called her over to their spot in the shadows.

“Something?” she asked worriedly.

“Are ya’ sure about Mikey?” Raph asked.

She thought about it for a moment and then said, “Yes. I’ve seen the real Mike; I’m sure it’s time. Even if I weren’t, I have to try now. Somehow I feel as though time is becoming a factor. The wizard’s mist that I had to fight in your mind Raph was stronger than the one inside Don’s.”

Donatello nodded; his face a work of concentration. “I think that the longer the wizards are in control of our minds, the more of our true consciousness is pushed back and weakened. Lav, you seem to be able to reach us because your empathic ability tells you when and what to do to pull our true selves out of the wizard’s grip.”

“Well, it’s telling me to free Mikey right now,” Lav said with determination.

“Then we need to keep Leo occupied after dinner so you can get Mikey alone,” Don said.

Lav breathed out, a quick exhalation to ready herself. “I’ll meet you guys in the dining tent in ten minutes. I need to change into my ‘working clothes’,” she quipped with a smile.

Raph cupped her chin and placed a quick kiss to her lips before the two of them turned to walk to the dining tent. As she watched them, Lavinia thought again how lucky she was to have found the Turtles and how divinely happy she was when she was with them.

No matter what craziness surrounded their lives or how difficult things could become, Lav knew she had made the right choice to stay with them.

When Raph and Don entered the dining tent, they saw that Leo was silently and methodically working his way through his meal, his alert eyes darting around the room. Mikey was standing in front of their table with a pair of juggling acrobats, attempting to learn their craft.

Don wanted to laugh as he watched Mikey toss balls into the air over and over, never giving up with each failure. His tenacity paid off; by the time Don was seated and had his plate full of food, Mikey had mastered the skill of juggling.

Sitting next to Leo, Don commented, “I should have known Mikey would figure it out. Controlling those nunchucks is a bit like juggling.”

Leo turned cold amber eyes to Don and then swept them over Mikey, who was laughing as he handed the balls back to the jugglers.

“He is losing his focus again. So is Raphael. We came here to win a tournament, not to become emotionally involved with some woman,” Leo said in a low, ominous tone.

Don’s heart jumped in his throat and he fought it down as he replied, “I suppose that admonition is aimed at me as well?”

“You can ill afford the distraction, Donatello. Your skills are not as strong as they should
be,” Leo said.

Don felt the sting of that. Of the four brothers he was not the most adept fighter, but he felt he made up for that with his other contributions. Unfortunately, in this reality, his mental agility wasn’t required. This realm was all about the art of fighting and winning; a world obviously created primarily for Leonardo.

“I don’t think you need worry too much about that, Leonardo. Our Proctor seems to enjoy the challenge of the hunt most of all. Once she has worked her way through our team, she will probably lose interest and thus cease to be the ‘distraction’ you are so concerned about,” Don said.

Don’s words were meant to accomplish several things; to assuage any concerns Leo might have about Lavinia’s actions, to relieve his brother’s mind about how deeply involved his team was becoming with their Proctor and to hint that Leo should turn a blind eye to Lav’s seduction of their youngest sibling.

The words seemed to work as Leo’s overly tense posture relaxed just a fraction. That he was strung too tightly was easy for Don to see and the genius felt the gnawing dread push into his gut just a bit more.

If he was correct, then the wizards were working feverishly to bind Leonardo and shove his consciousness into that bright white light from which there was no return. Hopefully, Don’s words set the wizards at ease as well; let them think that Lavinia was some sort of nymphomaniac for a while longer.

As long as they did not fully understand her intent, she might be safe from harm and free to complete her plans.

Lavinia walked into the tent then, pausing momentarily to observe the room. Don was struck with how much her demeanor reminded him of Leo; the watchful wariness, the quick study of her surroundings and the swift assessment of the actions around her. Don wondered if she’d learned this from his oldest brother, or if this was indeed a natural part of who she was.

Raph moved his chair closer to Don so that there was a space between himself and Mikey for her to sit. As she approached, Lav’s eyes conveyed her thanks to the red banded Turtle.

Mikey’s tongue swept over his lips as he pulled a chair out for Lavinia to be seated. Her short, tight dress accentuated the rounded flesh of her bottom and he was nearly salivating at the sight of it.

“Going to keep your end of our bargain, Proctor?” Mikey asked.

She glanced at him quickly, and then reached out to pluck a bunch of grapes from a bowl. Depositing them on her plate, she told him, “Of course.”

Pushing a grape past her lips, she caught his eye before letting her mouth slowly engulf the small piece of fruit.

Michelangelo squirmed in his chair, suddenly finding it difficult to sit still or even to eat.

“Gonna walk with me anywhere I choose?” he asked, still unsure if he could believe his luck.

“Mikey,” she said, her voice low, “I’ll go with you anywhere you’d like. All you ever have to do is tell me what you need.”
The orange banded Turtle went completely still, his eyes locked on Lavinia’s. A whirlpool of the dark vicious mist spun past the whites of his eyes and Lav reached to touch the back of his hand, excited to see how his consciousness was starting to fight back.

Raph nudged her foot with his and she withdrew her hand. Looking up, she let her eyes wander around the room before turning them with apparent nonchalance towards the end of the table. Leo had stopped eating to watch her through narrowed eyes.

Her lashes fluttered as she looked away from him. It was time to acknowledge the fact that as scared as she was at his behavior and at the prospect of losing him, his fierce determined pursuit of her was exciting.

“Yo, Leo,” Raph called to the blue banded leader, “ya’ know we got a drawing for both a single and a doubles point match tomorrow. Ya’ wanna spar some with me after dinner in case our names get drawn?”

Surprised at the request, Leo said curtly, “Certainly. It will be a good opportunity to remind you of the importance of following my directives.”

Raph bit his tongue to hold back an angry retort and felt Lav’s foot slide along his calf. The gentle reminder helped Raph pocket his resentment and he settled back to his dinner without a word.

When dinner was over, the group left the tent and both Raph and Don coaxed Leo over to the practice area. Lavinia smiled demurely at Michelangelo and strolled towards the servant’s area where she could hear music playing.

They discovered a small band had set up near a central fire and the group of musicians was entertaining their fellows. The music was quite good and Lavinia clapped enthusiastically as one number ended and another began.

Mikey touched her arm lightly and dipped his head to the side, indicating she should follow him into the woods. Taking a deep breath, Lavinia moved to his side and walked into the trees and out of sight of the encampment.

She was waiting to see what his approach would be so she would know if she was dealing with pseudo-Mikey or if the real one was pushing to escape. When he didn’t speak or move aggressively towards her, Lavinia knew the real Michelangelo was struggling for control of his body.

Knowing he couldn’t fight for long, Lavinia decided to make her first move while they could still hear the music from the camp. It was low and rhythmic and Lav smiled slightly, turned to look at Mikey invitingly, and then skipped away as he drew near.

“You want to play,” he said with a grin.

“Maybe,” she told him, coming to a stop near a large tree. Her hand touched the trunk and slid over it slowly, down and then up again in a suggestive caress that didn’t go unnoticed.

When he reached her, she stepped back, circling the tree away from him. Mikey touched the fingers of one hand to the trunk and followed her.

Lav moved just fast enough to keep the tree between them. Mikey’s smile grew wider as he held to a steady, stalking pace.
“If I catch you do I get a prize?” he asked lecherously.

“Maybe,” she said again, letting the corner of her mouth lift.

Mikey suddenly darted in the opposite direction, trying for a grab, but Lav anticipated his move and danced away. He stopped and tipped his head to look around the tree trunk at her, and she did likewise.

“This is fun. How long can you keep it up?” he asked.

“The real question is,” she said impishly, “how long can you keep it up?”

The innuendo wasn’t lost on him and he smiled. “Stop running away and I’ll show you.”

“I’m not running away,” she told him, “I’m dancing. With you.”

Mikey’s mouth opened to respond but froze as the black mist moved across his eyes. He wore a puzzled look as he glanced up at her, and then shook his head and blinked.

The lewd grin was back on his mouth, but Lav knew she had reached in and gotten a hold on Michelangelo. She wasn’t about to let go.

Turning her back on him, she tossed a slow, sensuous look over her shoulder, swung her hips and once more circled the tree.

She heard Mikey swallow and then the rustle of leaves as he began to circle the tree in pursuit.

Spinning, Lavinia placed her other hand on the trunk and walked backwards, locking her eyes with Michelangelo’s. The leaves under foot crunched as both moved in an unspoken rhythm along with the beat of the music coming to them from the distance.

After several moments, they both slowed and then came to a stop. Holding both her palms against the trunk, Lav leaned around the tree and tipped her head invitingly. Mikey followed her example, he eyes locked on her mouth as he moved towards her.

Their lips touched and Lav caressed his softly, sliding her lower lip over his teasingly before pressing against his mouth. Her eyes had captured his and held them while their mouths moved together, unconsciously following the beat of the far off music.

When Mikey moved as though to deepen the kiss, Lav stepped away. Walking back from the tree into the clearing, she kept her eyes on him and he followed, as though pulled by an invisible string.

Lavinia stopped and let him walk completely up to her. Tilting her head back, she watched his eyes, her hands unmoving at her sides. Mikey likewise kept his to himself as they both shifted to stand as near to each other as possible without actually touching.

Mikey was searching her eyes, his blue ones open wide as he tried to read what she wanted from him. Lav leaned forward the tiniest bit, and rose up on her toes.

Tipping his head to one side, Mikey captured her mouth again and this time the kiss was deep and in no way tentative. Accepting his probing tongue with a slight moan, Lavinia forced herself to keep her hands to her sides as she concentrated on pushing her mind into his subconscious.
When she reached inside she found that Mikey was locked in combat with his pseudo-self, the wizard’s black mist attempting to roll over him as he twisted to avoid it. She knew she needed to give him an anchor, something to make him too strong for them.

Breaking the kiss, Lav asked, “What do you want me to do Mike?”

His mouth twitched slightly and his wide tongue flicked out over his lips quickly.

“Dance for me,” he finally said, exhaling hugely.

Lav backed away from him, swaying lightly as she found a rhythm to match her heartbeat. Mikey liked a show; wanted to be entertained, and although she had no experience, instinct took over and told her what to do.

Her hips rolled and her shoulders moved up and back as she danced, keeping her movements slow and sensuous. Lav turned her head to the side and opened her mouth, playing her tongue across her upper lip and looked over at him from beneath lowered lashes.

Mikey hadn’t moved so much as an inch, other than to clench his fists at his sides. His eyes were riveted on her, unblinking blue hazed with lust.

Lav flattened the palms of her hands on her hips and deliberately slid them upwards, caressing her sides, lifting them to touch just her fingertips to the outer edge of both breasts. She heard a quick intake of breath from Mikey, and she moved her fingers over the point where her breasts began to swell, flattening her palms again and rubbing against her skin.

Her head came forward and then down as she moved it in a slow circle, looking up to see his reaction. He was breathing hard, and his stance had widened a bit, but his hands were still tightly pressed to his sides.

Lav had to smile a bit at that, knowing he was restraining himself. Hooking a thumb under one thin dress strap, Lav pulled it away from her body; then slid it down off her shoulder. Her body continued to sway, her movements calculated to cause the short, tight skirt to ride up just enough to tantalize him with the briefest of glimpses of what lay beneath.

Turning, she exaggerated the sway of her hips as she presented her back to him. Looking over her shoulder, she lowered the other dress strap in the same enticing way as the first, even though she knew he was no longer looking.

As soon as she had turned, his eyes came down to her ass and locked on like missiles to a target.

Lav lowered her hands to her knees and bent forward, rolling her rear end invitingly. She heard the churr that he tried to swallow as he attempted to keep his arousal hidden.

Catching the hem of her dress in her hands, Lav began to play with it, pulling down and lifting slightly as she danced. She turned again to face him, leaned over and pressed her arms together to push her breasts outward. The material of her dress slid down just a fraction, unhampered by straps that were no longer in place, and the only thing still covered were her nipples.

In a husky, deep voice, Lav asked again, “What do you want me to do, Mike?”

His head jerked up to catch her eyes. Lav called him Mike deliberately; she always used the more adult version of his nickname when she wanted him to be in control.
The black mist moved again, faster and clearly more agitated.

Breathing hard, Mikey stuttered, “T . . . take it off.”

“All right,” she murmured and slowly slid the hem of her dress up over her thighs, and then to her hips, turning as she uncovered her butt. Mikey moaned and then choked, coughing on his own spit, and Lav smirked at him as she turned again.

The dress continued upwards, over her taut belly and then she released her breasts. They bounced as they were set free and Lav heard another sharp intake of air from the orange banded turtle.

Pulling the dress over her head, Lav tossed it aside. Completely naked, she continued her exotic dance, watching as Mikey pounded his fists into his thighs.

“Mi~ke,” she crooned. “Tell me what to do.”

“D . . . down.” His voice was hoarse and he cleared it. “L . . . lay down.”

Lav moved down to her knees carefully, keeping her eyes on him. Her hands touched the ground next, and she crawled languidly towards him, stretching her limbs with each movement, like a cat stretching itself.

He didn’t try to hide the next churr that rumbled out of his chest. Mikey’s breathing was labored as he watched Lavinia stop near his feet, look up at him and bite her bottom lip in a challenging half-smile.

Lav lowered a hip to the ground and gracefully rolled on to her back.

“What do you want, Mike?” she asked again, twisting just a bit against the dry leaves.

“Open . . . open your legs,” he managed to gasp out.

Lav moved her legs outward, leaving a wide gap between them. Hands on her thighs, she pet herself, moving up and over the fine patch of hair covering her vulva.

With a loud groan, Mikey dropped to his knees between her legs.

“Where do you want me to put my hands, lover?” she asked, sweeping them over her abdomen and then up to cup her own breasts.

“Gahh.” Mikey’s voice caught. Pulling his eyes from her hands, he looked into her eyes and said, “On the . . . on the ground. F . . . flat babe.”

As she moved to comply, Mikey leaned forward over her, put his hands next to her head and pressed a desperate kiss to her mouth. Lav fell into his passion and back into his mind.

Mikey had broken free of the wizard’s hold and as Lav entered, he shoved the pseudo-Mikey away. When he saw her, he ran towards her outstretched hand.

With a strong surge, the black mist rolled around his ankles to stop him.

“He’s mine!” Lav pushed the thought out sharply, opening her eyes wide and willing her power into them. Twin lasers of green light stabbed the mist, piercing holes in it. Lav heard something scream, and the mist let go of Michelangelo.
“To me, Mikey!” she called loudly, reaching out with both hands.

Lav’s eyes snapped open and she pulled away from Mikey’s kiss.

“Please, Mikey, I need you inside me. Now, now,” she urged him breathlessly.

Mikey dropped down, his cock fully erect and throbbing. With a sob, he pushed into Lavinia with one quick, hard thrust and she yelped in response, her body jumping under his power.

Eyes closed again, Lav once more connected with Mikey’s mind. His hands were in hers and she pulled him towards her while the white light grew. He fell into her arms as the light swallowed his cavorting, evil double and the wizard’s dark manifestation along with it.

Lav opened her eyes to look up into Mikey’s and saw with a thrill that he was whole again.

“Lavinia,” he gasped.

“Oh yes, yes, Mikey, yes!” she cried, pushing her hips up at him and wrapping her legs around his shell.

Mikey pistoned into her relentlessly, churring and grunting. She let his passion and his urgency swallow her, his feeling overwhelming her own and driving delicious spikes into her womb.

Pressing her head into the ground, Lav arched her back, clamped down hard on his carapace and screamed as her orgasm hit.

“Shell!” Mikey cried out seconds later as he climaxed with an almost painful intensity.

His forehead came down on hers and he panted, barely able to breathe as he waited for the blood to once more fill his cock. They were both still gasping as her flow of energy shot into his groin and then his hips were moving insistently.

Two thrusts and then Lav lifted her lower body high, making him lose his connection. With a low desperate cry he groped for his cock, determined to push it into her pussy, but Lav walked her heels up his carapace.

He suddenly got the message and smiled hugely. Grabbing her ankles, he moved her legs up to his shoulders and pressed the head of his cock against the tight ring of muscle that marked the entry to her ass.

Their only lubricant was her juices still glistening on his cock, but Lav didn’t care about the burning pain as he pushed into her. She was too ecstatic over her victory and too determined to share with Mikey something she knew he loved.

He moved carefully, taking his time until he was fully sheathed in her tight hot anal cavity. Mikey wanted to move so badly, but instead he leaned down, placed his hands on the ground next to her and waited for her sign.

Lavinia sighed deeply, and her eyes fluttered. Reaching up, she wrapped her hands around his forearms and he began to thrust into her.

With each drive, Lav lifted her hips and clenched around his dick. It didn’t take much to push him into his second orgasm, his seed shooting out to fill her ass.
When his release was complete he gently pulled out, lowering her legs to the ground before rolling onto his carapace next to her.

Both of their chests were rising and falling rapidly. Mikey reached over and caught her hand in his, pulling it over to rest on his plastron.

When he was finally able to, he asked, “Can you please tell me what’s going on?”

“We’ve all been abducted by some type of wizards who are working for Lord Hebi. Raph says you all know him.”

Mikey’s face wrinkled in disgust. “Yeah, we know him. I wish we didn’t. These wizard guys are pretty strong; why didn’t they just kill us?”

“They don’t want you dead. They want mindless slaves; assassins who answer to Hebi,” Lav explained.

“Crap,” Mikey said; his tone full of feeling. He didn’t need any more explanation. If he had been caught by his doppelganger for much longer, he knew it was his ass that would have fallen into the light.

“How’d you know what to do?” he asked, watching Lav sit up and pull her dress back on.

“Splinter came in here with me. He was too strong and they left him to take me, not realizing he could follow. Splinter set me free pretty fast but he couldn’t reach you guys, so I had to wing it,” she said.

“With sex?” he asked, rolling onto his hip and grinning.

“Hey, whatever works. I find that you guys do a pretty fine job of focusing outside of your own heads when you’re reaching for an orgasm,” she said bluntly.

“Back at ya’ babe,” he snorted, making her blush. “So, who all is free?”

“Both Don and Raph. You were a little harder, ‘Mr. Glory Hog’,” she teased and was rewarded by a look of chagrin.

He stood up, reached for her hand and pulled her to her feet. “What about Leo?”

Lav moved into his arms and rested her head against his collarbone. “He’s being . . . difficult. He seems to be thriving on this reality. No one questions his command; he’s focused on being the best warrior and doesn’t have nearly the responsibilities that are his at home. He wants to win, Mikey. That beautiful, wonderful competitive streak of his is being played to by experts. How can they know him so well?”

Mikey answered with a short bark of humorless laughter. “He had more contact with Hebi than the rest of us. He’s so darn noble that wizards climbing in his head are gonna easily see how to turn his best traits into his worst.”

“It’s just a matter of making sure we aren’t balanced,” Lav whispered against his scutes.

He gave her a tight squeeze and she sighed happily. “Okay, then. We need to work on Leo and we gotta be quick. ‘Cause that white light in my head was getting a whole lot bigger babe. It was getting a whole lot bigger really fast.”
Chapter Summary

Mikey slept in Lav’s bed that night. It was possibly not a prudent thing to do, but Lavinia needed the comfort he gave her.

Leo worked Mikey hard during their early morning practice the next day and it was difficult to tell if that was punishment for his speaking out the previous day or retaliation for his sleeping with their Proctor.

During the night, Mikey had whispered to Lavinia his thoughts on why Leo was so fixated on having her. He said it was sort of a Spartan attitude; to the victor go the spoils. Leo had studied wars and battles his entire life and one of the more consistent themes had to do with the winner keeping for his own the best of what had been plundered.

Lav told him she wasn’t part of the prize for winning the Games, but Mikey said that didn’t matter. Leo had led such a monastic life – always denying himself things – any pseudo duplicate of him would certainly be completely opposite and want it all. Winning the Games and achieving fame and notoriety was a minimal part; as a champion he would also want to have the perfect woman to flaunt.

When Lavinia told him she was hardly the perfect woman, Mikey had laughed, kissed her and said, “For us you are. No matter how trapped Leo is, that’s one thing he’ll never forget.”

Before they fell asleep, Mikey brought up the subject of the dance she had performed for him, asking how she even knew to dance that way. Lav felt herself blushing furiously as she snuggled into his arms.

“I don’t know. I think I was feeling your mood and doing whatever seemed to excite you the most,” she answered.

“Mission accomplished,” he said, squeezing her tightly.

They slept that way, tucked against each other, until morning.

There was another attempt to open the portal.

Usagi felt the change in the air before he heard the sounds. Rising to his feet swiftly, Usagi pressed his hands together and closed his eyes while chanting the counter spell.
The attempt was stronger than the last one and the samurai was forced to use all of his powers of concentration to keep the portal closed. The fight lasted for nearly an hour before the enemy gave up.

Usagi fell to his knees, exhausted by the battle. He would probably have found fighting an armed assault less tiring than this mental war, but he could not afford to take the chance of being overwhelmed.

After a few moments, the ronin managed to regain his feet and walk back towards his friends.

He noticed immediately how drawn Master Splinter’s face had become. Maintaining his connection to his sister was taxing his strength and he was not a young rat.

“Is there anything I can do, Splinter-san?” Usagi asked with concern.

Master Splinter’s eyes remained closed as he shook his head slightly. “No my friend, you are doing all you can to protect us and I am grateful. It pleases me to tell you that Lavinia has rescued Michelangelo.”

Usagi’s eyes shifted to Leonardo and then back again. “Is there still time . . .?” He left the question unfinished.

Master Splinter understood. “Yes, but neither of us know how much. Michelangelo told my sister that the evil holding them becomes stronger over time and that makes it much harder to fight. Lavinia may not be able to hold off on her attempt to rescue Leonardo. She may have to try to retrieve his consciousness before she has any kind of connection to him.”

“What does that mean, Splinter-san?” Usagi asked; his voice barely above a whisper.

Master Splinter showed his pain for just a moment as he answered, “If she is unsuccessful, they may both be lost forever.”

For a second time, Usagi went down on his knees. This time his mental focus was not on a chant to fight magic, but on a prayer to save the Turtle he loved.

Her heart pounded painfully in her chest as Lavinia waited for the singles matches to be drawn.

Michelangelo’s name had already been placed on the board in the first round of drawings; now they watched as opponents were selected.

The morning would be taken up by the singles point matches; the afternoon devoted to double point matches. Her team had been selected to participate in both.

Finally a name was placed on the board next to Mikey’s. Lavinia called to Master Splinter with her thoughts and listened carefully as he fed her the information she needed to pass on to Mikey.

Standing in the pit area reserved for the fighters who were awaiting their battles, the Green squad gathered around Mikey to discuss strategy. Sounds from the first set of fighters filtered through to them, along with the noises of the spectators who crowded the arena.
“Ameyo-Tun is an experienced Kreu fighter. Look to your left, about seventy paces over. Do you see them?” Lav asked.

Mikey’s eyes widened. “Oh shell, are you talking about the guys who look like gladiators?”

“Yes I am,” Lav said.

“This is so not my idea of a good time,” Mikey said as his eyes raked over his opponent.

Ameyo-Tun was close to seven feet tall and built of solid muscle. His body was humanoid in appearance, but his face was flat, with two large eyes recessed into the front of it and a thin line for a mouth.

His face was expressionless as he in turn scrutinized Michelangelo. One of his Kreu teammates slapped him on the back and said something that had Ameyo-Tun nodding. He accepted the helmet that was handed to him and once he had donned it, his entire head and most of his face was covered in steel.

“Helmet? He gets to wear a helmet? I want one too,” Mikey yelped as he grew agitated.

“Kinda puts ya’ at a disadvantage,” Raph observed.

“That helmet is part of the Kreu’s standard fighting armament and was approved as such. You’ve never worn armor, so you aren’t allowed to have any now,” Lavinia said.

“His weapon?” Leo asked, watching the Kreu warrior move through his forms as he warmed his muscles.

“The trident,” Lav answered. “The one he carries is just a little over six feet in length. Besides the advantage of the long reach, Ameyo-Tun is very skilled in using that weapon to disarm his opponents. If he catches your nunchucks between the prongs, he’ll twist them away from you,” she told Mikey.

“So how do I beat him?” Mikey asked.

“Your biggest advantage is that you are faster and more flexible than Ameyo-Tun. He’s given up some of his peripheral vision in order to better protect his skull, so you should keep moving at his sides and from behind. If you try for a frontal assault, he’s going to gig you like a fish,” Lavinia said.

“Stay behind him, can do,” Mikey repeated.

“Remember he can use that trident like a bo staff as well; so don’t stay in any one place for long or he’ll whip that thing around and send you sprawling,” Lav said.

“And then he’ll gig ya’,” Raph added.

“That’s not helpful,” Mikey told him, frowning deeply.

“Michelangelo,” Leo said, getting his brother’s attention. “You are going to have to disable him by striking his limbs with as much power as you can put into your swings. His arms and legs are most vulnerable, but a broken rib will diminish his maneuverability. Move continuously and move quickly so he never has a target.”

Mikey listened intently while Leo laid out a plan of attack for him.
“Do you think I can beat him?” Mikey finally asked Leo in a somewhat hushed tone.

Leo’s hand came up to his shoulder. “Of course you can, little bro’,” Leo said, squeezing Mikey’s shoulder.

Lav clutched at Don’s arm when she saw a black mist swim across Leo’s eyes.

It was gone in a fraction of a second, but she knew she’d seen it. Mikey’s need had made the wizard’s lose their grip on Leo.

She didn’t have time to savor the moment or to press the advantage. An attendant swept through the pit area and called Mikey and Ameyo-Tun to the arena.

As Mikey took his place, Lav stopped just for a second to catch his eye. She hoped hers told him everything he needed to know.

Lavinia stepped into her podium while Mikey’s brothers moved to the viewing area.

Before the sound of the starting horn had even faded, Ameyo-Tun was jabbing towards Mikey’s gut with his trident, but of course Michelangelo was no longer there.

Flipping away from his opponent, Mikey taunted, “Do you always move so slow, lard butt?”

The Kreu warrior doggedly followed Mikey’s movements, his trident centered across his body and held in two hands. As he turned to try to put the Turtle in front of him, Mikey bounded to one or the other side, equally as determined to stay away from the vicious prongs on the warrior’s trident.

Mikey’s nunchucks were out and spinning as he looked for an opportunity to strike some portion of Ameyo-Tun’s body. The Kreu feinted with his weapon at Mikey’s chest and when the Turtle jumped away, the warrior swung the back of his trident at Mikey’s legs.

Seeing the move, Mikey landed and leaped again so quickly that he was an orange blur.

Years of sparring against Don and his bo staff gave Mikey an edge as he anticipated the Kreu’s rotation into the swing and the split second that Ameyo-Tun’s right elbow was vulnerable, Mikey slammed his nunchuck into it.

Ameyo-Tun grimaced in pain and pulled his elbow in tight against his side. It drew the trident off center and Mikey grinned.

“That had to hurt. Betcha can’t even extend that arm anymore, huh?” Mikey challenged as he flipped from his opponent’s right side to his left and then darted behind him.

The Kreu fighter spun quickly to find Mikey and in a flurry of movement, shuffled towards the Turtle while jabbing with short, repeated thrusts at his adversary’s torso.

Mikey jumped back with each attempt to spear him, his nunchucks weaving an orange arc in the air.

Timing his opponent’s thrusts, Mikey brought one of his nunchucks down to strike the side of the trident and then as it was forced off center by the blow, the other nunchuck came down hard on Ameyo-Tun’s left hand.
The front of the trident went down nearly to the ground as the Kreu warrior’s hand was momentarily paralyzed. Ameyo-Tun ran backwards to avoid a quick rush by Mikey; the Kreu’s weapon gripped tightly in his right hand, he swung it up in an arc towards Mikey’s head.

Mikey rolled under the swing and snapped his weapon against his opponent’s kneecap.

Ameyo-Tun stumbled and howled in pain before slamming down at Mikey with the butt end of the trident.

Throwing himself aside, Mikey heard the thump of the trident as it hit the ground. His next flip took him out of the path of the prongs as the Kreu lunged at him.

A quick series of hops took Mikey around behind Ameyo-Tun. Turning to locate his adversary opened up the Kreu’s left side for attack and Mikey swung his nunchucks hard into his opponent’s ribs.

Only the solid muscle of his abdomen kept the blow from breaking Ameyo-Tun’s ribs, but the pain was enough to double him over. Mikey swung back and down against the Kreu’s head to test the helmet.

The strike pushed the fighter a little further off-balance, but it also shook Mikey’s arm.

“Shell!” Mikey yelped. “Nice hat. I’ll stick to body blows from now on.”

Ameyo-Tun yelled something in Mikey’s direction and charged at him.

Laughing, Mikey spun out of his way, slamming a nunchuck into the other fighter’s shoulder and once more into the already injured elbow.

The arm dropped to Ameyo-Tun’s side, his elbow numb and useless. The warrior shifted his weapon to his left hand quickly and swung it like a bat, trying with all his might to hit Michelangelo.

The Kreu fighter was big and he was powerful, but he had obviously never fought against an opponent who refused to remain in one spot. His injuries were slowing him down; the tone of Mikey’s taunts riling him up, and he was starting to get sloppy.

Mikey on the other hand was not. For each uncoordinated attack by Ameyo-Tun, Mikey’s nunchakus found a target. Within minutes, the Kreu warrior’s trident was dragging the ground, both arms battered beyond use.

When the fighter stopped moving and swayed in one spot; his knees swollen from Mikey’s relentless onslaught, the Turtle backed off and waited.

“Michelangelo needs to finish him,” Leo growled from the sidelines.

“It isn’t necessary,” Don said, looking at his brother in surprise. “The fighter can’t go on.”

“The other teams need to see we will fight to a finish. This is a show of weakness,” Leo scowled at Don.

“It is a show of respect,” Don argued.

Before they could exchange more words, the Kreu team Proctor lifted their color flag and gave the victory to Mikey.

A loud cheer went up through the crowd and Mikey grinned widely as he waved to them.

Turning, he saw the Kreu team supporting Ameyo-Tun as they made their way to where Mikey stood.

A teammate pulled the helmet from the warrior’s head and Mikey saw the thin line that was his mouth stretch up into the semblance of a grin. Bowing his head quickly, he acknowledged his defeat and his acceptance of Mikey’s superior ability.

Mikey was beaming as the Kreu led their injured fighter off the field of battle.

Lav skipped down the stairs from her podium and practically leaped into Mikey’s waiting arms, ecstatic at his win. Moving out of the arena, they joined the other Turtles.

“Good job shell for brains,” Raph told his little brother.

“I knew you could take him Mikey,” Don added.

Leo’s face was expressionless as he watched the four react to Mikey’s win. Finally, Mike noticed Leo’s silence, and turned to look at him.

“Hey, bro’ I won,” he told his oldest brother.

“You stopped fighting,” Leo said, his tone dark and ominous.

“Call if professional courtesy,” Mikey said. “The crowd liked it.”

“We didn’t come here to please a crowd. We came here to win these Games,” Leo practically snarled at him.

Don stepped in, determined to mollify Leo. “You know Mikey likes to give the audience a show Leo. He never lets it interfere with our primary goal.”

Leo turned on him and snapped, “Since when do you question my authority, Donatello? I am growing tired of this constant insubordination. It had better cease immediately or there will be severe consequences. Is that clear?”

Speechless, all Don could manage was a curt nod. Leo sent his head around to include the rest of them in his glare.

Raph couldn’t keep still. “Fuck, Leo, we’re winnin’. What more do ya’ want?”

“I want you to shut your mouth and do as you’re told,” Leo said, his voice like ice. “We have a pairs match this afternoon and I don’t think any of the three of you is ready. So we are going to forego lunch and have an extended sparring session, starting now. Any arguments?”

Since the question was obviously rhetorical, no one said anything. Leo stepped aside and stared at them expectantly; following as they marched back towards the practice field.

“What crawled up his ass?” Mikey whispered to Don as they walked.

“He’s the only one left,” Don whispered back. “The only one of us the wizards are still in control of. They’re probably pushing him to abandon his feelings for us. That thing with you just
before the fight? Somehow the real Leo momentarily broke free because you needed him.”

Practice was brutal. Leo pushed his team hard, criticizing their slightest error and leaping on any hesitation. He left bruises with his ferocious attacks, finding and taking advantage of any lapse in their concentration.

He was particularly harsh on Donatello. Any mistake the purple banded Turtle made was dealt with viciously and then Leo would make him repeat the maneuver until it was perfected.

“Why the shell is he pickin’ on Donny?” Raph asked Lav in a low voice as they stood to the side.

Lav’s mouth was set in a grim line. “Don never disagrees with him. I suppose the false Leo is infuriated that Don would question his authority.”

“We gotta get rid of this crazy Leo,” Raph said, folding his arms over his plastron. “My whole life I wished Leo would get the fuck off my ass when we’re in battle and just let me loose. Now I got one that’ll do that ‘n I don’t like it. I never knew how much I depended on him ta keep me from turnin’ into a murderer.”

Lav turned soft eyes on him. “Raph, I don’t think you could ever murder someone. Your sense of honor is much stronger than you give yourself credit for.”

Raph glanced into her eyes, then turned back to watch his oldest brother slam Don to the ground for the fifth time.

“Yeah, well there are circumstances that could make me wanna murder someone. Lord Hebi’s about to find that out, soon as we get outta here,” he said with determination.

The afternoon doubles match drawings pitted Leo and Don against a pair of competitors from the Walid team; a bearded fighter named Aard, and his teammate Kaal.

“Oh Donny,” Lav murmured under her breath as the two brothers watched their names being drawn.

“Lav?” Raph inched closer to her.

Her eyes flickered to him and then back to the board as the Turtles names were placed next to those of the Walid. “After what just occurred between Leo and Don, that drawing couldn’t possibly have been random,” Lav said.

“What are ya’ thinkin’?” Raph asked.

“If Leo lets Don fall then the wizards win,” Lav told him, her voice low with worry.

“Shit,” Raph said. “Can’t we make a substitution or somethin’?”

“No.” Lav turned to walk towards her podium with Raph at her elbow. “I’m so frightened, Raph. Your wrist; Don’s ankle. If you can be hurt here, you can be killed.”

Mikey joined their conversation. “‘Cause your mind believes it, right?”

Lav nodded. “I talked to Don about this and he agrees. If your mind believes you’ve died it will send a massive electrical charge to your heart, your real heart. Your body back in the lair will die.”
“So if Leo lets Don get killed here, Don is really dead?” Mikey asked with dawning horror.

Lav swallowed. “Oh God, I’m afraid so. It won’t be just Don who dies; Leo will fall into the white light and be gone forever as well.”

Raph said as calmly as he could, “This ain’t good is it?”

“Say something to Leo,” Lav urged. “Something you would normally say to make him feel protective. Quickly, before the fight starts.”

Raph and Mikey glanced at each other and then over at Leo, who stood several feet from Donatello. Don appeared nervous, his hands opening and closing around his staff, but Leo was rigidly stiff. There was no conversation between the two; no last minute advice from the older brother.

Raph strode towards them. Clapping a hand on Don’s shoulder, he leaned in to say something in Don’s ear that earned him a small smile. Raph’s eyes narrowed slightly as he turned to look at Leo, and then he approached the blue banded Turtle.

Inches from Leo’s face, Raph lowered his head and spoke in an undertone. Lav watched as Leo seemed to ignore his brother’s words. She saw Raph’s eyes squeeze shut, and then open as he said something more.

Leo’s head jerked up to him, and then swiveled to Don. Raph stopped speaking for a moment, and then one of his hands moved up to grip Leo’s bicep as he quickly added something.

Spotting the Walid beginning to cross the arena, Raph released Leo’s arm and jogged back to where Lav and Mikey stood waiting.

“Fuck, I hope that works,” he breathed out anxiously. He and Mikey moved off to the viewing area, and Lav climbed the stairs to her podium.

Leo and Don had already been briefed on the Walid. As the field of competitors decreased, Lavinia had discussed with them those most likely to be potential finalists. The Walid’s were definite contenders.

Short in stature, they were crafty fighters who were skilled in the use of the two weapons they carried. One was a blade similar to a steel tanto; the other a razor sharp dagger.

Their greatest strength however, did not lie in the mastery of these weapons, but in their incredible speed. The Walid people were very fast, depending on their speed to carry them close enough to an adversary for their weapons to inflict damage.

Don’s bo staff and Leo’s katanas had the reach necessary to give them the advantage, but only if they wielded them with a swiftness that could match their opponents speed.

The Walid were not strong and were easily debilitated; but only if they could be hit. Unfortunately, most competitors could not react quickly enough to hit them.

Lav could tell by Don’s body language that he was more than just nervous. Don did not scare easily, but he was smart enough to understand the things she’d had to explain to Mike and Raph. Don knew he was in serious trouble, and not just from the Walid.

Another frightening thought came to Lavinia and it took all of her will power to stay on the podium. Leo had told her once how he and Don had both wanted her, to the exclusion of the other,
when she first came to live with them. There had been a short conflict, not out in the open, but it had resulted in some resentment before they’d worked it out between them.

Leo had set a plan in motion whose sole purpose was to have Lav become a part of their lives permanently, and he thought Don was interfering with that plan.

In this altered reality, it was Donatello to whom she had gone first. If the wizard’s pseudo-Leo could tap into that memory . . .

The horn sounded to start the competition.

. . . Donatello would be in mortal danger.

There was a loud gasp from the crowd as the Walid’s both moved simultaneously straight towards Don.

They came at him incredibly fast. If not for Donatello’s years of training and actual combat experience, their first assault might have taken him down.

But Donatello was a master of the bo staff and his mind and body had been molded to work as one. Swinging the bo in an arc, Don shoved the attackers away from him.

The Walid’s changed their tactics after Don’s first swing; spreading out quickly, first one attacked and then the second.

Lav watched in growing horror as Don fought to hold them off, unable to do much more than mount a defense. His training kept him from remaining in one spot for too long. Don’s strength made it possible for him to continue to put distance between the Walid’s and himself by flipping or leaping away from them.

Through the first minutes of the bout, neither Walid did more than cast a wary eye at Leo. Leo himself didn’t move.

His katanas were drawn, but he stood and watched his brother take the entirety of the attack.

Lav felt a horrible constriction in her throat as she wondered if Leo was going to simply stand there and watch as the Walid’s wore Donny down and then fell on him with their blades.

She couldn’t take the chance. Turning, Lav reached for the team flag, meaning to toss it into the arena and end the match.

Her flag was gone.

All color drained from Lav’s face. She spun to catch Raph’s eyes, her own full of panic, but neither Raph nor Mikey were looking at her. Both bright banded brothers were too intent on the continuing battle to notice her dilemma.

She wanted to scream at Leo to help his brother but was afraid that her voice would make matters worse.

One thing she decided then; if the situation in the arena did not improve quickly, she was going to draw her weapons and enter the fight. Even if that meant she would be fighting Leo.

Don jabbed the end of his bo into Aard’s hand and twisted it quickly, forcing the fighter to
drop his weapon. The second that it took for him to complete that maneuver was enough for Kaal to close in, and only a well-placed spinning kick kept the fighter’s dagger out of Don’s exposed side.

The spin put his back to Aard, who moved so fast he was nearly a blur.

Don saw the movement with his peripheral vision and thrust backwards with his bo. His staff caught Aard in his midriff, but the warrior grabbed the end of the bo and held on.

Fighting to regain control of his staff, Don didn’t see Kaal racing towards him until the diminutive warrior was leaping at his throat, tanto raised.

Don threw himself down on his carapace, pulling his bo free and bringing it across his chest to try to block the tanto. He wasn’t fast enough.

Lavinia screamed as the small sword got past Don’s defenses, its tip going straight towards the Turtle’s jugular.

The edge of cold, razor sharp steel was all it hit, as Leo suddenly leaped into the fray, his own amazing speed bringing his katana down to block the deadly strike at the last possible second.

Lav clapped a hand to her mouth as she watched Leo shove Kaal backwards away from Don. Don rolled to his feet, his bo lifting as he turned his complete focus to Aard.

Both blades up, Kaal leaped at Leonardo, trying to zip past the katanas. Leo danced nimbly aside, his eyes locked on his quarry as he brought a katana down at the racing fighter. The fighter caught the edge of the katanas blade on his tanto, and then stabbed at Leo’s hand with his dagger.

Leo pulled his hand back, sliding their weapons apart while bringing his other katana down, hitting the dagger on its hand guard. It saved Kaal from losing his fingers to Leo’s blade.

The strike was hard enough to make Kaal lose his grip on the dagger and it hit the ground near their feet. Leo quickly used the tip of his katana to send the dagger sliding across the dirt and out of reach.

Jumping back, Kaal reassessed his situation. Yelling something at his comrade he dashed away from Leo and went after Donatello again.

Leo spun and gave chase, his mouth set in a grimly determined line. Lavinia saw Kaal’s face as he looked at the pursuing turtle. He appeared to be surprised, as though he didn’t expect Leo to come after him.

With a desperate lunge, Kaal threw himself at Aard, hands outstretched. Aard caught his wrists and spun, flinging his partner like a projectile straight at Donatello’s head.

In that same instant, Aard charged towards Don’s legs. As Don swung his bo down at Aard, Leo dove from a full run right at Kaal’s flying form. Head down, Leo smashed into the fighter shoulder first and drove the Walid away from Donatello.

When they hit the ground, Leo tightened his fist around the hilt of his katana and pounded into Kaal’s face with it until the Walid was unconscious.

Don caught the side of Aard’s neck with his bo staff and knocked the fighter off balance, sending him rolling to the ground. Before the Walid could regain his feet, Don brought his bo down on the back of Aard’s head and flattened him. Aard went down heavily and stayed down.
Breathing hard, Don turned to look over his shoulder at his brother. Leo stood up and walked slowly over to Don, stopping just a foot from him and staring intently.

Then Leo reached out and gripped Don’s forearm tightly.

With a grin Don returned the grasp, relishing the warmth of seeing his real brother again, if just for that split second.

Raph let out a deep triumphant yell as he and Mikey ran to where their two brothers stood. Lav was still clutching the railing, putting her head down between her arms to take several steadying breaths.

Composed enough to move, Lavinia descended from her podium slowly and walked to where her guys waited. Her eyes were on Don’s and she wordlessly moved into his arms.

Lav wrapped her arms around his waist, grabbed his shell and buried her face into his scutes.

“I’m okay Lav.” Don held her tightly as he felt her tremble, stroking her hair reassuringly.

Lavinia nodded, rubbing her face on his chest.

Looking over at Leo, Don said, “Thanks for the save bro’.”

“You didn’t think I’d let anyone take you down, did you?” Leo responded.

Raph grinned and slapped Leo’s carapace. “No way. That’s what makes us so tough ta beat. Teamwork.”

Without moving her head, Lav reached over and wrapped her fingers around Leo’s arm. He went completely still at her touch, and though she couldn’t see his face, Lav knew he was staring at her.

Mikey was waving and grinning at the crowd. Over his shoulder he said in a low voice, “Maybe we should get outta here now? We’re holding up the works again.”

Lav released Leo’s arm and leaned back enough to look in Don’s eyes. He smiled down at her. “Hang on sweetheart,” he said softly.

“I am,” she whispered.

Maybe it was the excitement of the win, or the fact that the real Leo had rescued Don, but they all let their guard down. As ninja’s it was something that shouldn’t have happened.

Lavinia was several paces behind the Turtles as they headed back to their tent. Everyone was tired and hungry, but the adrenaline rush from the bout kept the guys moving and talking, discussing better ways to handle adversaries gifted with such speed.

Head down, Lav was more worried about how next to proceed. Her Leo had shown himself briefly two times and she knew it was time to try to pull him to freedom. She was still just a little afraid of him.

“Proctor Green!”

Lav stopped and turned at the shout. She didn’t recognize the voice, but the call was purposeful enough to capture her attention. Searching in the direction from which the voice had
come, Lav couldn’t spot anyone who appeared to be interested in her.

She was about to continue on her way when the thunderous sound of fast approaching hooves spun her around.

Bearing down on her was a heavy supply cart, pulled by four rampaging beasts.

It was too close for her to successfully leap aside; she wouldn’t be able to gather enough momentum to carry her out of the way. The only thing she had time to do was close her eyes.

Just before they snapped shut she saw a flash of green and then someone hit her in the midriff and she was airborne.

The sound of the cart racing by was surreal as Lav was pulled off her feet. Time slowed; she heard the bounce of a wheel rolling over a rock, someone shouting her name and she smelled the heavy scent of the beast’s fur lathered in sweat as they swept past.

Lav heard Raph shout, “Stop it before it hits someone!”

Then her back hit the ground hard enough to knock the air out of her lungs and time resumed.

Dust flew up around Lavinia and Leonardo. Even with her eyes still tightly shut, Lav knew who her rescuer was. He laid partly on top of her, breathing heavily, his arm wound around her waist.

It struck her that this was the second attempt on her life.

Lavinia started to shake and quickly placed a hand over her eyes in an attempt to hold back the tears that threatened to flow.

“I hope that wasn’t too aggressive for you Proctor,” Leo said with a note of smugness in his voice.

Lav couldn’t say anything. Her lips quivered with the effort to control her emotional response and her chest was heaving as hysteria tried to bubble up and overtake her. It was too much suddenly; the frightening unknown she’d been thrust into, the fear for her lover’s, the weight of their lives in her hands.

“Proctor?” Leo asked.

When she didn’t answer his voice changed slightly and she felt his hand on her cheek.

“Lavinia, are you all right?” the real Leo asked.

Lav rolled her head away from his voice; her hand still covering her eyes.

She felt him shift closer to her, his body suddenly a comforting weight against hers.

“Lav,” he pleaded, his face inches from her cheek. “Lav, are you hurt? Talk to me.”

“I’m okay,” she finally managed to squeak out in a small, shaky voice. She bit down on her lip, despising herself for showing that much weakness.

Leo’s hand closed over hers firmly and he gently drew it away from her eyes. Lav blinked up at him, a thin film of unshed tears made Leo appear to shimmer.
“Lavinia . . .”

There he was, Hamato Leonardo; wholly and completely himself.

“I’m sorry, Leo,” Lav whispered. “I’m acting like a girl.”

His smile curled around her heart. “I forgive you since you are one,” he whispered back.

A deep voice interrupted them. “I told you this was a dangerous place.”

Sarvitek stood nearby, his arms crossed over his chest and a smirk on his face.

As Leo’s head lifted, Lav saw the dark, rolling mist cover his amber eyes and then pseudo-Leonardo was back.

With a shout of rage Leo flew to his feet, drawing his katanas as he rose. Sarvitek fell back with a surprised yell and managed to pull his short axe just as Leo swung down at him.

Lav rolled over and up as quickly as she could. It was obvious after two strikes that the Triceraton was no match for Leonardo. She also knew she had to stop Leo from killing Sarvitek.

“No Leo! No!” Lav screamed.

Leo was beyond listening. His katanas whistled as his fury moved them with incredible speed. Sarvitek was backing away and using every ounce of skill to deflect the blows.

Sarvitek’s foot rolled under him and he went down on one knee. His lifted axe was swept out of his hands by Leo’s katana, and then the Triceraton’s arm came up as the second katana swept down at his unprotected head.

Lav’s hands snapped down to her tonfas and she dove in front of Sarvitek, lifting her weapon to block Leo’s blow.

His growl at her interference was murderous.

“No Leo. Please, please . . .” Lavinia begged, pushing against the katana as Leo bore down on her tonfa.

“He tried to kill you,” Leo hissed.

“You don’t know that,” she told him. “If you kill him now they will take you into custody and the competition is over for your team.”

“It’s over if our Proctor dies,” Leo said with cold anger.

“I’m not dead,” she reminded him. “I’m not dead, Leo. I still want to win, don’t you? Isn’t that why you’re here? Please Leo.”

She felt the pressure lift as Leo pulled his katana from her weapon and stepped back.

From the corner of her eye, she saw Raph, Mike, and Don rushing towards them. They had managed to stop the runaway cart and had turned in time to see Leo attacking the Triceraton.

Lav flipped her tonfa back into the holster and slowly stood upright, her eyes locked on Leo’s. From behind her she heard Sarvitek’s angry grunts as he rose to his feet.
“This is an outrage!” he bellowed. “I shall inform the Games commission of your unwarranted attack!”

“Ya’ do that loud mouth. There’s a few questions I’d like ya’ answer,” Raph snapped.

Sheathing his katanas, Leo turned without another word and walked away.

“This isn’t over,” Sarvitek fumed as he glared around at them and stormed off.
Raph walked over to Lav and put a comforting arm around her waist. Still shaken, Lav leaned into his protective embrace.

“What the shell was that all about?” he asked, indicating Leo’s retreating form.

“He thought Sarvitek was behind the attack on me,” Lav said, glancing up as Mikey and Don joined them. “I had him; I had Leo just before that big buffoon opened his mouth. The real Leo is trying to get out and I have to help him.”

Lavinia suddenly felt anxious. They shouldn’t have let Leo leave.

Pushing away from Raph, she told them, “Help me find him. We have to hurry.”

“Why Lav? What’s wrong?” Don asked, surprised at her sudden urgency.

“I don’t know,” Lavinia admitted. “Something feels off. This whole thing with the cart and Sarvitek was a set-up; a last ditch effort to destroy Leo. They know he’s fighting back now; helping Mikey, saving Don, rescuing me. They don’t have any more chances to hold him permanently unless they do something right now.”

“He wasn’t meant to enter our battle, was he?” Don asked.

“No. I saw that Walid’s face as Leo chased him,” Lav explained. “He was surprised; as though the move was completely unexpected. Leo was fighting against the wizard’s influence because of his love for you. They don’t understand that emotion; it’s just too strong for them.”

“So you’re sayin’ they gotta try something else?” Raph asked.

“Shell!” Mikey yelped explosively. “What are we waiting for? Let’s find our bro’ quick.”

Leo wasn’t in their tent or the dining one. They checked around the servants sleeping area, but he was nowhere to be seen.

“We have to split up,” Don announced. “He’s around here somewhere but there are too many places to look.”

“Okay, we’ll look in all the spots where the fighters hang out. He’s probably in one of those places,” Raph said, and then turned to Lav. “Stay here in case he comes back this way.”
She nodded and watched the three Turtles quickly scatter.

Lav needed to find Leo; his disappearance was not a good sign. His brothers were searching for him on the fair grounds and at the arena, wherever there was a lot of activity.

Forcing herself to relax, Lavinia closed her eyes. She focused on Leo, blocking out everything else, until finally she sensed him. Letting that guide her, she moved into the seclusion of the woods.

Trailing Leo’s mental signature, Lavinia walked for several long minutes, going deeper into the woods where the growth was heavier.

She eventually heard voices ahead – one female, one male – Leonardo.

“You’re very naughty to take me out here warrior. Are you thinking of having your way with me?” The female voice was teasing.

“Yes.” Leo’s voice sounded guttural and serious.

“I’ve never been with a champion. Oh, hey! Whoo, you’re strong!” she said, giggling excitedly.

Lav quickened her pace, pulse racing. Pushing through a small divide between two bushes she emerged into a slight clearing.

Leo was holding a girl in his arms, his face against her neck.

Lavinia froze for a full minute, shocked beyond speech, until she remembered this wasn’t her Leonardo. Face flushed, she decided it was damn well time to put him back together.

“That’s enough,” she announced forcefully.

Leo pulled his mouth back from the girl’s throat, but he didn’t turn.

“Why are you here Proctor? Why aren’t you attending to my brothers?” he asked sarcastically. He was watching the strange girl’s face as he spoke.

Lav could feel the smugness roll off of the girl. The girl’s hands were flattened against Leo’s plastron, her gaze on him as a large smile curved her lips.

Lavinia wanted to rip them off of her face. She had never in her life felt such raw emotion as what she was feeling at this moment.

“Girl, you need to leave now. This one is not for you.” Lav addressed her directly, ignoring Leo’s jibe.

As Leo’s hands were still on her arms, the girl began to feel cocky. “I got to him first and he wants me. You go away.”

Leo smirked but he said nothing, nor did he move.

Lav thought she felt something from Leo then, a little push of emotion akin to satisfaction. He was enjoying this.

Lavinia walked towards them, her stride purposeful. “Go away girl. Go away before I hurt
“you,” Lav told her.

Leo’s hands dropped from the girl’s arms, but still he didn’t turn to look towards Lav. The smirk was still painted on his face as he stared at the girl, daring her.

“You won’t do anything to me, he won’t let you. He wants me and I want him.” She glanced at him for confirmation, but he said nothing.

“He’s playing with you and you’re too stupid to know it,” Lav said harshly.

Lav knew it was true; Leo was playing some sort of game. She could feel his excitement from holding the girl, but not the arousal that should have been there if he truly wanted her.

The girl wasn’t playing; her need a desire to be someone and Leo was her ticket to reaching that goal. She still had one hand on his plastron, and she slid it further up his chest until she was touching his face. Glancing at Lav quickly, she turned back to Leo and leaned forward, her eyes on his mouth.

“Use that mouth to do anything other than say goodbye and I’ll break it.” Lav stepped closer, her eyes narrowing.

The girl faltered, looked at Leo for a sign and when she received none; withdrew her hand.

Then Leo moved back from her, turning his head finally to look straight into Lavinia’s eyes.

The girl saw that look, and the one Lav returned and stomped her foot. “You should have told me you were married!” With an angry flounce, she ran away from them, back towards the camp grounds.

“You set me up,” Lavinia said with conviction.

Leo chuckled low in his throat, turning his body towards her. “I’m not chasing you; you said you didn’t want aggressive.”

Lav’s head lowered a fraction, her eyes still fixed on him. “So you used a random girl to get me to come to you?”

He came closer and reached a hand out to touch her arm, but didn’t grab her. “Would you have fought for me?” he asked in a wicked whisper.

“Yes,” she responded with a hiss. “Yes. I would have killed her for you.” Lav knew she meant it; suddenly understanding something new about herself. She would never be able to share her Turtles.

“Good.” He stepped to within inches of her. “I shouldn’t be the only one to feel that way.”

Lav lifted her head as Leo lowered his and their lips touched, making Lav’s whole body begin to burn. She moved to press it against Leo’s and immediately felt the responding heat.

Leo pulled her into his arms and opened his mouth, stabbing at her with his tongue and with only the slightest hesitation, she let him in. As soon as her tongue touched his, she forgot everything else in her desire. A long low moan escaped her throat and his churr rolled up to meet it.

Lav’s hands touched his collarbones, her fingers sliding across hard muscle until they met his scutes and then rubbing along the top edge. The touch was familiar; she didn’t know why she
always did that with Leo; maybe because he was hypersensitive there and she knew it.

Leo pulled his mouth back as soon as her fingers touched that spot. Surprised and suddenly wary, Lav stared into his eyes. She didn’t see danger there, but something else was happening in their depths.

He was becoming aware.

“Lavinia?” he asked, sounding puzzled.

“Leonardo,” she murmured; the buzz of accomplishment shooting sparks inside her head.

His mouth found hers again; moving with a renewed fervor he kissed her deeply enough to scorch her soul. Leo’s lips flowed from Lavinia’s mouth to her neck, where his ardor was no less fiery.

Lav felt his hand move down and caress her lower back, and then slide over her hip and around her front to dip between her legs. She pressed against the hand, letting him feel how wet she was, and he rubbed hard against her opening through the thin material that covered her.

A long shuddering moan issued from Lav and she pushed against him again, spreading her legs further. Her hands traveled down his plastron to his thighs and moved inwards until she felt the bulge of his manhood. Lavinia began to stroke the slit housing his cock with her fingertips.

Leo’s mouth moved from her neck to her breasts, lapping at the hardened nipples through the material of her body suit. Lav lifted one of her hands and pulled the suit from her shoulder, rolling it down enough so that her right tit bounced free.

He attacked it immediately and Lav gasped as his wide mouth opened all around her very sensitive mound of flesh. Both her hands lifted and she grabbed his shoulders, pulling him closer to her.

Leo pushed hard against the thin fabric between her legs, stretching it as his finger dipped into her opening. Lav’s eyes fluttered and she grabbed at her clothing, pulling the rest of the top down. The material bunched at her hips where Leo’s arm and the belt of her holster stopped her progress.

His mouth came off her breast and Leo looked down, saw her intent, and pulled his hand away to grasp the material. As he peeled the rest of the body suit from her, Lav unbuckled her holster and let it drop to the ground.

Kicking out of her boots, Lav lifted her legs so the final bit of her garment could be stripped from her body. Leo ran his hands over her smooth legs as he stood back up, his eyes locked on hers. The large three-fingered hands moved up over her hips, onto and over her tight, flat stomach, touched and squeezed her breasts and finally came to rest on her cheeks.

As her pulled her face into his kiss, Leo whispered, “Love me, Lavinia.”

“Always, Leo,” she whispered back, his words sending a wave of heat over her entire body.

Lav untied his belt and he lifted his sheathed katanas from his back, letting them slide to the ground next to his feet.

Pressing against him again, Lav shifted so one of her legs was between his thighs. She lifted it slightly and used her knee to rub against the arousal that was still tucked away. With a loud
churr, Leo released his erection and Lavinia purred her excitement.

Their mouths joined once more and Leo knelt on the ground, pulling Lavinia down with him. Bodies welded together, their tongues danced in unison and their minds transcended their physical forms.

The white light in Leo’s mind was bright and so very close to him. The mist was strong in him; it separated into three forms and then melded back into one, swirling and looping over Leo’s trapped conscious.

His pseudo-clone spun towards her, swords drawn. “I am staying,” it hissed at her.

“No.” Her answer was echoed by the real Leo as her presence brought him focus.

Leo pulled his mouth off Lavinia’s and he sought her eyes. She could see the dark mist behind them.

“Fight them with me,” he pushed out with an effort as he fought for control.

“Become mine again,” she whispered and slowly lay back, offering herself to him.

He followed her down, his eyes concentrated on hers as his pelvis pressed between her thighs. Lavinia lifted her legs and joined her ankles behind his muscular thighs, spreading herself wide.

“Take me, Leo,” she pleaded, clinging desperately to his conscious mind.

Concentrating completely on the body beneath him, Leo pushed his darkly aroused erection into Lavinia, his mind focused on the feeling of her body tightening around his shaft. The veins on his penis throbbed inside of her slick heat as he sank into her.

Lavinia moaned and arched her back, a delicious spasm made her vagina clench around his cock. Panting lightly, her mind once more joined with his.

His consciousness had nearly reached her. He was warring with his clone, their katanas sparking off one another as Leo fought for his freedom.

Lavinia could hear the mist now; it hissed at her invasion and cursed her interference. She watched it boil in fury, and then swarm towards Leo’s escaping mind.

Willing her gift to manifest itself, Lavinia turned her eyes on the swirling mist, just as she’d done when fighting for Mikey. The twin beams of flashing light shot from her mind’s eyes and pierced the mist, drawing screams of anguish from whatever lay within.

With a final leap, Leo swept his sword down and across, slashing his pseudo-self into halves. As it fell, the wizard’s mist roiled and burned, growing larger as it expanded in a final attempt to wrap itself around Leonardo.

The white light was all around them now and Leo’s feet were slipping backwards. Lavinia leaned towards him, both hands outstretched, and screamed, “Leo, take me!”

Sliding her hips back forced his cock partway out of her, and then she slammed them forward, clamping her legs in a vise like grip around his body. With a loud grunt, Leo fell back with her, his body reacting to her call.
The wizards screamed as they plummeted into the white light and Leo was once more in control of his own mind.

“Lavinia,” he whispered, breathing heavily.

“Leo.” Lav felt a tear fall from the corner of her eye.

He leaned down and brushed his lips over it before nuzzling into the hair on her temple. The throb of his organ buried deeply inside of her called for his attention, and smiling into her eyes, he began to thrust into Lavinia.

Lav circled his neck with her arms and held onto him as tightly as she could, still afraid someone might try again to take him from her. His heavy breath on her neck was reassuring.

“It’s all right now, my love. I’m back, I’m truly here,” he whispered into her ear.

Lifting her hips to meet his thrusts, Lav groaned. Her clitoris, rubbed continuously by his thick shaft, was sending waves of pleasure into her abdomen and the corresponding pressure pushed downwards, building in intensity.

“Leo . . . Le~o . . . L-Leo,” she moaned his name repeatedly, unable to think as her mind abandoned her body to pure feeling.

Lavinia’s inner muscles began to snap around his cock; Leo’s body frenzied as he pushed his length into her hot, slick canal. Every stroke sent him closer to his orgasm, her body super heating his organ and tightening around the shaft as he moved.

He could feel her start to shake and heard the sound of her breathing as it became erratic. Knowing she was close, Leo shifted enough to tip his head down and catch one of her nipples in his mouth.

“Ahhh! Leo!” she cried out as his action pushed her over into climax.

Her hips were shaking under him and her muscles clamped around his organ. With a final lunge, Leo came hard, his pelvis jerking uncontrollably as he poured into Lavinia.

Holding her tightly, Leo lifted his head from Lav’s neck, rubbing his cheek against hers as he sought to look into her eyes. Her return gaze was soft and warm.

With a slight smile, Leo touched his lips to hers just as her energy flowed into him and made his cock expand for a second time.

There was no wild mindless driving this time; both of them found a slow, easy rhythm. Time seemed to stop around the pair as Lav stared into Leo’s eyes while he pushed into her.

Finally the clock started again as Leo’s eyes half closed, feeling his impending release. His movements changed; hips grinding his shaft into her body with short, quick stabs.

A loud groan and Leo spilled over, filling Lavinia with his seed.

Lav’s chest felt tight as more tears threatened to fall. She suddenly realized all of her Turtles were free and they could finally leave the altered reality they were trapped in.

With an effort, Leo pushed far enough back from Lav’s tight grip to look into her face. When he saw the emotion there, he kissed her eyes, then her temples and cheeks before pressing a
deep kiss to her mouth.

“T’m sorry, Lav,” Leo told her, searching her eyes as he pulled away from the kiss.

“Please don’t say that,” Lavinia said. “What happened was beyond your control. There’s so much more to this than you realize.”

Leo touched the corner of her mouth with another kiss before lifting himself off of her.

“Tell me while you get dressed. We need to find my brothers,” Leo said as he handed her bodysuit to her.

“It’s Lord Hebi. He hired wizards to destroy your conscious minds and replace them so he could use your bodies to murder his enemies. Splinter kept them from completely taking me and he’s been guiding me this entire time,” Lav told him.

He watched her pull on her boots and asked, “How do you know Hebi is behind this?”

“Usagi came to the lair and told Splinter. He’s there now, watching over our bodies because Hebi has already tried to send someone to collect them. Splinter would have had to sever the connection to me if he’d needed to fight.” Lav stood up and belted her tonfas into place.

“Was he with you just now?” Leo asked with a slightly horrified tone.

Lav looked up quickly, and then giggled at Leo’s expression. “No. He has a dark corner to hide in while I’m bringing you guys back.”

“The others?” Leo asked.

“Everyone is back to normal. The only thing left is to get out of this place. Splinter says we have to be together,” Lav told him.

“Then let’s go get the others,” Leo said, catching her hand and heading back towards the camp.

Before they had gone very far, they heard loud, angry voices. It took only seconds to realize one of them was Raph’s.

“Get your hands off of me! What the fuck is going on here?” Raph was yelling.

Leo ducked down quickly, pulling Lavinia with him. Together they inched forward through the dense underbrush until they reached a spot where they had a view of what was happening.

Raph, Don, and Mikey were surrounded by armed security guards. Their hands were bound behind their backs and one guard carried their weapons.

“Silence! The Games council has ordered your arrest for serious infractions of the rules and for operating outside of the laws of this precinct,” one of the security guards told Raph.

“Who is bringing these charges?” Don asked.

“You’ll find out from the Games council, but I can tell you one of them is a team Proctor. His word is above reproach,” the guard answered and then pushed Don to get him moving.

“Fuckin’ Sarvitek,” Raph growled, jerking his arm away as one of the guards tried to grab him.
“Dudes, you’re seriously making a mistake here. That Proctor has been telling lies ‘cause he’s mad at our Proctor,” Mikey tried to explain.

“None of that is up to us,” a guard told him. “Tell it to the Games council.”

“Lav,” Leo whispered, “I’m going to rush them. Work your way around so you come up behind them. When they turn to me, take out the ones in the back. They aren’t real, so don’t worry about what you have to do to take them down.”

Lavinia nodded and slithered through the underbrush. Leo was pleased to note how silently she moved.

He waited as long as he could for her to get into position. Raphael was becoming belligerent and Leo was afraid that more security guards would be called to assist in arresting him. As it was, there were six guards to deal with, and they were armed.

Drawing his katanas, Leo leaped into the open.

“Wha…?” the lead guard shouted, never finishing the question as Leo nearly severed his head from his body.

Another guard swung around, trying to bring the barrel of his gun up, but Leo sliced into his hand with one sword while the other made short work of the man himself.

Lavinia was there suddenly, her bladed tonfas penetrating deeply into the back of the rearmost guard. As he sank to the ground with a moan, the man next to him spun, and Lav cut a deep x across his chest.

Raph turned to the guard nearest him and head butted him in the chest. The man took two steps back as he bent over in pain and Don tripped him, kicking his chin hard enough to break his neck when he fell.

Mikey threw his shoulder against the last guard as the man brought his weapon to bear on Leo. He pulled the trigger but his aim was off and the laser cut a trench in the dirt in front of Raph’s feet.

Leo was on him before he had a chance to try again.

“Oops, uh, sorry dude,” Mikey told Raph with a chagrined look.

Raph glared at him for a moment, then turned his hands to Leo. “Cut me outta this,” he said.

Leo removed his bindings, then Don’s. Lav cut through the ties on Mikey’s wrists, then retracted her blades and settled the tonfas into their holster.

Raph grabbed Leo’s biceps and stared into his eyes. “Is it you?” he asked hoarsely.

“Yes Raph, it’s me. Lav told me what happened. We need to get out of here,” Leo answered.

“No shit,” Raph said. “Any idea how?”

Before Leo could answer, they heard loud voices coming towards them.

“He’s in there with his wife. I saw them just a little while ago. Right through there,” a
woman’s voice.

“Your girlfriend is turning you in, Leo,” Lav said dryly.

“Shell!” Leo cursed. “Come on, this way. We have to stay in the woods and out of the open. Let’s move away from the clearing she saw us in; maybe we’ll buy ourselves some time.”

His brothers leaned down to strip their weapons from the dead guards and the group dashed into the woods.

They hadn’t gone far when someone spotted the dead security guards and shouted, “They’ve gone into the woods! Get some more men; we can follow their trail!”

The sound of multiple bodies crashing through the underbrush told the team that they were not that far ahead of the security personnel.

Running as fast as they could, the group tried to lose their pursuers. As they put distance between themselves and the force that was after them, the Hamato clan searched for an escape.

“Now would be a great time for Master Splinter to tell you how to get out of here!” Mikey yelled.

Before Lavinia could answer, the team broke into a clearing and slid to a stop. In front of them was a deep gorge whose bottom was not even visible.

“Damn!” Raph cursed. “How far do ya’ think this goes?”

Don looked in either direction. “I think it goes all the way around. This game we’re trapped in has us on a virtual island. We’re not going to be running out of here.”

“Lavinia, are you connected to Master Splinter?” Leo asked.

“Yes,” she answered. “Hang on.”

They could all clearly hear the shouts of their pursuers as the men searched to find the wanted team.

“Any day now, babe,” Raph urged.

“Splinter says we have to jump,” Lav said, looking down at the sheer drop below.

“He said what?” Mikey’s eyes were wide as he stared from her to the bottomless chasm.

“Jump. We have to jump together.” Lavinia looked at Leo.

“How the shell do we know if that’s Master Splinter you’re talkin’ ta? Maybe it’s another one of them wizards.” Raph held back, suspicious of everything after what they’d gone through.

“Raph, there isn’t time . . . .” Leo began.

Lavinia interrupted. “Splinter tells me that when you were all five Raph started tormenting Mikey by stealing his orange crayons. One day Mikey had enough and while Raph was asleep, Mikey colored Raph’s shell completely orange.” Lav turned to Raph. “Mikey told you that if you liked orange so much, you should be orange. Everyone’s sympathies were with Mike and you were orange for a week because no one would scrub your shell.”
“Okay, that’s Master Splinter,” Raph conceded.

The sounds of pursuit grew closer and a sudden yell told them their trail had been discovered.

They joined hands on the edge of the cliff.

“We have to jump now,” Leo said.

Mikey hesitated. “Um, not fond of this jumping thing,” he told them.

Don tightened his grip on his little brother’s hand. “It’s a leap of faith, Mikey. The last step in getting out of here is we have to know – truly know – that this isn’t real. We aren’t getting back into our own bodies until we release this manufactured reality.”

“Then let’s go before I think about it some more,” Mikey said.

The five looked at one another, squeezed their hands together, closed their eyes, and jumped.

There was no momentous feeling of escape, no uplifting excitement in freefalling; they didn’t even experience a floating sensation. One minute there was solid ground beneath their feet; and in the next there was no ground and no feet.

The crash of their subconscious minds back into their bodies was both jarring and painful.

Mikey yelped as he fell backwards and then stared up at the lair’s ceiling. He couldn’t feel his legs or arms, nor could he hear anything except a loud buzz in his ears. Blinking a few times, he finally noticed Master Splinter leaning over him.

“Home?” Mikey finally managed to mutter.

“Yes, my son, you are home,” his father said and smiled hugely.

Hearing the others groaning, Mikey slowly sat up and looked around. Lav appeared to be completely recovered and was kneeling next to Don, holding his head to her chest. Raph was rubbing a hand across his face and flexing the other hand.

Leo had made it onto one knee, his head down as he shook it. Mildly disoriented, he waited until the vertigo left before standing.

He spotted the samurai as soon as he lifted his head. “Usagi,” he said, smiling wanly.


Leo chuckled. “So are we. You’ve been here this entire time?”

Usagi nodded. “I arrived just after you were taken. I am sorry my timing could not have been better.”

“From what Lavinia relayed to us, it appears your timing was impeccable,” Leo said.

“How do you feel?” Usagi asked.

“Pissed off,” Raph interrupted with a growl. He was also standing and his face wore a thunderous scowl. “How long were we gone?”
Master Splintered answered, “In actual time, nearly eight hours my son. During that period there were three attempts to retrieve your bodies. Usagi was forced to use violence to thwart the first attempt.”

“It is highly probable that although you have regained your consciousness, Lord Hebi will continue to send hired assassins to come after you. Especially since they have learned how to reach directly into your home,” Usagi said.

Raph was staring expectantly at Leo. Mikey moved up to join them and watched as Leo directed a long, searching look into Master Splinter’s eyes.

“It is entirely up to you, Leonardo,” Master Splinter gently reminded him.

“I understand sensei. I do not wish to disrespect your teachings, but I can think of only one way to permanently stop Hebi’s interference in our lives,” Leo said quietly.

Master Splinter bowed his head. “I cannot speak to that my son. Sometimes one has to do what is necessary when one is faced with such a dilemma. Know that whatever decision you make, I will support and honor it.”

Leo continued to look at his father for another long moment. Lavinia stood next to Don, his arm around her shoulder as they waited.

“Leo . . .” Raph finally urged, drawing Leo’s eyes.

“We’re going after Hebi. Now. Pack your gear,” Leo told him with finality.

Master Splinter let out a low sigh. Raph dashed off towards his room, followed by Don and Mikey. Lavinia moved to stand with Master Splinter and he took her hand.

Leo turned towards Usagi. “This is a wonderful hello for you,” he said.

Usagi smiled. “We will have time for more during our journey. I will of course accompany you.”

“I hoped you would, though I couldn’t ask it of you,” Leo said.

“It is my honor, Leonardo-san. Hebi has marked me for death as well. It is time to remove that threat from my life.” Usagi glanced at Lavinia, then back at Leo.

Turning towards her, Leo said, “Miyamoto Usagi please allow me to introduce you to my clan sister, Hamato Lavinia.”

For the first time, Usagi looked into Lavinia’s eyes. The return look was intelligent and curious. They bowed to one another and Usagi said, “I am most honored to meet you, sister of my most revered friend.”

“I am happy to meet you as well,” she said. “I believe we owe you our gratitude for acting as our guardian while we were trapped. I cannot thank you enough. Please, won’t you call me Lavinia?”

“Thank you. You must call me Usagi,” he said. Turning once more to Leo, Usagi said, “I will draw the symbols to open our portal so that we may be ready to journey as soon as everyone has packed.”
“Very good, we shouldn’t be long,” Leo’s eyes followed Usagi as he left them. He thought his friend looked well, though slightly worried.

His eyes returned to Lavinia. She continued to stand quietly next to Master Splinter, her fingers entwined in those of her brother. Lav met Leo’s eyes and her lips flickered into a small smile that she managed to hold for a moment, before it quivered and faded.

He knew she wanted to come with them, but she wasn’t going to ask. Leo thought he understood what she was thinking; that the Turtles didn’t want her to take part in anything dangerous and that she wasn’t going to be allowed to participate completely anymore.

She was still afraid that she would be asked to leave again. Leo felt a tug on his heart at that thought; he was the one that had planted that fear in her and it would take a long while before she could let go of that hurt.

Lavinia turned her head and looked down at Master Splinter who gave her a reassuring smile.

“I can take Splinter and Klunk to my apartment to stay with me. No one should be in the lair as long as this Hebi person can send assassins in here,” Lav told Leo, her eyes lowered.

“Master Splinter and the cat will have to go to April’s,” Leo said.

Lav’s eyes lifted to his in surprise. “But . . . .” she began.

Leo interrupted her, “You’re going to be with us, Lavinia.”

A beautiful, warm smile spread across her face and lit up Lav’s eyes. “I . . . I can go?”

Leo nodded. “I think you’ve proved yourself enough, Lav. You know we would have died if you hadn’t been with us in that altered reality. There is no way I’m going to go on a dangerous mission and leave you behind. I need you, Lavinia.”

Lav released Master Splinter’s hand and threw her arms around Leo’s neck. He hugged her tightly for a minute or two, then pushed her back.

“You need to pack your things. We’ll be on foot mostly, so pack light,” he told her.

“I’ve been on humanitarian missions in some of the most godforsaken areas of this planet Leo. I know what to take,” she informed him.

As she started for her room, Leo called out, “Wait.”

Lav stopped and turned. “Yes?” she asked.

“Bring the bow and as many arrows as you can. I think we’re going to have a need for it.”

“Okay,” she said, grinning at him before she trotted off.

Leo looked over at Master Splinter as she left. “I’ll call April and make sure it’s all right for you to stay with her. We could be gone for a while.”

“Then I too need to pack.” Master Splinter stepped forward and placed a hand on Leo’s arm. “I am proud of you my son. You have shown great strength in overcoming so many challenges. I am also impressed with how your team is responding to your leadership. Raphael in particular is showing his acceptance of your command.”
“Thank you, father. I have to give the credit entirely to my team. Without them I’m afraid I would be lost,” Leo told him.

Master Splinter patted his arm. “Never underestimate your role, Leonardo. It takes a skilled leader to understand what his team is capable of. I think you understand yours very well.”

He walked away to his room then and Leo went to phone April and to pack his things.

The group all met back in the center of the lair. Casey had come in April’s van to pick up Master Splinter and Klunk. Their father had a word with each of his sons, and had also talked quietly to Lavinia.

When their sensei had left, the small band gathered near the wall where Usagi had drawn the necessary symbols to open the portal into his world. Together he and Leo chanted the spell that made the symbols glow, and then the portal appeared.

Lavinia stared at it for a moment thinking that first there had been an alternate reality, and now there was a gateway to another world.

She felt Raph’s hand touch hers and she looked over at the big Turtle. He was grinning at her as he squeezed her hand reassuringly.

“Come on, babe. Adventure time,” Raph said.

Lavinia moved closer to him and smiled. As long as he held her hand, stepping into the unknown was a piece of cake.
Hunting the Enemy

Chapter Summary

They stepped from the darkness of the lair into the portal and out into a bright, sunny day.

The portal had taken them to a field just outside of a village. Looking around her, Lavinia was surprised that everything looked similar to Earth – a sunlit sky, grass, trees – nothing to indicate that she was not still on her own world.

Until she saw the first inhabitant of the village stroll past, leading a group of oxen. It was a giant cat.

“Well of course it is,” Lav said to herself. “Usagi is a rabbit.” Leaning towards Raph, whose hand she still gripped tightly, Lav said, “You could have warned me. I’m going to look out of place here aren’t I?”

Raph grinned down at her. “Slightly. Wanna go back?”

She bumped her arm against his. “Shell no, as long as I don’t have to hide in any sewers.”

“There are no sewers out here,” Usagi said as he began walking towards the village. Looking over at Leo, he said, “You should not be seen any more than necessary. Lord Hebi will have learned by now that you have escaped from his wizards.”

“Then perhaps we should go around this village, Usagi,” Leo told his friend.

“I brought us here because this was the last place I was able to garner information about Hebi’s whereabouts,” Usagi explained. “I am hoping there will be further information so that we may pursue the monster. He has not remained in one location for long since the Shogun ordered his arrest.”

He waved a hand toward an abandoned shack which was just a bit further ahead. “You will be safe from detection there while I go into the village. It may take a while for me to find someone who is willing to talk.”

“We’ll wait. I think we all need the chance to sit down and catch our breath after the ordeal we just went through,” Leo told him.

As the small band of New Yorkers turned off towards the shack, Usagi stopped next to Leo. “I understand. A matter of hours for me was much longer for your family. You should all rest Leonardo; I fear this journey will be no less tiring or dangerous.”
“It’s far less dangerous with you watching my shell, Usagi,” Leo said.

Usagi smiled. “Almost like old times my friend.” His gaze slid over to Leo’s family and its latest addition.

Leo nodded. “Almost,” he agreed.

They separated and Leo moved across the grassy field to join his family inside the shed.

“I packed some food,” Lav said as Leo stepped through the door. She was down on one knee, digging through her backpack. “We haven’t taken any real sustenance in a while, and who knows when we’ll get the chance.”

Leo reached down and took hold of her elbow, pulling her to her feet. Lavinia looked at him curiously.

“We also haven’t stopped long enough to tell you how grateful we are to you for pulling us out of Hebi’s trap,” Leo said, wrapping his arms around Lav.

“You don’t need to thank me for that,” Lav said as she searched his eyes. “You’re my family. I’ll always do whatever it takes to keep you safe.”

Raph walked up next to them, draping an arm over Leo’s shoulder and one over Lav’s.

“That don’t mean we shouldn’t say thanks when someone in the family steps up,” Raph told her. “Shell, your family is who ya’ shouldn’t take for granted when handing out a thank ya’.”

Mikey and Don joined them, spreading their arms and making it a group hug.

“Master Splinter taught us that when we all stand together, we stand strong,” Donatello said.

“And Leo once told me that all we have in this life is each other,” Mikey added. “That means you too, Lavinia.”

Lav quickly blinked back the tears that were threatening. “I love you guys,” she said softly as she tucked her head under Leo’s chin.

“We love ya’ too, babe,” Raph told her, settling his cheek against her hair.

He and Leo looked at each other over the golden head, enjoying a rare peaceful moment. Raph slid his face further up until his mouth was close to Leo’s. Leo leaned forward to meet him partway, and they shared a long, deep kiss.

Mikey smiled at Don, pushed Lav’s hair aside to kiss her neck, and then turned to kiss Don as well.

After a few moments, Mikey pulled away from Don’s very tempting mouth and sighed. “I guess we have to keep this G rated huh guys? Usagi could come back at any minute.”

Don laughed. “I’m afraid so Mikey.”

Leo and Raph separated. Leo caught Lav’s chin and tilted her face up to his, pressed his lips to hers, and caressed her tongue gently.

“So,” Mikey said, interrupting them, “let’s talk about this food you packed.”
Lav giggled, pulling away from Leo to retrieve her backpack. “It’s mostly dried fruit and meat, nuts, granola bars – all healthy easy to carry stuff. No gourmet dinners for a while Mikey. Sorry.”

Mikey flipped a hand up as he said, “Right now, all of those things sound gourmet. I’m hungry.”

The little group settled themselves comfortably on the floor and ate their makeshift meal. Once they were done, Leo told them to rest while they could. Don offered to stand first watch.

Three hours later he gently tapped Leo’s shoulder. The shadows were growing long as the sun began to set. Leo shifted Lav’s sleeping head from his plastron to Raph’s arm and got up. Don took his place and was quickly asleep.

Stretching, Leo glanced through a window to survey the area around the shed before stepping out. He moved a little ways from the small building, into the shaded shelter of a nearby tree, and waited.

Night had completely asserted her control before Leo heard any type of sound. It didn’t come from the road or the trail leading to the shed. Alert, Leo squatted in the tall grass and let his sharp eyes survey the area.

A blade of grass bent slightly, and then another. Again the faint sound reached Leo’s ears and he grinned.

Moving silently, Leo circled the intruder, moving up behind him. Drawing a katana, Leo leaped at the shadowed form crouched before him.

The figure spun and the moon glinted off of steel. Two swords clanged together, and two large smiles faced each other.

“Testing me, Usagi?” Leo asked, drawing his katana away from his friend.

“It has been a long time, Leonardo-san. I was curious as to how much better you might have become,” Usagi answered him.

“If we had the time, I would be delighted to show you,” Leo told him, sliding his weapon into place on his back.

Usagi sheathed his katana as well. “Perhaps when this job is done, we will make the time.”

“Ya’ okay Leo?” Raph called from the shed.

“I’m fine bro’. Usagi’s back.” Leo started walking towards the shed and the samurai fell in step with him.

“I heard your swords,” Raph said as they drew near.

“Just getting reacquainted,” Leo told him.

“Yeah, sure.” Raph squinted at Usagi as he walked past.

The rest of the group were pressed into the shadows and came out when they saw all was clear. Lav glanced at Raph, sensing how tense he was, and her brow furrowed.

“Usagi, have you eaten?” Don asked him.
“Yes, thank you,” Usagi said. “I had to wait for my original informant to arrive at his favorite tavern. It cost me the price of a meal to discover Hebi’s current location. My informant works for a farmer who has sold goods to Hebi’s cook.”

“So he’s close?” Raph asked.

Usagi nodded. “A day’s march. We should not travel while it’s light.”

Leo looked around at his family. “Gather everything and let’s be ready to go in five minutes. We’ll walk until the sun starts to come up, and then find someplace to sleep.”

Usagi showed them a way around the village that kept out of the sight of any inhabitants who might still be awake. It wasn’t midnight yet, and sounds carried in the night air, letting the group of travelers know that they needed to remain quiet and cautious.

“We will have to avoid the main road, Leonardo. Even at night supply caravans travel along here and we would be seen. It will lengthen our journey, but I fear Hebi will have guessed our intent and we will not be safe out in the open,” Usagi said quietly as they walked.

“He is ruthless but also intelligent. I learned during our last confrontation not to underestimate him, Usagi,” Leo responded.

The friends walked side-by-side as the travelers crossed a darkened field. The other four walked a little ways behind them; silent and watchful as they proceeded to the next point in their journey.

“Then you know he has the means to direct a large and varied force against us if he discovers our whereabouts,” Usagi said.

Leo nodded and glanced back at his family. “I’m aware of that. Hopefully, we can strike and destroy him before he learns that we’re here and are hunting for him.”

Usagi looked at him and then quickly away. “You have changed somewhat my friend. Three years ago you would not have contemplated a journey such as this.”

“Three years ago I would have made such a journey. What has changed is my understanding of evil and how it needs to be dealt with.” Leo’s voice was grim, a hardened edge to it that Usagi had never heard before.

“And how exactly is that, my friend?” Usagi asked, although he was sure he knew the answer.

Leo’s smile was humorless. “You want me to say it out loud?” he countered.

“Yes,” Usagi said. “Let us be sure we truly understand each other Leonardo-san. In three years, my comprehension of evil has also changed.”

“Hebi has to die,” Leo stated bluntly. “If we capture him and turn him over to the Shogun to be dealt with, the chances of his escape are too great. He has too many allies and too many resources to trust that imprisonment would be a permanent solution.”

“Then we do truly understand one another, for I too have reached the same conclusion,” Usagi said. “Does your family know what has to be done?”

“They do. Don’t worry about them, Usagi. When a fight comes, they are all four prepared
and capable,” Leo told him.

Usagi said no more on the subject. Walking in silence next to Leonardo, he was transported back in time to a period when he and Leo had travelled together.

For the ronin, those nine weeks had been the happiest of his life. He had begun to hope then that there might be a way to make the companionship a more permanent thing.

Unfortunately, the dream was one-sided.

A half hour before the sky would begin to lighten under the sun’s rays the little group began to look for a resting place. They found an area covered in large boulders and discovered a small clearing in the midst of several such rocks.

Hidden from the road, it was the perfect spot to rest for the day, and they spread out their bedrolls.

Lavinia passed food around to the hungry travelers and while they ate, Leo said, “We need to set up a watch schedule. Hebi will be sure to have guessed that we’ll be hunting him, and even if he hasn’t, he will as soon as he sends another force through the portal and into our home. When he learns no one is there, he’ll know where we’ve gone.”

“Give me the first watch,” Raph said. “You and Don had a turn last night.”

“Two and a half hours each will take us to sundown. That should give everyone more than enough sleep,” Leo said.

Lavinia looked up at him. “I hope you included me in that, Leo. I can take a turn at watching.”

“Lavinia, you don’t have the experience . . . .” Leo began.

“I certainly do,” she interrupted. “I told you I’ve been on aid missions in some very rough parts of the country. In some of those places if we didn’t stand guard thieves would steal the eye teeth out of our mouths.”

Raph chuckled and Leo had to smile. “All right, then we do two hours each. Let’s all try to get some sleep, we’re going to need it,” Leo said.

Hours later it was Michelangelo’s hand that roused Usagi. The samurai sat up quickly, fully awake. He glanced around and located each of his travelling companions before he rose from his bedroll.

The lengthening shadows told him he had the next to last watch. As Mikey crawled in for a few more hours of shut-eye he called in a low voice, “Wake Leo when your shift is done. He’s the last.”

Usagi nodded his understanding and adjusted his weapons against his body before stepping away from the temporary camp.

A shadowed alcove between two rocks allowed him to see his friends as well as the surrounding area. Settling back against one of the rocks, Usagi noted the placement and natural shape of every shadow. He had spent too many years like this, alone and wary, to make it easy for someone to sneak up on him.
Alone except for a short period of time when he had the trust and friendship of a ninja named Leonardo.

Usagi forced his mind away from those thoughts. Regrets were a waste of energy; longing and desire both selfish and pointless.

He couldn’t help that he felt a small thrill of hope as they travelled. Leo had been graciously polite to him at the lair, but out here, some of their old comradery was coming back.

Usagi continued to carefully watch Splinter’s sister, trying hard to determine her exact role in the family. She was deferential to Leo at all times; reacting to his directives quickly and without argument. So far he had seen nothing else.

If there was a personal relationship happening between Lav and one of the Turtles, it was with Raphael. She had stepped through the portal holding his hand and had barely strayed more than a few feet from his side since their arrival.

When Usagi had looked around the camp, he had seen the woman asleep with her head on Raphael’s arm. That at least was a good thing.

Possibly better than a good thing. Usagi settled himself into a more comfortable position as he thought more about what it could mean if one of Leo’s brothers was with a woman. Especially if that brother was Raphael.

An hour into his watch, Usagi felt a hand on his shoulder and turned his head; unsurprised to find Leo standing there.

“I thought I might catch you unawares,” Leo said with a smile.

Usagi shook his head and returned the smile. “Not likely Leonardo. I was downwind of you and caught your scent several minutes ago. But then, you knew I would or you would not have approached from that direction.”

“Sneaking up on a samurai who is carrying a sharp katana is never a good idea,” Leo said as his smile broadened.

“I only know of one ninja who could possibly manage it,” Usagi returned, his own smile brightly warm. “Could you not sleep? There is still an hour before your watch is due to begin.”

“I slept well and long my friend,” Leo assured him. “You should try to rest for a couple more hours. I’m afraid this is going to be a rough night.”

“You are correct on that point. Hebi will not be taken easily,” Usagi looked hard at Leo’s face. “I too am rested enough. Perhaps we can become reacquainted while waiting for the sun to set?”

“Will you tell me of your adventures, Usagi?” Leo asked, and then laughed. “I’m sure you’ve had a few in the three years since I last saw you.”

“As I’m sure you have,” Usagi responded.

Leonard had drawn the line for their conversation, and Usagi respected his friend’s wishes. Usagi talked of his adventures over the past three years, and stayed away from any talk involving their prior involvement.
Usagi did not lose heart or hope because of that, choosing instead to believe that Leo felt, as did he, that this was not the appropriate time or place to pursue anything more personal.

When full darkness had claimed the sky, the pair walked back to the campsite. They found that Raph and Lavinia had already risen, and Don was just waking up.

Raph had built a small, hidden fire and Lavinia was brewing tea in a lightweight portable kettle. Leo smiled at that; she had certainly come prepared.

Leo reached down to shake Mikey awake, and his little brother sat up quickly, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

Stretching his arms overhead, Mikey yawned and said, “I miss my soft bed already.”

“I think you’re getting soft, Mikey,” Raph told him.

“Nope, not me,” Mikey said, hopping off of his bedroll. “I’m ready to get this over with and go home.”

“I think we all feel that way, Mikey,” Don said as he rolled up his bedding and began packing his things.

Lav handed Leo a cup of tea, smiling softly at him as she did so. Usagi’s eyes were fixed on them, but he noticed no more than that.

“Would you care for some tea, Usagi?” Lavinia asked him, offering him a gracious smile.

“Thank you, yes,” he said, accepting a cup. The tea was good, strong but not bitter, and he sipped it gratefully.

“Got anything to eat with this?” Mikey asked.

“No time to spend eating Mikey,” Leo told him. “Munch on a handful of nuts while we walk. Everyone finish your tea and let’s move out.”

Raph and Don put out the fire while Lav replaced the cooking gear in her bag and collected the collapsible cups. Just before they headed out, Leo gathered everyone together in a semi-circle.

“I need to make sure everyone is very clear on what we’re about to do,” he began.

He knew he had already told Usagi his family understood what they had come for, but he thought it would be a good plan to reiterate their mission, so that there would be no last minute misunderstandings.

“We’re clear Fearless,” Raph said, “but go ahead and say it.”

Leo glanced at his red banded brother. Raph was keyed up and ready for a fight, and Leo knew it wasn’t just the prospect of taking care of Hebi once and for all that had put Raph on edge.

Raph had been watching Usagi like a hawk ever since they’d come through the portal.

“Hebi is a killer,” Leo stated flatly. “He will not stop and he has too many loyalists to be able to trust him to a prison cell. We came here to kill him and we are probably going to have to kill some of his followers to get to him. Does anyone have a problem with that?”

He sent his eyes around. Usagi and Raph wore the same grim look, determined and
unyielding. Mikey’s eyes were wide, but it seemed more from excitement than any protest.

Neither Don nor Lavinia seemed eager, but they did appear resolute. Leo’s family understood their mission and he knew he needn’t worry about them.

“Let’s go,” Leo said.

Usagi led them cross-country, staying parallel to the road but out of sight of it. Periodically he would move back to get a sighting of the road, check their bearings, and then they would continue on.

Mikey knew that Usagi had certain landmarks fixed in his mind from the conversation the ronin had with his informant. He also knew that Leo had risen before he needed to, and that Usagi had not returned to his bed roll when his watch was over.

The pair walked together and spoke rarely, but when they did it was strictly about the task at hand. Obviously Usagi had spent some of those early morning hours with Leo discussing what his informant had told him, since Leo was also watching for those same tell-tale landmarks.

What Mikey wondered was what else the two of them had talked about. Mikey was pretty observant and it hadn’t taken long for him to see that Usagi’s feelings for Leo hadn’t changed. The samurai was doing an excellent job of hiding that fact and Mikey wouldn’t be surprised to find that Leo wasn’t aware of it.

Don was walking next to Mikey and he was staying pretty quiet. The genius was never very talkative when they were on a mission unless he ran across some new tech toy, then Don could gush forth like a fountain.

Mikey knew that Don was working through his emotions about the fact that they had purposely set out to kill someone. The only times they had ever done that before was when they’d gone after the Shredder.

Master Splinter had been with them for those occasions and Don knew that their sensei had given his approval for this mission, but that fact didn’t completely ease the intellectual Turtle’s mind. Mikey loved Don for his gentle nature and understood Don’s distaste for the necessity of taking a life.

Behind Mikey were the final two members of his family.

Mikey listened to the low drone of Raph and Lav’s voices as they walked side by side. He could guess what they were talking about; sports most likely ‘cause it was basketball season.

Lav had been sticking pretty close to his red banded brother ever since they had crossed through the portal. Mikey knew part of that was because she felt out of place and a little scared in Usagi’s world; after all, here she was the misfit.

Raph always turned ultra-protective whenever Lav got scared and she in turn drew closer to him as she sensed his concern. However, there was more to Raph’s emotions right now than just calming a frightened Lavinia.

It was easy for Mikey to see that Raph was giving Usagi the stink eye. It was because Raph was upset about seeing Leo and Usagi together that he was giving off the vibe that had Lav feeling as though she needed to comfort him.

Lavinia of course had no idea why Raph was so edgy. Someone was going to have to fill
her in at some point; she really needed to know the history behind Raph’s attitude.

But not right now. Let them comfort each other while the group hunted for Hebi. It was much less complicated to let those two cling to each other. Besides, Leo was pretty focused on their mission right now and didn’t need to worry about Raph’s jealousy.

They had been walking for nearly six hours when Leo’s hand came up suddenly and stopped them. The last two hours they had travelled in complete silence, not wanting the sound of their voices to carry and give them away.

About a quarter of a mile in front of them was a large, wooded area. The moonlit sky was bright enough to just make out the curls and wisps of smoke that drifted up from somewhere amidst the trees.

Leo’s hand flattened, palm down as he patted the air and everyone dropped to the ground. Focused on the woods, Leo shrugged out of his pack and set it down.

In a barely audible whisper, Leo said, “Stay here. I’m going to see where the smoke is coming from. This is where Hebi’s camp is supposed to be, and he probably has look-outs posted throughout the area.”

Without waiting for comments, Leo moved away from the group at a slow run, his body held low to the ground. Within seconds he disappeared completely.

The group remained deathly silent; none of them daring to even breathe hard. From the corner of his eye Usagi caught a small movement, and turned his head just a fraction to see Raphael touch his fingertips to Lavinia’s knee.

When Leo rejoined them, it was with the same ethereal movement; he was simply suddenly there.

“I took care of the two guards that were posted on the perimeter,” he told them. “Leave your packs here and follow me.”

Crouching low, they spread out into a thin line on either side of Leo to avoid crushing the tall grass overly much. He took point and led them into the wooded area, where the grass played out. The dense canopy of trees ate sunlight during the day, so the floor below was nearly devoid of other plant life.

They could hear sounds now; men talking, the snap of flames, the whinny of tethered horses and the occasional clink of metal striking against something. Leo’s hand lifted, his fist closed and they all froze in place.

A guard strolled past; his katana carelessly slung over one shoulder. He yawned audibly, patting at his mouth and shaking his head in an attempt to push back his sleepiness.

Leo was on him in seconds, pouncing from the shadows and dragging the guard down with absolutely no sound.

Watching Leo perform as the perfect ninja that he had spent his entire life becoming gave Lavinia a thrill of pride. Leonardo was her Master, her man, and the thought left her breathless.

Leo rolled the lifeless body against the trunk of a tree and waved his team forward. The light from a campfire was now clearly visible, and Leo directed his group to gather near him behind a trio of fallen logs.
“There aren’t nearly enough men or horses here,” Leo told them in a low undertone.

Usagi whispered, “Hebi may no longer be at this campsite.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” Leo said. “That large tent is our goal. There are guards stationed around the camp and around that tent. Something or someone of importance is still in there.”

“Let’s take it then,” Raph muttered, his sais already in his hands.

“Hang on and let’s see if we can lower the odds,” Leo whispered to him.

“By doin’ what?” Raph asked.

“Lav,” Leo called softly to her.

Lavinia crawled up next to him. “Right here.”

“The guard standing in the shadow of that tree; can you hit him in the throat? I don’t want him to cry out,” he told her.

“Of course.” She notched an arrow, lifted herself onto one knee and fired.

The only sound was the ping as the arrow was released. That she’d hit her target was proven when the guard slumped silently to the ground.

“Again, the one standing on the perimeter of the tree line, just to the right of the tent. Be careful not to shoot directly over the camp fire,” Leo instructed.

Lav nodded and brought her bow up. A second later, another guard fell soundlessly.

“Good,” Leo said. “We’re going to spread out around the rest of the group and try to capture some of them alive so they can answer questions. Lav is coming with me; when I’m sure everyone is in place, she’s going to hit one of the men near the campfire and that will be the signal to attack.”

Turning to Usagi, he said, “Take Mikey with you. Your primary target is that tent.”

“Of course,” Usagi said.

“Mikey,” Leo said. “You have two minutes to get into position and make sure that tent only has one exit.”

“Got it,” Mikey answered with a quick grin.

“Raph, you and Don move off to the left and fan out about twelve feet from each other. When you see Lav’s arrow hit, rush the camp. Kill only if you must,” Leo told them.

Don’s eyes were dark, but his face was determined, and Leo knew he would do his job.

With a last look around at his team, Leo moved out, followed by Lavinia. Raph nodded to Don and the pair headed off in the opposite direction.

Usagi watched Leo leave with Lavinia, signaling to Mikey as the pair disappeared. He and Mikey made their way to the area behind the tent.
Mikey split from him when they reached their destination, gliding in closer to the back of the tent. Usagi noted that the youngest was much more adept at the art of stealth than he had been three years previously. He also seemed to have matured to a great extent.

When Mikey rejoined him it was with a slight smile and his thumb up.

“The canvass is stuck down tight all the way around. My guess is they didn’t wanna chance someone sneaking into the back,” Mikey told him in a hushed voice.

Usagi’s curt nod was all there was time for.

From their position, Leo and Lavinia had a clear view of the men around the campfire. As one stood to stoke the fire, Leo hissed into Lav’s ear, “Hit him just above the knee. If we let them know this doesn’t need to be a fight to the death, then they will give up sooner.”

Lav nodded, notched an arrow and waited. Once Leo was sure his team was in place, he whispered, “Now.”

The arrow whistled as it flew through the air and struck home. The guard cried out and fell to the ground, clutching at the arrow embedded in his leg and writhing in agony.

With simultaneous precision, Leo’s team rushed forward and was met by the remaining guards.

As soon as the arrow hit its target, Usagi and Michelangelo darted for the tent’s entrance. Just before they reached it, the flap flew back and two guards rushed out, swords drawn.

From the corner of his eye, Usagi saw the flash of orange that told him Mikey had engaged one of the guards. No time for more than a glance as the other slashed down at Usagi’s head.

Usagi lifted his katana to block the blow, and then he spun to the side as the guard kicked towards the samurai’s knee. When his foot missed its target, the guard ducked and twisted to avoid Usagi’s counter strike, sweeping around with his katana.

Usagi leaped over the flashing steel, bringing his katana straight down towards the guard’s head. His opponent bent back quickly, flipping his body away from the deadly cut.

The sound of wood striking steel sounded to his right, but Usagi couldn’t spare Mikey any of his attention. Usagi noticed the royal seal on the guard’s tunic, and realized that the two men he and Michelangelo faced weren’t ninja’s for hire, but rather members of Hebi’s elite guard.

As the guard regained his feet, he brought his weapon up to center, eyes narrowed behind his mask as he studied the samurai. Usagi did likewise, circling the guard warily. The sound of Mikey’s fight was a sharp contrast to the one Usagi was engaged in; the young ninja was a flurry of non-stop action, giving his opponent no time to think or catch his breath.

“Where is Hebi?” Usagi asked; his voice deep and demanding.

Rather than reply, the guard rushed towards him, his blade hungry for Usagi’s throat. Watching it come at him, Usagi timed the movement and then brought his katana up beneath the blade, shoving the weapon to the side.

Before the guard could recover his balance, Usagi’s katana pierced his neck.

Pulling it free as the dead guard sank to the ground; Usagi heard a grunt from his side and
spun swiftly. Michelangelo was straightening from a crouched position as his opponent fell forward onto his face, the back of his masked head smashed flat by the strength of a strike from Mikey’s nunchucks.

Just as they both wordlessly turned back towards the tent, Leo joined them.

“Elite guards,” Usagi pointed out to his friend and saw there was no need for further explanation.

“Inside,” Leo directed them through gritted teeth.

Dark smoke started to roll out from beneath the front end of the tent and the trio hesitated. Lifting his head, Usagi sniffed the air and said, “That is not fire.”

Raph rushed up to join them, followed by Lavinia and Donatello.

“What are ya’ waitin’ for?” he asked gruffly.

Leo’s nod toward the smoke turned their heads in that direction. Then they heard a faint sound from inside.

Lav tipped her head slightly and asked, “Is that . . . chanting?”

Don jumped forward, getting Leo’s attention. “Hebi has wizards working for him. If that is one of them, we really shouldn’t let him finish his spell.”

Raph’s hand squeezed around the handle of his sai. “No problem. I wanna give him a taste of an alternate reality and see how he likes it.”

Before anyone could stop him, Raph had leaped through the flap and into the tent.

“Raph!” Leo called, rushing to follow his brash brother.

Usagi stepped in front of Don and asked, “The other guards?”

Don’s head dipped to the side as he said, “Back there, tied up.”

A loud shout from inside the tent pulled at them, and Mikey shoved his way through the flap, followed by the others. The smoke which had been rolling from a small vase was dissipating, the vase itself shattered on the hard packed dirt.

Leo was standing to one side, a hand over his eyes and the other holding his remaining katana out in front of him like a shield. Raph was stalking the wizard; an old desiccated looking fox, twisted and misshapen but nonetheless dangerous.

“Stay back,” Raph warned. “He tossed some powder at me and Leo jumped in front and got an eyeful.”

Usagi heard Lavinia’s gasp, and turned his head to see her set her weapons and rush to Leonardo. He watched as she murmured something to him, and then he moved his hand so she could put her own over his eyes.

His attention was called back to Raph when the fox tried to move towards the tent flap. Mikey slid over quickly to stand in front of the exit, both nunchakus spinning.

“Ya’ ain’t gettin’ out pal,” Raph told the wizard. “Why don’t ya’ put your paws up where
we can all see ‘em? All we want is to know where Hebi went.”

“Eneminess of my Masster,” the fox hissed, his voice creaky and familiar. “You want to sssee my sssecrets? Look closssely.”

One of his paws came out of his robes and Don yelled, “Raph, look out!”

Raphael reacted to the movement by reflex, launching a sai straight at the wizard. It hit home with a thud, burying itself deeply into the fox creature’s gut.

With a groan, the wizard crumpled to the floor. Raph watched him for a few minutes before approaching and wrenching his weapon free, cleaning the blood off by wiping it across the fox’s robes.

“Ya’ okay bro’?” Raph asked Leo, walking towards his brother.

Usagi looked over and saw Leo bending to pick up the katana he’d dropped. Lav still stood close to him, watching as he sheathed his weapon, but her head turned towards Raph as he approached.

“I’m good. I suppose he’s beyond answering questions now?” Leo asked.

Raph grinned. “Yeah, sorry bro’. He ain’t dead, but he’s damn close. Unless ya’ want Lav ta . . .” he left the sentence unfinished as Leo shook his head.

Mikey saw the puzzled look on Usagi’s face and strolled closer to the samurai.

“Lav’s a doctor,” he said by way of explanation. “She also sorta has these healing gifts.”

Usagi said, “Ahh, Leonardo’s eyes. That is why she went to him.” He felt relieved.

Mikey was watching him; a corner of his mouth quirking up at the edge. “Yeah,” he said.

They heard the harsh crinkle of paper and turned to see Don standing at a long table, flipping through piles of parchment.

“Maybe something in here can tell us where Hebi has gone, since no one is willing to say anything. Even those guards outside seemed to prefer death over giving us any information,” Don said.

“What are they?” Leo wanted to know, walking over to join his brother.

“I don’t know,” Don admitted. “I can’t read any of the words. Some sketches look like field placement layouts, but the rest is meaningless to me.”

Leo glanced over at his friend. “Usagi, can you take a look at these papers?”

Usagi slid his katana back into place and joined the two brothers at the table. Lavinia stepped up as well, her quick eyes darting over the scrolls and parchment littering the tabletop.

Mikey was making a quick tour around the tent, flipping over the pillows that served as bedding and sifting through several trunks that were shoved against a far wall. Raph stepped over to the fire pit in the center of the space and glanced at the hot coals before joining his youngest brother in his search.

“Anything there?” Leo asked, his eyes fixed on Usagi’s hands.
Usagi was shaking his head as he flipped through the papers. “It is possible these scrolls could be helpful in locating Hebi, but I can read none of them,” he admitted.

Leo turned to look at Lavinia. She in turn looked over at Raph.

“Raphael is that wizard still alive?” she asked him.

“He’s trying not to be,” Raph answered, squatting next to the fox.

Lav walked over and looked down at the gnarled creature. Her lip curled up in disgust before she took a deep breath and kneeled beside him.

Lavinia pressed her fingers to the back of his hand for about a minute. Then she let go and stood up, wiping her fingers on her pants leg.

When she came back to stand next to Don, Leo asked, “Did you get it?”

“Yes,” she said without looking up. Her eyes were locked on the scrolls.

“Anything useful here?” Don asked after a few minutes.

“Not in this one.” The distaste was back on her face. “This seems to be spells or incantations of some sort. It should be burned,” she said.

Don rolled it up and tossed it to Mike, who dropped the scroll onto the hot coals of the fire pit. Flames shut up quickly as they consumed the parchment.

“You can read these now?” Usagi asked in surprise.

Leo answered for her, watching her face as she began scanning the next scroll.

“Lav can acquire language through touch,” he told the samurai.

“That is a very useful skill,” Usagi said, tilting his head to study her face.

“More potions,” she said and Don pulled the next scroll out of her way.

Lav went through three more scrolls before striking pay dirt. Leo could see by the look on her face that she’d found something useful.

“What is it Lav?” he asked.

Lav looked at Usagi. “Do you know a place called Perdred?”

Usagi nodded and said, “Yes, it is the stronghold for the Jeshtare clan. It was thought that they had at one time sworn a blood oath to Hebi’s clan, but they denied it vehemently.”

“It appears that they are liars,” Lav said. “This is a notification of readiness, addressed to Hebi, stating that they have four legions of fighters trained and ready for Hebi’s return so he can lead them against Lord Noriyuki.”

The look of alarm on Usagi’s face was matched by Leo’s.

“That’s somewhere around twenty to twenty-five thousand soldiers, Usagi,” Leo said.

“Twenty-five thousand?” Mikey asked incredulously.
“This is not good, is it my friend,” Usagi said, a statement rather than a question.

“We have to stop him before he reaches Perdred,” Leo said with determination.

“Just exactly how far away is that?” Raph asked.

“Far enough that we may have a chance to overtake him, if we take the shorter route,” Usagi answered. “It will mean travelling across country through rugged and dangerous terrain. Hebi will be on horseback or in a carriage and those means of transport will require he remain on the main roads.”

“Do you suppose he’ll figure out he’s being followed?” Mikey asked, glancing significantly at the now dead wizard.

Usagi followed his eyes and nodded. “I have no doubt this creature’s brethren are already aware of his passing. They will inform Hebi soon enough.”

“Then maybe we should talk less and get movin’,” Raph said pointedly.

Leo turned his head, surveying the tent before sending his eyes over the team.

“Toss the dead inside and burn it; all of it,” he ordered, moving towards the opening purposefully.

“Gladly,” Raph growled as he followed Leo outside.

Mikey darted back towards the area that had served as a bedroom and snatched something from one of the leather chests before bringing up the rear. Tucking it into his belt, he jogged over to join his brothers and Usagi as they pulled the dead guards towards the tent and placed their bodies inside.

Lavinia was kneeling next to the guard she had injured with the arrow. Her glance at Raph brought the muscled turtle over to her and he leaned down to grip the back end of the shaft, yanking hard to tear it from the guard’s leg.

Her hand clapped down over his injury before the cry finished leaving his lips, and he lay there panting as she closed the wound.

“You’re damn lucky,” Raph snarled down at him as Lav moved away.

Don walked over to join them and said, “I untethered the horses and smacked them with my bo to run them off. Since we can’t use them, I didn’t want anyone else to either.”

“Good thinking brainiac,” Raph said distractedly.

His eyes were glued to Usagi and Leo, standing together just out of earshot while discussing something. Lav’s eyes followed his and then she looked back at him, puzzled by the mixture of emotions she felt him giving off.

Mikey came over to the group and stood next to Lav, noticing how she was staring at Raph. When he looked over at the tent, he saw Leo duck inside and Usagi coming towards them.

Within minutes, flames were shooting up through the center opening in the roof of the tent, and Leo was backing out, a heavily blazing torch in one hand. Holding one of the flaps up, he tossed the torch inside, and moved away from the tent quickly.
The team stood watching the fire consume the tent, none of them saying anything for several long minutes. Then Mikey reached into his belt and nudged Lavinia with his elbow.

“I got something for you,” he said, extending his hands.

Lav reached out and took his offering. It was a large, orange scarf, diaphanous and intricately sewn with winking gems. The material was light weight and nearly transparent.

“Mikey, this is gorgeous,” Lavinia said in awe.

Mike was grinning. “Yeah, I didn’t want it to go to waste and I thought it’d be a nice gift for my best girl.”

Lav smiled and leaned over to kiss his cheek. “I’d better be your only girl,” she told him.

Usagi noted the exchange and frowned slightly. He had come to believe the woman belonged to Raphael, but now it appeared she was in a relationship with Michelangelo as well.

“We’ll have to stick to our original travel plan,” Leo interrupted his thoughts by saying. “Move at night, rest during the day. Just because Hebi has been warned that we’re on his tail doesn’t mean we have to make it easy for him to find us.”

“Do you suppose we can spare an hour and eat something?” Lav asked. “After all, they have food and a nice cook fire sitting over there, and an army does not travel on an empty stomach.”

The look Leo gave her was warm and Usagi’s heart did a backflip.

“Okay. You do have a good point. We’ll take the time to eat first. Mikey, help Lav get a meal together; Raph will stay as a guard for you, just to be on the safe side. The rest of us can go retrieve our gear from the field,” Leo said.

Usagi felt Raphael’s eyes on him as he turned to follow Leonardo. Resisting the urge to look back, Usagi couldn’t help a small, ironic laugh at the situation.

Raphael was still possessive of Leonardo and jealous of Usagi’s presence. Usagi in turn was becoming concerned about Leonardo’s relationship with the woman Lavinia.

Chasing a sworn enemy while hordes of deadly fighters were hunting for your head was not the best time to be involved in a love triangle.
The meal was hurried, but it was good and it was hot; the first real hot meal any of them had consumed in days. The group made sure to refill their canteens with fresh water from a nearby stream before continuing their journey.

All of the remaining guards had been left at the campsite, trussed up tightly. One of them would eventually be smart enough to roll over to another and work themselves loose, but it would take a while, and the little traveling band would be long gone by then.

While they walked, Leo told them, “We haven’t any way to communicate with one another if we become separated, so we should have a plan in case that happens. There’s a good chance that at some point we’ll be attacked and we may not be able to stay together.”

“Maybe we should choose certain locations along our intended route?” Don suggested. “That is, if we have a planned route,” he added.

“We do,” Usagi said. “Perhaps I should designate a spot at 25 kilometer intervals. Some type of landmark that would be simple to find.”

“Fifteen miles? This place Hebi’s trying to reach must be a ways out there,” Raph observed.

“Yes, Lord Noriyuki’s realm is vast. Hebi must traverse the entirety of it before he reaches the lands occupied by the Jeshtare. From that border, it is another two days march to reach Perdred,” Usagi explained.

“With us on Hebi’s ass and his hired assassins on ours,” Raph pointed out.

“They started it by coming after us first, in our own home I might add,” Mikey retorted.

“Kind of makes you wonder just who is chasing who,” Don said softly.

They didn’t talk much after that. There were only a few hours left until sunup, and the group needed to put distance between themselves and Hebi’s last camp. Since visibility was a problem in the dark, their running was limited to the short distances of open land they came across.

Morning found them searching for a place to stop. The terrain around them was open farmland with few options for staying hidden, and they were forced to move farther away from their planned route. It took an hour to find a suitable resting spot, a copse of trees surrounding a
small, dirty pond.

Lavinia strolled to the edge of the pond and squatted down to dip a palm full of the water into her hand. Don came to stand next to her and watched as she lifted it to her mouth.

“Lav, don’t drink that,” he said quickly. “It might be bad.”

Lav looked up at him and smiled. “That’s why I’m testing it Donny. It won’t hurt me, but I’ll know if it’s safe for the rest of you to consume.”

Taking a sip, she made a face and said, “Uh!” before spitting it back out.

“Poisonous?” Don asked, wide eyed.

“No,” Lav answered, “just nasty!”

Chuckling, he offered her a hand and wrapped his arms around her when she stood up.

“You don’t really need to be our guinea pig Lav,” he said.

“It’s a self-appointed task,” she told him impishly. Then her smile faded as she asked, “Don, why does Raphael dislike Usagi?”

“He didn’t tell you that,” Don said, meeting her vivid green eyes.

She glanced away from him to look at the others as they cleared a spot for their sleeping bags. Raph was studiously avoiding the samurai and Mikey was staying close to his red banded brother, keeping up a monologue for his benefit.

“He hasn’t said anything, but I don’t need to be an empath to see the tension in his shoulders whenever Usagi is anywhere near Leo,” she said, looking back at Don. “The fact that I am an empath tells me that I’m not just seeing things.”

Don took a deep breath, and then led Lav over to a dry patch of ground, urging her to sit with him.

“We’ve known Usagi for a long time; since we were fifteen,” Don began. “He saved Master Splinter’s life once, and he jumped into a fight that saved Leo’s. Usagi and Leo are sort of kindred spirits, they follow a slightly different code, but basically it is a code of honor. Since they both wield a katana, they became very close friends.”

Lavinia shifted a bit, getting more comfortable. Don continued, “When we were all about sixteen and a half, Usagi came to visit and asked Leo if he would like to travel here in this world with Usagi for a while. Right about that time is when we were all getting our growth spurts, and other things were going into overdrive as well.”

When he stopped, Lav smiled and offered, “Your libidos?”

Don nodded. “Typical teenage boy hormones. I don’t want to draw this story out, so I’ll just say we started to look at each other differently at that point. None of us would say anything; we either denied it or lived with it bottled up inside. It was harder on Leo because he was under a lot of stress to be the perfect leader. Master Splinter knew something was bothering him, but didn’t know what it was, so Father decided that Usagi’s offer would be a good change for Leo. A learning experience.
“Leo jumped at the chance as soon as Master Splinter gave his blessing. None of us was very happy with the idea of losing Leo for the three or four months that Usagi proposed they spend together, especially Raph. Raph was hiding a lot of his desire behind his temper, but I think Father saw past that. We’ve never really talked about that with Master Splinter, but he knew that Raphael has always been drawn to Leonardo.”

“Master Splinter may have thought he would be able to break that kind of attachment by removing the object of the desire,” Lav murmured.

“It’s possible,” Don agreed. “He didn’t know then how bonded we actually were. Anyway, Leo went off with Usagi and Raph resented it, so that was strike one for the samurai.

“They were actually only gone for a little over nine weeks. One evening they both came back very suddenly, and we could tell something was wrong. They were both behaving very cordially to one another, but without the ease of their prior relationship. We thought something bad had happened during their journey; maybe a fight that ended in them having to kill someone. Leo wasn’t a stranger to that, but he was by no means thrilled with it either.

“Usagi spent that night and the next day with us. He was supposed to spend another night, but he wound up leaving halfway through. We didn’t know what happened until a year later, when we decided to stop postponing how we felt and started to do something about it.

“Leo finally told me everything one night when we were sleeping together. I think he’d wanted to talk about it for a long time, but the other thing got in the way of his opening up to anyone. That’s one of the healthier things about sex for Leo, he loosens up enough to get some things off his chest.”

“Not everything,” Lav said with a smile.

Don chuckled. “No. Some things he is determined to own and there is no talking him out of it. But this he wanted to talk about because even after all that time he was still feeling guilty. The problem was, it wasn’t his fault. Usagi fell in love with him.”

Lav gave a tiny gasp and put her hand to her mouth. The “Oh shell,” she muttered behind them bled through her fingers.

“I know.” Don looked over towards their camp to see what everyone was doing before he went on. “Leo spent the time travelling to come to terms with how he felt about us, and Usagi spent the time noticing all the things about Leo that makes the rest of us love him. Seems like a natural thing to have happen, but it was actually pretty hard on Usagi because he’s so traditional.

“He finally worked up to telling Leo how he was feeling and it got awkward because Leo didn’t feel the same way. Leo even hinted that his mind was occupied with thoughts of his brothers. So they came home. That second night Usagi decided to make one more attempt at persuading Leo to join him on a more permanent basis. Leo told him no, but Usagi isn’t the kind to give up easily.

“Unfortunately, Raph overheard them. Practically the entire thing. He did a good job of staying out of it considering his temper, but when Usagi kept pressing Leo, Raph couldn’t take it anymore. Raph barged into the dojo where they were having their conversation and told Usagi he needed to learn to take no for an answer.”

“They didn’t fight did they?” Lav asked in a low voice.
Don shook his head. “No, but I think it was a close thing. Usagi left about a half hour after
that and we haven’t seen him in three years. Leo was mad at Raph and told him he shouldn’t have
interfered and you can guess how that went over. Maybe if they weren’t both so stubborn they
might have wound up being lovers a lot sooner.

“All I do know is that a year after that we came to terms with our love for each other, and
in another year we met you,” Don said.

“I’m certainly glad that one worked out,” Lav said softly.

Don leaned over and rubbed his beak against her nose. “So am I.”

Usagi had been surreptitiously watching Donatello and Lavinia since he saw the purple
banded ninja put his arms around the woman. The two had been locked into a deep conversation
for quite a while, and now he saw Donatello lean forward and press his face to hers.

It was an intimate gesture, just like the ones he’d witnessed between Raphael and Lavinia
and between Michelangelo and Lavinia.

He did not consider himself to be overly imaginative or extremely intelligent, but Usagi was
astute enough; he had to be in order to survive. It was not necessary for him to see Lavinia and
Leonardo together to know that they were, and his heart broke a little more with that
understanding.

When the pair rejoined the camp Usagi’s gaze flickered down to their joined hands and
then up into the brilliant blue eyes of Michelangelo. The youngest of the brothers had always been
the most observant and Usagi turned around quickly lest he give away more of himself.

The task of preparing meals seemed to have fallen to Lavinia and Michelangelo. Usagi
offered to assist, but the pair politely chased him away from the small cook fire.

Before the sun was fully over the horizon the small band of travelers was asleep, arranging
for each member of the group to stand guard in shifts as they had done the day before.

Just as Usagi prepared to close his eyes, he saw Lavinia curl in close to Donatello. The
image he fell asleep with was not of a purple banded Turtle lying down with his arm draped over
the woman’s shoulder, but that of a Turtle who wore blue.

Don felt someone watching him and perceived that it was Usagi. He knew that the samurai
was trying to grasp Lav’s place in the family, and Don understood why.

Explaining to Lavinia the events of the past had been necessary; Raphael’s reticence around
Usagi would have affected her and their team as well. Don would have to speak to Raph; probably
during the night as they travelled. Having Raph suspicious and angry, possibly holding back from
Usagi during a battle, would get someone killed.

As for Usagi himself, that was Leo’s call. Don was friendly with the samurai but not close.
The suspicious jealousy that Raph had of Usagi wasn’t shared by Donatello, but neither was the
comradery with the samurai that was Leo’s.

Don pulled his thoughts away from Usagi, trying to ease his restless mind so he could
sleep. Lav whimpered softly, no doubt feeling a touch of his anxiety as she slept, and he stroked her
hair gently to soothe her.

When she pressed closer to him and sighed, Don knew she had relaxed again, trusting in his
touch. He rubbed his chin against her hair, smiled, and fell asleep.

A light touch from Michelangelo’s hand woke Usagi in the late afternoon.

“Everything’s quiet,” Mikey whispered to him. “Some farmers were moving around in a field over the ridge earlier, but they never even looked in this direction.”

“Thank you Michelangelo,” Usagi said as the youngest of the brothers stuck his thumb in the air and crawled into his bedroll.

Usagi glanced around and wasn’t surprised to see that Raphael had bedded down next to Leonardo. Even with the companionship of a woman, the red banded brother would not relinquish his hold on Leonardo. Usagi should have known.

Nor did he blame Raphael for those feelings; in his place Usagi would have just as jealously guarded Leonardo’s affections. If he could have talked Leonardo into staying with him as a lover, he would have been loath to have the ninja return to his home even to visit.

Once again, Leo joined him before Usagi’s watch was over.

“You are tense,” Usagi observed.

Leo’s mouth was set in a grim line. “It’s a feeling I have, something I’m sensing. I think we need to be more wary.”

Usagi nodded, letting his eyes roam the landscape around them. “It is Hebi’s evil; it permeates the surroundings wherever he has been. He has gotten worse than before; now he does not simply hire assassins, he hires wizards to do his bidding. To align himself with such dark forces is the ultimate of depravities.”

“If I can feel it here, then he must have passed through not long ago,” Leo said.

The samurai glanced at him, knowing what was in Leonardo’s mind. “We should go now and press our advantage.”

“Yes,” Leo said with determination and went to wake his family.

“We’re headin’ out now?” Raph asked as he pulled his pack together. “It ain’t even dark yet.”

“I know that Raph. I’m sensing something; something that tells me Hebi is close. We shouldn’t miss an opportunity if it’s presented to us,” Leo said, reaching a hand out to stop Lavinia from stoking the fire.

She looked up at him. “Don’t you want tea?” she asked.

“No time. Let’s see what’s ahead of us before we break for a meal,” Leo told her.

As they set out, Don started to feel what Leo had; there was a strange weight in the air, an oppressive darkness that was palpable. He knew Lavinia was feeling it as well; she had drawn her shoulders in and moved closer to Raphael.

Their first indication that something had happened was the black smoke lifting in the horizon. Their next was the dead ox lying in the field ahead of them.

Usagi moved over and knelt near the animal, studying the arrows buried in its side and
placing a hand against its neck.

“It has been dead for possibly three hours,” he said before standing.

“What was the point of killing an ox?” Mikey asked breathlessly, feeling the shift in the atmosphere himself.

“They are travelling light in order to move faster,” Usagi explained. “When they require food, they are simply taking it. They must have gathered enough up ahead and didn’t waste time coming after this animal.”

“We need to see what happened,” Leo said. “There may be someone who needs our assistance and can give us some answers as well.”

“That will require that we go near the main road,” Usagi reminded him.

“Yes. We’ll lose some time; that can’t be helped,” Leo told him.

“It’s gonna give away our position too, Leo,” Raph said.

Leo nodded, his eyes focused on the plume of smoke. “I know.”

There was no further discussion as the group turned towards the road and the smoke.

Upon reaching the road, the travelers proceeded to follow it, walking two miles before an incline and a curve brought them into view of a tiny hamlet.

Or rather, what was left of it. Lying in burned ruins, it was obvious that this had once been a small farm cooperative, but all that remained of it now were the metal husks of tools and smoldering homes.

“Why would he do this?” Lavinia asked in a small voice.

“Displeasure with how little they had to offer no doubt,” Usagi answered; his own voice grim.

They walked past slowly but saw none of the inhabitants, alive or dead.

“Maybe they all got away,” Mikey said hopefully, voicing a thought they’d each had.

A slight noise in the tall bushes just beyond the village drew their attention and the group turned as one, warily searching out the area with sharp eyes. They saw nothing, but again a muffled sound reached their ears, and then the shushing sound of someone attempting to quiet another.

“That’s a child,” Lavinia said and darted towards the bushes before they could stop her.

Halfway to her destination, two panda men jumped up and brandished rakes, holding them out threateningly. Lavinia stopped, but didn’t draw her weapons, keeping her hands out to her sides where they could be seen.

Leo stopped the rest of the group from going after her, instead signaling Usagi to follow him. When they reached Lavinia, both of the men looked at them and stepped back.

“We come from Lord Noriyuki,” Usagi said. “What has happened here?”

One of the men shook his head, and the other said, “Move on. We’ve lost our homes and
our livestock. We want no more of your war.”

“We are attempting to stop a war. Please tell us, was this the work of Lord Hebi?” Usagi asked.

“Go! Go now, and leave us to our suffering,” the other man said.

A movement caught Lav’s eye and she saw several hamlet natives crawling away from them through the tall grass. A female was attempting to carry a baby and hold up an injured child, although she appeared to be hurt herself.

Sliding away from Leo and Usagi, Lav moved around the men. Both glanced at her, but movements from the two in front of them drew their attention and they were forced to let Lavinia go by.

Once she’d gotten around the tall bushes, Lav could see the group from the hamlet consisted of three women, two old men, an old woman, and five children.

“Please, I am a doctor. Let me help you,” Lavinia said quietly.

Eyes wide, the people in the group simply shook their heads and continued to move away from her. It was obvious that they wouldn’t be able to get far; the injured child was crying and dragging a broken leg behind her. Covered in a blood soaked bandage, Lav could see the damage would eventually kill the girl if not treated immediately.

Lav took a breath and strode forward rapidly. The people began to run, all except the mother, who was forced to stop when the little girl fell down and was unable to move.

Setting the baby on the ground, the mother spun to meet Lav, her hands out. Lav sidestepped her easily and dropped to her knees next to the girl, who was sobbing hysterically.

“I’m going to make you better,” Lav told her in a kind voice, placing a soothing hand to the girl’s forehead.

As soon as Lavinia touched her daughter, the woman stopped moving. The fear in her eyes was easily read, but Lav gave no more of her attention to the mother, concentrating her focus on the child.

The energy Lav pushed into the child eased some of the pain, and the girl looked up at her with understanding. She tried to smile and Lav nodded, reaching down to touch the injured leg.

Turning her eyes from the child’s face, Lav examined the injury. The leg was broken in at least two places, and the bone had punctured the skin with one of the breaks. Placing both hands on the leg, Lav closed her eyes and sent her healing power into the girl.

Lavinia heard the mother gasp, and then the sound of her falling to the ground nearby. When Lav opened her eyes, she saw that the girl’s mother had crawled up next to her daughter and pulled her child into an embrace.

Sitting back on her heels, Lav watched them, a smile on her face. The mother finally looked up and whispered, “Thank you.”

“Your arm,” Lav said. “May I?”

The woman held out her arm to Lav, who saw that it had been badly burned. With the
lightest of touches, Lav pushed her healing gift into the mother, and the burn vanished.

None of the other people appeared badly hurt and Lav made no attempt to go after them. They were frightened of strangers and wouldn’t want her assistance, nor did Lav wish to press it on anyone else. If not for the child, she wouldn’t have approached them at all.

The mother got up to retrieve her baby and the little girl took that moment to lean towards Lavinia.

“My family is scared that those men will come back to hurt us again,” the girl said.

Lav smiled. “They won’t. They are running away from us.”

The little girl smiled in return. “You are powerful? Your men can do magic too?”

“Yes, they are great warriors,” Lav told her.

“Then you should kill Lord Hebi,” the girl said, her face suddenly serious. “He is very bad.”

“We will stop him, but we have to catch him first,” Lav said. “Can you tell me anything that will help us?”

The girl looked furtively towards her mother, who was swaddling the infant. “There were at least twenty ninjas with him, and two wizards. The ninjas raided our homes for food, but we didn’t have much and Lord Hebi accused my papa of hiding provisions. Papa tried to tell him we were poor, but he didn’t listen and told the wizards to burn our homes.”

“How did you get hurt?” Lav asked.

“When our oxen began to run in panic, one of them hit me. My mother was burned when she ran over to pull me away from the fire. My papa is brave and wanted to fight, but my mother said he had to save our family.”

Lav patted her arm. “Your papa is brave and did the right thing by saving you and not fighting with Lord Hebi. Your parent’s first job is to protect you. Leave the fighting to those of us who have spent our lives doing just that.”

Standing up carefully with Lav’s help, the girl said, “The Kame in blue will kill Lord Hebi.”

Startled, Lav said, “He will try. Why do you think he will be the one to do it?”

“I can just tell. It is the way he moves and the look on his face,” the girl said with assurance. “The samurai is a great fighter, but the Kame is better.”

The girl’s mother came to stand next to her. Lav touched a fingertip to the infant’s forehead and smiled at finding the little one was uninjured.

“Goodbye,” Lavinia told them, turning to join her team.

“Goodbye!” The girl waved at her as she walked away.

Lavinia found Leo and Usagi had returned to the road. They had made no progress in their attempt to get information from the men, but their presence held the men’s attention while Lavinia dealt with the child’s injuries.
When Lav came back to the road and her family, they turned back to their route before Leo said anything.

“Did you learn something from that child?” he asked.

“I did. Hebi has twenty ninjas with him, along with the last two wizards. They aren’t carrying much in the way of provisions, and they have to stop to gather them,” Lav answered.

“If he continues to stop in this manner, he will leave a trail for the Shogun’s army to follow,” Usagi said.

Leo appeared to be deep in thought. “It’s possible he may want to be followed,” Leo said. “If the Jeshtare are in league with him, and if they do have four legions waiting to do battle, then a fight with the Shogun’s forces will be a good test for them. Defeating the Shogun’s men will deplete his armies, and greatly bolster Hebi’s.”

“That type of victory will bring others to join his ranks,” Usagi noted. “They will march on Lord Noriyuki first and attempt to take his holdings. Hebi’s plan is diabolical.”

“And well-reasoned,” Leo said.

“Only I don’t think he expected ta have us on his trail,” Raph said. “Knowing we’re right behind him has ta be a big thorn in his side.”

“We should be more cautious from here out,” Leo observed. Turning his head towards Lav, he said, “The information you gathered was valuable, but don’t dart off like that again.”

“Yes sir,” Lav said sheepishly.

Mikey slung an arm over her shoulder. “She was just trying to save that kid’s life, Leo.”

“I’m aware of that Mike. It would have taken two seconds to tell me what she wanted to do,” Leo reminded him.

“He’s right, Mikey,” Lav said. “I have to learn to control my impulses.”

Raph chuckled, and thumped the back of Mikey’s head with his finger. “Yeah, Mikey. Leo’s always right, huh Lav?” he teased.

Usagi saw Lavinia’s cheeks turn pink while a complacent look settled on Leonardo’s face and he began to understand a little more about their relationship.

Night was falling around them quickly now, and Usagi stopped to get their bearings.

“The land remains flat for a few miles more, and then an area of hills, mountains and forests take over the landscape. We can cut across this field,” he said, lifting his hand to point, “and remove at least two hours from our journey. We should be only a little ways behind Hebi when we connect back up to the main road.”

“Maybe he’ll do us a favor and stop again,” Mikey said.

“It is too much to hope for,” Usagi replied. “There is a forest to the south of the area we will traverse that must be avoided. All who enter there are never seen again. I do not know what lies within, nor do I want to know.”

“Where should we meet if something separates us?” Leo asked, still feeling the menace that
he’d felt earlier.

“Head north until you reach a point where the ridges of two hills nearly touch one another over the main road. One of the hills appears to have a set of eyes; climb to the top of that one and wait near the boulders that are on top of it,” Usagi told them.

“North, away from the scary forest,” Mikey repeated. “I like that plan.”

With that settled, the small group cut back across the open field, determined to move fast enough to overtake Hebi. None of them was talking; too keyed up for conversation and too much on the alert.

They had walked for two hours when Leo suddenly stopped, his head up and cocked to the side. A second later, Usagi’s ears twitched and he turned to look behind them.

Nothing was visible, but Leo sensed something was drawing closer. Usagi heard it as well; clothing brushing against the dry stalks of tall grass.

The faintest of sounds reached Leo and his head swiveled sharply. The noises were coming from several directions.

“Move with me,” Leo whispered harshly.

Crouching he began to run and his team followed, just before a group of ninjas jumped up from the grassy floor behind them.

“Damn!” Raph yelled as an arrow hit the ground close to his foot.

“Faster!” Leo shouted. “Into the trees!”

More arrows fell behind them; Leo’s unexpected move putting the archers out of range. Usagi glanced back quickly to see how many were in pursuit.

“Leonardo, there are too many!” Usagi called to his friend.

Leo looked ahead at the forest, noting the heavy brush that surrounded it.

“Lav, into the trees; use your arrows to pick them off. The rest of you spread out and become invisible; let them come to us,” Leo said.

When they hit the outer ring of trees, the group fanned out swiftly and silently. Spotting a low hanging tree limb, Leo interlaced his fingers and Lavinia used them as a springboard into the tree.

One leg straight out to the side and the other bent at the knee, Lav pushed the arches of her feet into the limb to brace herself, and dropped her pack to the ground. Taking the bow from her shoulder, she notched an arrow and waited.

“I am not a ninja,” Usagi reminded Leo, catching his arm.

Leo turned his head to survey the area. “Stay here, behind this cluster of bushes so the archers can’t see you. If they come for Lav, cut them down. The two of you hold out until there are too many close to you, then get her out of here.”

Usagi looked into Leo’s eyes and nodded. As Leo melted into the bushes, Usagi glanced up at the woman in the tree, poised for battle. Leonard had great trust in him to leave the safeguarding
As Usagi watched, a group of six archers lined up together and sighted towards the forest. They held their bows at the ready, attempting to find a target.

The ping of Lavinia’s bow told Usagi she’d picked out her own target, and a split second later, one of the archers fell. Before the others had a chance to line their sights on her hiding place, she’d released a second arrow and felled another of their group.

With a shout, the archers separated, bending double to run towards the trees where Lav’s arrows had come from. Behind them was a contingent of ninjas, moving too quickly to count, coming in fast.

Lavinia didn’t hesitate in firing two more arrows in rapid succession, each finding an opposing archer unfailingly. Now Usagi understood why she carried the bow; not only could she hit a still target with accuracy, but a moving one as well.

Suddenly a dark shadow leaped from the grass in front of the attacking ninjas, a flash of light playing across fine steel telling Usagi it was Leonardo. The surprise of his attack stopped three of them permanently, before others turned to render aid. By that time, the Turtle’s leader had once more disappeared.

As soon as Leo had vanished, Lavinia took aim at one of the group of ninja who had stopped to search the grass for him. When he dropped, the ninja around him scattered, crouching to stay low enough so as not to offer the hidden archer a target.

A loud grunt followed by a bloodcurdling shout froze several of them in their tracks, as a large figure dove into their midst. Taking the first ninja attacker down on the end of his sai, Raph turned with incredible speed, driving upwards with powerful muscles to impale another.

When a third went down under the red banded Turtle’s onslaught, a cluster of attackers rushed to the scene. By the time they arrived, Raph was gone.

Two of the hired ninjas made it to the heavy brush, shoving it aside and slashing into it with their swords. The rustling of leaves drew their attention and they pounced on a bush as it moved. By the time they realized no one was there, Don had pulled his bo staff back and then thrust it up under a jaw, snapping the ninja’s neck to the side with such ferocity it immediately broke.

The other turned to face the bo wielding Turtle, and Mikey popped up from the ground and cracked the ninja’s skull in with the whirling power of his nunchuck.

Usagi stood ready, his katana out as several of the attackers finally honed in on Lavinia’s location. Rushing towards her hiding place in a zigzag pattern, the one remaining archer spotted her and lifted his bow. Before he could fire a shot, Lavinia’s arrow caught him right between his eyes.

None of the attacking ninja saw Usagi until it was too late. With a shout, he leaped towards them, his katana flashing with deadly speed and accuracy.

Lav sped an arrow into the neck of the rearmost attacker, and then held back as they came in too close to Usagi. She watched in stunned surprise as the samurai stood his ground, slashing, dodging and blocking blows, dropping the ninjas without mercy.

She never thought she would see anyone with near the skill level that Leonardo had, but Usagi was his equal. Her thought to drop to the ground and come to his assistance was pushed
aside as she understood she would simply get in his way. Trusting him to keep the ninja at bay, she once more focused on those who hadn’t as yet drawn close.

Lavinia held her fire, waiting to locate her Turtles before releasing an arrow. She didn’t want to take the chance that one of them would jump up in front of her shot and be hit by mistake.

A last loud grunt and then silence beneath her drew Lavinia’s eyes. Usagi was wiping his katana blade clean on a dead ninja’s black garment. He looked up and caught her eye before standing and sheathing his weapon.

“How do they fare?” he asked in a low voice.

“They’re keeping them back. In fact, I believe the ninjas are withdrawing,” Lav said, looking into the field from her vantage point.

A rustle of bushes drew Usagi’s hand to the hilt of his sword.

“Don’t dice me up, Usagi,” Mikey called, stepping into the small clearing with Don just behind him.

“They’re either running away or regrouping,” Don said, turning his head towards the field.

Lav continued to watch, catching periodic glimpses of black bobbing through the tall grass as the ninjas moved away from the trees. Several times targets presented themselves clearly, but she loathed the idea of shooting anyone in the back.

Leo and Raph appeared then, coming in from opposite directions nearly simultaneously.

“Are they leavin’?” Raph called up to Lav.

“They’re moving away from us,” she told him. “Whether they’re actually leaving is anyone’s guess.”

“They aren’t leaving,” Leo said with assurance. “This is a contract they’ve taken on and their honor requires that they finish it. They’ll wait for more of their clan to join them and come after us again.”

Lavinia swung down from the tree, shouldering her bow and settling the quiver of arrows more comfortably on her back before she retrieved her pack.

“That gives us very few options Leonardo,” Usagi said quietly.

“Mmm,” he said in reply. “We’re going to have to take an unplanned detour through this forest.”

“Guys,” Mikey said in a hushed voice, “isn’t this the scary forest? The forest Usagi said we shouldn’t go into?”

“That can’t be helped Mike. If we go back the way we came, we’ll get picked off. This forest will eventually lead us to the main road if we keep heading in a northerly direction. Find your packs and let’s move before they regroup and come after us,” Leo said.

Any light they were getting from the moon quickly vanished the farther they moved into the forest. Don pulled a flashlight from his bag and played it around, showing that while the vegetation under the trees wasn’t dense, the upper branches of the trees were.
They stumbled along for nearly an hour before Leo stopped them.

“Usagi, can you tell which direction we’re headed?” Leo asked.

“No Leonardo,” Usagi admitted. “This unholy darkness has robbed me of all sense of direction. Perhaps it would be best to stop until the sun comes up.”

Leo waited, his head cocked to listen and everyone remained silent.

“I don’t think we’re being followed,” Leo said. “We’ll stop here for the remainder of the night.”

“Thank you,” Mikey sighed, dropping his pack on the ground.

“Don, have you got another light in there?” Leo asked.

“Yeah bro’, hang on,” Don said, digging into his bag and then handing Leo another flashlight.

Leo and Don used their lights to investigate the small clearing they were in. Some rocky outcroppings told them they were approaching the mountainous region Usagi had spoken of. With the flashlights helping them, each member of the team gathered dry wood and they built a small campfire.

Lavinia set about cooking the remainder of the meat they had taken from Hebi’s camp, while the rest of the group arranged their bedding for the night.

Leo spread out his bedroll, stretched his sore muscles and said in a quiet voice, “I’m going to check the perimeter. The rest of you stay here.”

As he disappeared into the trees, Usagi watched him, unable to tear his gaze from the Turtle, even though he felt other eyes were on him. He didn’t need to look around to know it was Raphael.

His brother had only been gone for a couple of minutes when Raph jumped up and announced, “I’m gonna go have a look around; this sitting still shit is for the birds.”

Don gave him a knowing look, not surprised when his hot headed brother followed in Leo’s footsteps.

Raph had to go a ways into the forest to catch up to Leo, but he didn’t need a light to find him. Leo wasn’t attempting to hide; he was standing in the open near a group of large boulders. Watching him, Raph saw from the tilt of Leo’s head and his stance that he was ‘sensing’ his surroundings.

After giving him a few minutes, Raph sidled closer.

Leo barely turned his head in Raph’s direction before saying, “I asked everyone to stay back at the camp.”

Raph grinned, his white teeth glinting faintly in the minimal moonlight that filtered through a small gap in the trees overhead.

“Ya’ didn’t ask,” he said, “ya’ ordered. And I wanted ta talk ta ya’.”

Leo’s arms came up across his plastron automatically, a lifelong gesture born of Raph’s
idea of talking that actually translated into attacking one of his leader’s decisions.

Turning to face Raph, Leo asked, “What about?”

“Usagi,” Raph said in a surprisingly soft voice.

Lifting an eye ridge, Leo studied his brother and saw the faint undercurrent of emotion he was trying hard to conceal.

“After all this time you’re still jealous?” Leo asked.

Raph’s lips pressed together to form a thin line. “Three years ain’t changed anything Leo, and neither will ya’ trying ta ignore it. His eyes follow ya’ everywhere ya’ go, and I can almost see him licking his lips. Three fuckin’ years Leo, and the damn rabbit still wants ya’ so bad he can taste it.”

“I can’t attach a governor to his feelings Raphael,” Leo said. “Neither can I ignore our friendship. Usagi has watched our backs enough times that I place total trust in him, whatever his emotions may be.”

“I noticed that. Ya’ left him ta watch Lavinia’s,” Raph said.

“He’s a samurai, Raph. He couldn’t have gone into that field with the rest of us. I assigned he and Lav the jobs they were both best suited for,” Leo told him.

“Did ya’ ever think he might let his feelings for ya’ get in the way of doin’ his best? Did ya’ ever stop ta think he might not be fast enough when it comes ta saving one of our lives?” Raph asked.

Leo lifted a hand and pointed his finger at Raph in an angry gesture. “That was uncalled for Raph. Usagi’s honor would never allow him to push forward any type of personal agenda, and you should know that by now,” Leo said hotly.

Raph took a step towards him and said, “I only know one thing, and that is I’m gonna continue ta keep my eye on him. If he crosses the line one time, I’m gonna shave his hairy butt with his own fuckin’ katana.”

“I would think we had more than enough challenges right now without you going off on one of your hot headed rampages,” Leo snapped at him.

Before Leo could have a chance to react, Raph closed the distance between them and grabbed Leo’s biceps, pulling his brother against his body. Raph’s mouth bore down on his brother’s; pushing against his lips with a fiery hunger that made Leo gasp.

That gasp gave Raph the opportunity to deepen the kiss, his tongue snaking past Leo’s teeth and searching until it found its mate. Even angry, Leo couldn’t resist the intensity of Raph’s desire and he found himself willingly kissing back.

Leo finally managed to pull himself away from the kiss, although Raph was still gripping him tightly. In a quiet but determined voice, he said, “This isn’t the time or the place Raphael.”

“Maybe not,” Raph told him gruffly, “but sometimes ya’ gotta give in ta your instincts Leo. Sometimes ya’ gotta just let go and do what feels right.”

Leo’s eyes widened and he tried to pull out of Raph’s hold, but Raph was already shoving
him backwards. Feet sliding on the dirt and leaves underfoot, Leo couldn’t get the leverage he needed to stop Raph’s momentum, and before he could twist away his carapace slammed against one of the nearby boulders.

Raph used his height advantage to lean over his brother, sliding his hands down from Leo’s biceps to his wrists and pushing them against the rock.

One of Raph legs was between Leo’s and he pressed a thigh against his brother’s lower plastron, flexing the heavy muscles to make his skin rub against Leo’s slit.

“What are you doing?” Leo whispered as Raph trailed a hot tongue against his neck.

“I’m markin’ my territory,” Raph responded, nipping at the skin beneath Leo’s chin. “Ya’ wanna call it petty or say I’m jealous ya’ go right ahead. Don’t care. All I know is after everything we been through, I need ta feel ya’ under me. I need ta hear ya’ moan and churr; I need for ya’ ta fight me and burn with me Leo. With me, so ya’ don’t ever forget what we are together.”

His hot lips captured Leo’s once more, mouth open and almost desperate as his tongue raked the inside of his brother’s mouth and sparred with Leo’s tongue.

Leo tried again to pull out of his brother’s hold, but Raph had him bent at an unnatural angle, his shell scraping rock, his toes barely touching the ground, his hands pinned and immobile. The movement of Raph’s leg against the most sensitive part of his plastron was having its intended effect; Leo could feel his hidden manhood twitching to life.

Pulling his mouth away, Leo gasped, “Raph, we . . . we should be standing watch. Someone could sneak up on . . . . “

“They didn’t follow us in here,” Raph said. “They can’t see any better than we can and it’ll be light before they even try. Besides, I’m so hot for ya’ right now, we ain’t gonna be all that long.”

As if to emphasize his point, his massive erection dropped down and he pressed it against Leo’s thigh. The heat from Raph’s organ made Leo’s eyes roll back in his head and his hips lifted as he unconsciously pressed the bulge beneath his plastron against Raph’s leg.

Raph churred when he felt his brother’s arousal and his mouth came down on Leo’s again.

With one last desperate attempt to stop Raph, Leo said, “The others, back at the camp . . . “

“Ya’ mean Usagi,” Raph interrupted with a growl. “Fuck him. Maybe he needs ta see me take ya’ Leo. Might be good for him ta have a visual aid so he’ll give up on the notion that he might get ta have ya’. ‘Cause he’s gotta know I ain’t ever gonna let ya’ go. Now stop holding back and drop down.”

His wide tongue attacked Leo’s pulse point and he ground his erection against Leo’s thigh. A long churr wound its way up through Leo’s chest despite his best efforts to contain it.

Raph’s dark chuckle against his neck was more than Leo could take. His cock expanded painfully and he stopped trying to hold it in.

As badly as Raph wanted to reach between his brother’s legs and wrap a hand around Leo’s cock, he knew better than to release the grip he had on Leo’s wrists. Using his knee, Raph spread Leo’s legs further apart and stepped fully into the wider opening.
Still looming over Leo’s draped form; Raph pressed his cock against Leo’s erection and rubbed them together. Leo’s eyes were half closed; his head back against the rock as he drew several deep breaths, now thoroughly aroused and needy.

Raph had no illusions about his control over Leo, knowing full well how fast Leo’s mind worked. If Leo wanted to take charge of their sex, he’d use the first opportunity to turn the tables on his red banded brother.

Wrenching Leo’s arms up over his head, Raph pulled his brother’s wrists together, pressing his fingers into pressure points on the backs of Leo’s hands. When Leo grunted, Raph grinned and wrapped one of his hands around his brother’s pinned wrists.

Using his now free hand, Raph rubbed his palm lovingly and with tantalizing slowness down Leo’s scutes. Leo’s breath hitched when Raph’s hand surrounded the flesh of his achingly hard cock, pumping it several times. He then pressed both their organs together with his hand and squeezed, letting Leo feel them throb against each other.

“Should I stop now?” Raph asked rhetorically, his voice harsh with lust.

“Raph,” Leo whispered, losing himself to Raph’s need. “Raphael.”

Raph’s eyes glittered in the dim light as he heard Leo surrendering control. His lips as they descended on Leo’s were demanding and he shuddered as Leo lifted his head to meet him partway. Leo’s tongue conveyed an urgent need, stoking the fire in Raph’s already burning loins to an even greater height.

Sliding his hand off of their combined cocks, Raph trailed his fingers through the mingled pre-come and shifted his hand lower, unerringly finding Leo’s hot entrance. Leo hissed and jerked as Raph’s finger breached him, but his tongue returned quickly to join his brother’s, too caught up in their dance to care about a momentary burn.

Leo’s ass was so soft and tight around his finger that Raph had to lift his head to take several deep breaths and force himself to go slower. His erection was pressed against Leo’s and the tease of promised friction was becoming painful. He could tell Leo was having the same reaction; his brother’s hips were working from side to side and lifting repeatedly, his desperation coming in soft gasps and barely audible whimpers.

Pulling his finger out, Raph growled, “That’s it, I can’t take it anymore.”

It was all the warning he gave as he stroked himself in order to spread his leaking juices over his cock, and then he lined up with Leo’s entry, shoving in with a hard, fast lunge.

Leo’s sharp intake of breath was everything Raph could have hoped for, and he churred in response. Pulling partway out, he adjusted his stance and thrust again, hard enough to lift Leo’s toes from the ground.

Grunting at the rough treatment, Leo tried to pull at least one hand down to take care of his own incredibly painful cock. Raph felt the movement and understood, reaching to grasp Leo’s dick in a firm grip, aware that Leo wouldn’t ask and much too needy himself to try to force his brother to do so.

Raph watched Leo’s larynx move as he swallowed, his relief at having his erection taken care of obvious. Chuckling darkly, Raph began to stroke Leo’s insides in a faster rhythm, moving his hand on Leo’s cock at a matching pace.
“Ya’ see Leo? This is what we g . . . got; I know your body like I know my own. I know what ya’ like and what ya’ n . . . need. That’s what we are together,” Raph husked against the side of Leo’s head.

“I don’t need anyone but my family, Raph,” Leo assured him, his voice low and deep. “I never have and I never will.”

Raph shoved hard into Leo as his brother said those words, and struck Leo’s prostate. Leo’s head went back down on the rock and his teeth caught his bottom lip, his face squeezing as the delicious feeling crawled down his spine and into his dick.

“L . . . Leo. Ain’t gonna last,” Raph gasped out, his body slamming against Leo’s.

“Mph. . . nnh, Raph,” Leo’s breathy moans filled Raph’s head. “Raph! Ngh!”

Leo climaxed with shuddering force, his carapace scraping the rock under him loudly as he jerked through his orgasm. Hot come streamed across Raph’s fingers and the muscles in Leo’s ass clamped down hard on his brother’s cock.


Raph’s shout reverberated through the trees as he came, his hips thrusting forward forcefully as he expelled his seed. Shaking and gasping for air, he released his grip on Leo’s wrists and fell forward onto his brother.

They were both breathing hard, their rasping breath filling the small clearing with sound. Leo lowered his arms and rested his hands on Raph’s carapace, feeling the wet slide of his brother’s cock as it left his body.

“Now we’re both sticky,” he commented mildly when he could talk again.

“Small price ta pay,” Raph said contentedly, pulling back to look into Leo’s eyes. “Thanks bro, I needed that.”

Leo’s chuckle was soft. “Did I have a choice?”

Raph shook his head, a grin on his face as he stepped back and let Leo stand up. “Not really. Guess it was sorta building up.”

Leo made his way over to a low bush and yanked a handful of leaves off, using them to clean his plastron. Tucking his cock away, he used a fresh set of leaves to swipe at the mess on his legs.

Following his example, Raph cleaned himself up as well, never taking his eyes off of his brother.

Without looking up, Leo said, “You’ve got to stop worrying about Usagi.”

Raph ran a hand over his head. “’S fucking hard ta forget what he said ta ya’.”

“That was three years ago, Raphael,” Leo glanced at him. “I told him no then and meant it. I still do.”

His brother nodded. “When this chase is done, ya’ gonna walk away from him again?”
Leo stepped over to him and placed a hand on Raph’s arm.

“Of course I am.”
The stew Lavinia made from the leftover meat and some mushrooms Michelangelo found was both tasty and filling. Usagi was puzzled that she had eaten one of the mushrooms first to ensure it wasn’t poisonous. Michelangelo explained to him that her healing gift kept her safe.

When Leonardo and Raphael did not appear after a quarter of an hour, Lavinia pulled the pan off of the fire, leaving it sitting next to the rocks so they could warm the leftovers when they returned. Usagi noticed that the family did not seem concerned by the pair’s absence.

Don was seated on his bedroll, his back against a log, and Lav came over to join him. He reached a hand out to her and pulled her down to sit between his outstretched legs. She settled back against him with a contented hum and he wrapped his arms around hers as she rubbed the side of her head against his throat.

Turning her head slightly, Lav murmured against Don’s neck, “Do you suppose they’re straightening things out, or just arguing?”

Don nuzzled into her hair, glancing through the golden veil to watch Usagi settle onto his bedroll.

“With those two it’s a fifty-fifty proposition. I hope they both realize this journey is going to be difficult enough without personality issues,” Don said.

“I hope Leo figures out that we need to get the shell out of this creepy forest,” Mikey said from his prone position next to them.

Lying flat on his plastron, he had one blue eye open as he stared at Don and Lav.

“Well, am I right?” he asked.

Lav shivered delicately and Don squeezed her tighter. “I don’t like the feel of this place at all Mikey. I think you’re absolutely right,” she replied.

“Yeah.” Mikey sighed, satisfied that someone agreed with him.

Don nudged Lav with his shoulder and said, “Why don’t you lie down? I’ll sit here and wait for them to come back.”

Yawning, Lav said, “Can I stay like this for a bit? I’m so comfy.”
Smiling, Don kissed the back of her head. “That’s fine by me. You’re keeping me warm.”

“So nice to be useful,” Lav murmured as her eyes slid shut.

Mikey was already asleep and Usagi looked as though he might be as well. It was hard for Don to tell much about how Usagi felt or what he thought; the samurai was quite skilled at disguising his emotions.

After a little while, Don shifted the sleeping Lavinia onto the bedroll and slid out from behind her. Stretching, he strolled over to the fire and added a few sticks, building it back up. He had just pulled the stew pan closer when he heard his two brothers returning.

It didn’t take much to see by the sated looks on their faces what they had been up to.

Don barely suppressed a grin, instead pointing at the pan and saying, “I just pulled it over to warm up. Lav made a stew and it’s good.”

Raph saw the look on his face despite Don’s trying to hide it. “Shut up,” he growled with good humor.

“I’m not saying anything,” Don told him with false innocence, “other than I’d better take the first watch because the two of you are about to fall asleep right now.”

“I can watch if you want to turn in, Donny,” Leo offered, sitting cross legged on the ground and spooning some stew into his cup.

“No, I’m wide awake. Both of you finish eating and get some sleep. When I get tired I’ll wake Mikey.”

Don stood up from where he’d been squatting next to the fire and grabbed his bo staff. Before heading towards the perimeter of their camp, he glanced over at Usagi and wondered again if the samurai was really asleep.

They were up and moving as soon as the sun began to rise, thus allowing Usagi to get his bearings. Heading in a northwesterly direction would not only take them out of the forest, but also make up for some of the time they had lost.

The sunlight filtered through the limbs overhead, but although it brightened their way enough so that they could see, it did nothing to alleviate the oppressive gloom. The only sounds they heard were their own footfalls; nothing else seemed to be alive in a forest that Mikey was beginning to suspect was haunted.

“How long do ya’ suppose we’ve gotta trek through these trees?” Raph asked Usagi in a fairly civil tone.

Usagi glanced at him. “Perhaps another hour; we will know when we are close to the edge of the forest because there the underbrush grows thicker.”

It was only a few minutes later that the forest seemed to become brighter. The trees were no less dense, but when they looked up, the canopy overhead appeared to be draped in something that looked like white moss.

“Wow,” Lavinia breathed out in a stunned whisper.

The moss looked to have a fine, silky texture and hung from the trees like wispy lace.
patterns interwoven from tree to tree were intricate; as though some giant had knitted the entire thing.

Unable to resist the lowest hanging strands, Lavinia reached out to touch some of it. It was extremely sticky and she had to pull fairly hard to get it off of her skin.

Her nose wrinkled in disgust. “Yuck; sticky and strong,” she said.

Those words struck a familiar chord in the back of Raph’s mind and he looked up again. Some areas were more tightly woven together than others and had a more rounded shape to them.

He reached for his sais, growling a warning as he did so, “We need ta get away from here.”

Before the others could react, strands of the sticky moss suddenly shot out at them from ground level. Raph pulled back as one wrapped around his wrist, stabbing at it with the point of his weapon. Before he could jab enough holes in the strand to weaken it, another sticky fiber wound its way around his other arm.

Lav let out a blood curdling scream and Raph turned his head to locate her. Half of her body was wrapped in the moss, her hands pinned to her sides. Coming towards her was the largest spider Raph had ever seen.

The insect was bright white and bigger than Raphael. It shot strands of webbing from snouts located on both ends of its fat body, the cluster of eyes at one end the only indicator of the position of its head.

Hearing a clicking sound, Raph turned around in time to see the spider that had ensnared him shoot out another strand of webbing.

“Hang on Lav! Keep fighting him!” Raph called out to her, the sound of her screams mobilizing him to action.

Yanking back as hard as he could, Raph managed to finally snap the strand that held his wrist and then began to jab at the one holding his other arm down. His sai was not a cutting weapon and he couldn’t damage the web quickly enough. Several strands shot out simultaneously and he found his upper body bound tightly.

He could hear Mikey’s shouts combined with those of Don and Usagi. Lavinia was still screaming and Raph tried to twist around towards her, but his ankles were ensnared by the webbing and the spider yanked him to the ground.

Leo had managed to lift his arms towards his katanas when Raph called out, but not quickly enough to draw his weapons. He saw with a glance that his entire team was caught fast, none of them able to pull a useful cutting edge weapon.

He could hear Lav’s muffled screams as the spider rolled her in his cocoon and then lifted her to dangle from a tree limb.

One by one they were cocooned and hoisted into the trees. One of Leo’s hands was caught by the web and by some instinct he lifted the other high above his head as his spider wrapped and rolled him. He couldn’t see anything after the fine strands encircled his head, but he knew when his body was lifted, and a moment later he felt himself swinging above the ground.

He heard the spiders scuttle away as they waited for their prey to suffocate. Leo was just thankful that they seemed to be a non-poisonous variety.
Unable to see, he had to chance that one of the creatures was watching as he slowly lowered his free arm toward the hilt of his katana.

Luck was with him as he felt that the grip on his sword wasn’t trapped by the strong webbing. Sliding one katana from its sheath, Leo turned the blade away from his skin and stuck the tip of his steel through the web, stopping when he felt the metal touch the back of his head.

Moving it down, he sliced through the web enough to loosen it from his skull and his opposite shoulder. Repositioning the blade, he cut another long section away and managed to get his other arm free.

Peeling the mask of webbing from his face, Leo took a deep breath and then freed his other katana. The web had dried to a bark like consistency in which the interior was no longer sticky. Within a second, his body fell from the tree and he landed soundlessly on the ground.

Knowing his brothers could hold their breath for a long time, he darted towards the cocoon he knew to contain Usagi. Although Lavinia was quite capable of going without oxygen for some time as well, he knew he needed to cut her free next. She had sounded completely unnerved by the attack and if she had actually been panicking Leo was afraid she might have expelled too much air from her lungs.

“Brace yourself, Usagi,” Leo called softly before jumping high and slicing the strand of webbing that held his friend aloft.

He heard Usagi’s grunt as he hit the dirt and then Leo removed the cocoon from his body.

“Get everyone free before those spiders return,” Leo urged in a low voice.

Usagi nodded and pulled his katana. Leo turned to the tree holding Lavinia, noting that her cocoon was not moving.

“Lavinia, I’m cutting you down,” he told her, hoping she was still conscious.

As quickly as he could, Leo cut her webbed prison from the tree and as soon as she was down he began slicing the strands away from her head. Yanking the web from her face, Leo saw that Lav’s eyes were closed and that she didn’t appear to be breathing. Placing his hands beneath her armpits, he pulled her body out of the cocoon.

Usagi freed Raph and then tossed the red banded Turtle his wakizashi before turning to release Donatello. Raph used the borrowed blade to cut Mikey down. Once they were loose, they hurried over to Leo and Lav.

Leo held Lav across his lap and tilted her head back, pinching her nose closed with one hand. Leaning over her, he covered her mouth with his and blew air into her, filling her lungs.

Lav jerked and her eyes flew open, the fear still in them. Leo kept his mouth on hers to prevent her from crying out and within seconds she’d calmed enough so he could release her.

“Where are they?” she whispered.

“They left us as soon as they placed us in the trees. We should move before they come back,” Leo told her in a low voice.

“My bow, did they break it?” she asked as Leo helped her to her feet.
“Right here, babe,” Mikey said, leaning down to retrieve it.

Taking it from him, she said, “Can we go now? Now, please.”

Mikey cupped her elbow, getting her attention. “Take a deep breath, sweetheart. We’re following Usagi.”

Lav blinked several times quickly and nodded, her lower lip caught by her teeth. Mikey grabbed her hand and they turned to where Usagi waited.

The clicking sound started to return, growing louder very quickly.

“They know we’re out,” Leo said. “Move!”

“Leo!” Don shouted.

When Leo turned back, he saw Don shoving their empty cocoons together with his bo, forming a line across their path.

“What are you doing?” Leo yelled.

“They’re too fast,” Don told him, digging into his duffel bag.

He extracted a can, shook it, and depressed the nozzle. As soon as it began to spray he pulled his face as far back as possible, flicked the head of a wooden match with his fingernail, and ignited the contents.

The fire swiftly grabbed hold of the dried strands of webbing and a roaring blaze swept in a line across their back trail.

Leo could just make out the shapes of the spiders on the other side of the crackling inferno. None of them were attempting to breach the flames.

“Run Donny,” Leo urged.

They sprinted along the path that the others had followed, running side by side. The clicking sounds receded quickly; the spiders drawing back as the flames licked at the trees that were shrouded with the fine, dry webbing.

Dodging through the trees, Leo kept his eyes on the ground, trailing the rest of his team. Within moments they caught up to them where they had stopped to watch their back trail.

“Keep going,” Leo shouted. “Don set a fire and I don’t know how fast it’s going to move!”

“Lav wouldn’t go any farther without you two,” Mikey explained as they started running again.

Leo glanced at her, seeing the rough edges of her panic still clinging to her. He didn’t admonish her for stopping, realizing that her fear wasn’t something she could ignore.

The underbrush started to become denser and the group had to pull back as they waited for Leo and Usagi to slash a path through the growth. Moving as quickly as they could, the team finally burst out of the forest and into the open.

Overhead, the sky was growing darker as black clouds rolled in and piled atop one another. The wind picked up, whipping in erratic circles as it seemed to come from all directions at once.
Looking around, Leo saw that they were standing in a small rock filled clearing at the base of a mountain. The high rocky walls converged around the group, offering them no choice but to begin climbing.

Finding a way in through the rocks by following what seemed to be an animal trail, Leo called over the now howling wind, “Follow me! Maybe we can find an overhang or something to protect us before this storm hits.”

“Lightening, Leo!” Don shouted as the sky lit up with a jagged flash.

“It’s no safer down here Donny,” Leo yelled back, proceeding up the trail as fast as he could.

The entire team was on the trail as the first cold droplets of water fell on them. Leo kept his eyes open; his head swiveling in every direction as he practically jogged along the narrow track, moving steadily upwards.

Looking back towards the forest, Don could see the flames from the fire he’d started licking across the top of the tree line, jumping up in stark contrast to the dark clouds above it. Almost in response to a lover’s call, the sky opened up and enveloped the blaze in a torrential downpour.

“Leo!” Raph called out. “Up there a few paces in front of ya’. It looks like a cave.”

Seeing what appeared to be a dark opening in the rocky wall, Leo hopped over several jagged boulders to get closer to it. It was a deep cutout in the mountain’s face; not a cave, but hollowed out enough to hold all of them.

Beckoning to the others, Leo quickly got them inside and out of the cold rain.

Tired and bedraggled, the travelers dropped their packs to the ground and followed them down. For several moments, no one said anything.

Finally Donny sighed. “We really need a fire.”

Lav started to giggle and Mikey began chuckling. Looking at them set Raph off and before long all six of them were laughing.

Finally Leo crept back towards the opening and looked out before announcing, “I’m going to see if there is some dry underbrush that the rain hasn’t managed to soak yet.”

Mikey pushed himself to his feet. “I’ll go with you. Moving around will keep me warm until we can get a fire going.”

The pair dashed out into the rain and Lavinia stood up, walking towards the back of the cutout to wring the water from her hair.

Usagi took the opportunity to remove his top and twist the water from it, shaking his body to remove the excess moisture that was clinging to him. The woman’s presence kept him from performing the same action with his pants; he would simply have to endure the dampness clinging to his legs.

Lavinia glanced at him and then dug into her backpack, pulling from it her backup set of clothes. Moving into the darkest recess of the cutout, she turned her back and pulled off her wet top.
Seeing her dilemma, Raph and Don moved over to join her, standing behind her as she removed the rest of her wet things. It wasn’t necessary; Usagi had turned away when he saw that she was going to undress.

Once she switched into dry clothes, Lav tossed her wet things over a boulder and walked over to where Don had begun to arrange a circle of rocks to create their fire pit.

Kneeling next to it, she told Usagi, “I’ll keep my eyes averted if you’d like to wring the water out of your pants.”

“Thank you, I would like to do that, but I did not want to disrespect you,” he told her softly.

“It’s all right, please go ahead. I don’t wish for my presence to make you uncomfortable,” Lavinia said.

Usagi rose and bowed to her before going into the same dark corner she had used. Divesting himself of the wet bottoms, he squeezed and twisted them until he had removed as much water as possible, and then pulled them back on.

He had just finished dressing when Mikey and Leo burst back through the curtain of rain falling outside of their shelter. Both carried an armload a semi-dry brush and twigs, having protected their find by leaning over it as they ran back to the small encampment.

Don dug out his matches and several twists of paper, setting them ablaze amidst the kindling. Before long, a nice fire was going, reflecting its heat back from the wall to both warm and dry the group of travelers.

The Turtles removed their wet padding and masks, laying them across rocks to dry as Lav had done with her clothes.

Despite her appearance of normalcy, Leo could read the after effects of the earlier panic in Lav’s eyes. He watched as she held a pan out to catch some rain and then set it on the fire, pulling food items from her backpack.

Standing up, Leo crossed over to where she squatted near the fire and put his hand down to her. Lav turned a puzzled face to it and then switched the look to Leo. The smallest smile played across his lips and her eyes softened as she slid her fingers into his calloused hand, letting him pull her to her feet.

“Mikey, can you throw some things together for us to eat?” Leo called over his shoulder, his eyes locked on Lavinia’s.

“Sure Leo,” Mikey answered, jumping up to finish the task Lav had begun. He wasn’t even sure the pair had heard him as Leo took Lavinia into a section of the cutout that was both shadowed and secluded.

Leo turned Lav around to face him, his eyes holding hers for a long, silent moment.

In a low voice, he finally told her, “Talk it out.”

“I panicked,” Lav admitted, equally as quiet. “I should have been able to shoot them before they trapped my arms, but I couldn’t think.”

“Raph barely had time to draw his sais,” Leo said. “Neither Usagi or I had time to unsheathe our swords. They were silent and too fast, Lavinia. None of us had a chance to react.”
“I feel like I could have done something more than scream. I’m sorry Leo; I was completely unnerved and I didn’t react very well in that situation,” Lav said contritely.

“In most situations it helps to have a frame of reference. I doubt if facing giant spiders was ever part of your wildest imaginings,” Leo said, his fingers gripping hers reassuringly.

From his seated position, Usagi could just make out the shadowed forms of Leonardo and Lavinia from the corner of his eyes. He could hear the low drone of their voices and see that the Turtle was still holding the woman’s hand. The image was not an encouraging one for him, but it was also not a definitive one as neither moved to do more than hold hands.

Raph came over to sit next to Donatello, both of them settling back to watch Mikey stir together their dinner. Raph glanced over at Usagi, and then turned his head to see what Leo and Lavinia were doing.

Leaning closer to Don, Raph said, “Do ya’ suppose he’s talking ta her about that thing with the spiders?”

Don nodded, stretching out into a more comfortable position. “You saw how he pulled her out of that cocoon; he knew she was panicking.”

“So did I,” Raph said, reaching up to scratch his chin. “I was afraid she was having one of those things like when we were at the farmhouse. What did ya’ call them, a flashback or some kind of memory?”

“It’s called repressed memory or memory cap; a leftover gift from that orphanage or institute where she lived when she was little. Her memories from her early teens in Japan may be horrifying, but she didn’t have to cap them. Whatever they did to her at that institute was far worse,” Don said with a grimace.

“She probably ain’t gonna ever remember it all either, is she?” Raph asked.

“I don’t know Raph. The mind is a tricky place. She remembers the things the Japanese couple did or tried to do to her because she was old enough to understand them. A repressed fear is hard to control when it suddenly springs out of nowhere,” Don said.

“Yeah,” Raph agreed. “Even panicked, Lav can still function. Ain’t like the memory caps; she pops one of those and our Lav really ain’t there anymore.”

Don was staring into the fire. “Imagine what it must be like for Lav. Remember when we discovered one of those caps? She didn’t even know it was inside of her head.”

“We got it open though, didn’t we? We got her ta remember enough so that she didn’t close that part of her brain back up again. That’s a good thing, right?” Raph asked.

“Yes, that’s a good thing,” Don said thoughtfully. “It would be better to someday find out if she built those caps, or if someone else did.”

Staring into the fire, Don thought back to the promise he’d made to Lav that he would help her ferret out those secrets. The first time they’d discovered one was terrifying to her and she didn’t ever want to be hit by that kind of surprise again.

It was during the trip when the five of them had gone to Casey’s farm for the first time together. Don settled back into that memory as Mikey worked on their dinner, Leo talked to Lav, Raph sat watching Usagi, and Usagi surreptitiously watched Leo.
They were supposed to stay for a month; a month to explore their new relationship, practice teamwork as a group of five and experiment with sex. Specifically, sex with Lavinia.

They wanted and needed her to be just as comfortable with every aspect of their sexual forays as the brothers themselves were with each other. Each new day brought a new challenge and a new kink. It was a thrilling, exciting time and every experiment was an emotional high. Except for one.

“You want me to crawl into a what?” Lav asked as she walked next to Mikey.

They were going to the barn where Don was waiting for them.

“A cage. A small one Donny made. It’s hot babe. You have to crawl to get into it and it’s kinda small, so when you’re on your hands and knees and the door gets closed, you can’t move.”

Lav laughed. “You realize what constitutes a small cage for your body is going to be large enough for me to move inside of, don’t you?”

“Well, sure Lav. That’s why Don went ahead to make some adjustments. It’ll feel really kinky babe, I swear. Your body, all pressed up against the bars and you don’t know who’s gonna do what to you until it’s happening.” Mikey danced ahead of her, turning to walk backwards. “You’ll do it right? Say you will,” he pleaded.

She smiled indulgently at him. “Of course I will. I’ll try anything with you guys at least once.”

“You’re the best!” he squeaked, his voice climbing from excitement.

He spun on his heel and swung the barn door open, shouting, “She’s gonna do it!”

Don walked towards them, a big smile on his face. He really had no doubt she would, considering it was Michelangelo who asked. She didn’t seem to be able to refuse him anything.

“It’s all set up in one of the stalls,” he told them. Catching one of her hands, he pressed her palm to his face and said, “You really are a good sport.”

Lav reached up to circle her arm around his neck, pressing her body against his. “Mikey promised it would be hot,” she murmured just before their mouths touched.

Don trembled as her tongue slid into his mouth and he wrapped both of his arms around her body, pushing back with his own tongue.

Mikey reached under her sundress and slid her panties off, removing her sandals when he reached her feet. He opened the zipper on the back of the dress and pulled her arms away from Don long enough to slip the straps of the dress over them.

Pulling down, Mikey managed to yank the dress off despite how tightly she was pressed into Don. When his brother felt the heat from her bare breasts radiate through his plastron, he began to churr.

Mikey pressed his body against her naked back and ran his hands down her sides, the skin on his palms rough against her smooth flesh. His hands traveled over her hips and onto her buttocks, and he rubbed up and down each cheek, entranced as always with how soft her ass felt.

He lowered his head to her neck, breathed in a lungful of her scent, and bit down lightly.
Lav moaned into Don’s mouth and she shifted to push her rear further into Mikey’s hands.

Lav had both her arms flung around Don’s neck and she rubbed her breasts against his scutes as she became more aroused. Don had pulled his hands to either side of her chest when he felt Mikey move up against her back, and now he grasped her tits tightly, squeezing them.

Mikey bit down on another spot, this time on Lav’s shoulder and held on with his teeth while spreading her ass with his thumbs. He rubbed against her with his lower plastron, churring when his cock dropped down. Moving his hips forward, he slid his dick between her butt cheeks and then pressed her bare flesh tightly around his shaft.

Her hips rocked slightly as she felt his giant organ sliding along the valley between her cheeks. The movement made her brush against Don’s thigh with the soft hair covering her vulva and the feeling was enough to make him release his hot organ.

Pulling his mouth away from the excited woman, Don stuttered, “The c . . . cage. Remember why we came in here?”

Mikey released her ass, took a deep breath and stepped back, reluctantly removing his cock from her rear. Once her luscious ass was up in the air, caught by the metal bars of that cage, he was gonna give her something to remember.

Don took Lav’s hand and led her over to the stall where he’d set up the cage. He glanced at her when they came within sight of it; her eyes were focused on the rectangle of metal. Don had adjusted the bars so that it was no longer its regular forty-eight inches in length; this shorter version would allow her no movement once she was confined.

He still had a firm grip on her hand when she suddenly stopped. It took him a second to realize she wasn’t going to move and he turned around to ask her why.

“What’s the hold-up dude?” Mikey came around her, saw the look on his brother’s face, and turned toward Lav also.

Lav’s eyes were wide; her face a mask of stark terror. The usual green color of her irises was faded to nearly white and she had begun to tremble.

“Lavinia?” Don stepped towards her, concerned by her strange reaction.

Her head turned at his voice, but her eyes were not focused on him. Rather, they seemed to look through him, as though seeing something outside his range of vision.

Mikey reached out a hand and touched her shoulder. “Hey babe . . .”

“NO!” she suddenly screamed and jerked away from his hand. “No, no! Don’t make me! I’ve been good; I have, I have!”

Her voice had changed; it was young, very young – the voice of a little girl.

“It’s okay Lav.” Don moved nearer, trying to put a soothing tone into his voice.

She abruptly spun away from him and tried to dart out of the stall. Mikey stepped between her and the opening, his hands out to catch her but she skid to a stop and backpedaled, retreating from both he and Don.

The stall wasn’t large enough for her to go very far. Lav backed to a corner and pressed into
it, her hands in front of her as she began to beg in the same little girl’s voice, “Please don’t make me. I didn’t do anything wrong. Please, please. I did what they wanted this time! I promise I did!”

She was sobbing; hysterical. Mikey started to move towards her again, but Don’s outstretched arm stopped him.

“Get Leo,” Don told him sharply.

Mikey didn’t waste time asking questions, he just moved.

Lav continued to cry, her arms stretched out in front of her and the fear on her face heart wrenching. Don didn’t make any sudden movements; he thought he knew what was happening and very slowly, he lowered himself down to one knee.

“Lavinia, it’s okay sweetheart. No one will hurt you now, I promise. No cage, okay? No cage, you never have to go in the cage again. Shhh, it’s okay now,” he crooned over and over, trying to calm the hysteria.

Don heard his brothers as they came rushing through the barn door and he called out quickly, “Don’t run!”

The footsteps stopped and then started forward again, three sets moving slowly and deliberately.

Don’s head turned to watch as his brothers reached the stall doorway.

Raph was carrying a blanket and he asked, “What the shell?”

Don lifted a hand to freeze them from coming further in. Lav was whimpering; her eyes glued to the cage and the sound of Raph’s voice made her scream again.

“Shhh, Lavinia, shhh. He’s not here to hurt you, I swear. He came to take the cage away, okay? He’s going to take it away,” Don chanted to her, his voice even and gentle.

“Stay away! Stay away from me!” Lav shouted as she turned her head frantically, looking for a way out.

Over his shoulder, Don called, “Raph, slowly, very slowly, come around behind me and grab the cage. No sudden movements; don’t go near Lav. Get the cage and drag it out of here.”

“Right,” Raph said in a low tone. He handed the blanket to Mikey and shuffled slowly into the stall, staying as close to the wall that was furthest from Lav as he could.

Lav was breathing fast, her head and hands following him as he moved. When he was close enough, he bent at the waist, grabbed the cage and began dragging it back in the direction he’d come from.

“No cage!” she yelled again, watching him remove it from the stall.

“That’s right, Lavinia. No cage. No more cages,” Don said softly.

“Don,” Leo’s voice was a low murmur, “what’s happening?”

Don answered; his voice equally as low, “I think it’s a memory cap. The ‘you know what’ seems to have triggered a repressed memory, something from her childhood based on the voice she’s using to respond to the visual stimuli. She’s locked in that traumatic memory right now; we
need to figure out how to get her to release it.”

“Can you talk her out of it?” Leo asked.

“No,” Don said, his eyes focused on Lav. “She’s not responding to me; just to the tone of
my voice. All I’m doing is keeping her from panicking further. There’s only one voice that’s been
able to pull her out of a fugue, and that’s yours.”

Leo understood. Crouching low, he moved with slow fluidity across the floor until he was
next to Don. Lav’s nearly unseeing eyes tracked his movement, her hands sweeping out in front of
her to keep him back.

“Lavinia,” he called to her softly.

“No! You can’t make me!” she screamed at the sound of a new voice.

Leo closed his eyes, took a deep breath before opening them and tried again.

“Lavinia.”

It was his command voice; strong, sure and completely undeniable.

Lavinia blinked.

“Again,” Donny whispered.

“Hamato Lavinia. Come back to me now!” Leo called again in the voice she’d been trained
to follow.

With a long whimper, Lav’s arms dropped to her sides and she slid down the wall, falling in
a heap onto the floor.

Leo and Don reached her at the same time. Mikey and Raph caught up to them just as Don
lifted her head.

Leo took the blanket away from Mikey and wrapped it around her, watching as Don gently
tapped her cheek with the palm of his hand.

“Lav? Lavinia, are you okay sweetheart? Can you say something?” Don asked.

Lavinia’s eyelids fluttered and then opened slowly. She looked from one to the other of
their faces blankly, asking in a perplexed tone, “What’s going on?”

“Do you remember what just happened?” Don asked her.

Her brow furrowed and she struggled to sit up. Leo put a hand under her shoulder and
helped her, keeping an arm there for her to brace against as she propped herself up on her hip.

“I . . . I don’t know. Something . . . something from when I was little?” It was more of a
question as she was clearly unsure of herself.

“Lavinia, how much do you remember from when you were small?” Don asked.

Lav cleared her throat and shot a glance at Mikey. He squatted in front of her and said,
“You told me a little of this, didn’t you?”
He asked the question in a way that preserved their secret about her nightlight and her mouth twitched into a gratified smile.

“Yes, some things I remember. There were a few of us and we all slept together in a really big room. There were . . . doctors? Maybe scientists; I’m not sure. Sometimes they would come to get one of us; it didn’t matter what time of day or night it was. I can remember none of us wanted to go when they showed up, but not much about what happened after we went with them. I think it must have been . . . bad,” she said, voice shaking.

“Do you know anything about repressed memories?” Don asked.

Her eyes came to him. “Not very much; psychology isn’t my field of study. I do know that the concept is not totally accepted by experts in the field of human memory.”

Transferring her attention to a clinical discussion of what had just happened seemed to help her. Lav sat up straighter, pulling the blanket tighter around herself.

“I know the arguments against the validity of memories purported to be repressed,” Don said, “but I’ve had a theory about how a truly traumatic event could conceivably affect how the short term memory function transfers memories to the long term memory function. I think it’s quite possible for those memories to be ‘capped’, making it difficult if not impossible for the transference to ever take place.”

“But Don, when memories don’t transfer from short to long term, that’s amnesia. There is actual physical damage in those instances which doesn’t allow the memories to store properly. That isn’t possible for me; I can’t be physically damaged,” Lavinia pointed out.

“No, but the interruption doesn’t have to be physical, nor does the trauma,” he explained. “When you say you don’t remember what was done to you, but that it must have been bad, it leads me to believe that the trauma was horrific enough for your brain to refuse to store the memory of it. Since it couldn’t be wiped out by physical means, you effectively brainwashed or hypnotized yourself into closing the memories in a psychological bottle and sealing that bottle with a cap.”

Lav’s eyes narrowed as she thought about what Don was saying. Leo lifted a hand to push a stray curl behind her ear and she smiled at him.

“So if I understand your theory,” Lav said, “it would be possible to hit that cap hard enough with something that recalled the trauma and effectively break through the cap.”

“Exactly,” Don agreed. “Since the cap is only a mental shield, it is possible to remove it and allow the memory to slip out. Only when it does come out, it manifests itself as a replay of the original trauma, a reenactment of the event. Because it hasn’t travelled by regular channels from short to long term memory, it doesn’t have the programming to allow it to do so once it’s been retrieved.”

“Are you saying that she may never remember the original event?” Leo asked.

“It’s possible,” Don said, looking across at his brother. “Unless we can figure a way to move it into long term memory, Lav may never know what happened to her.”

Lav put a hand up to her forehead and rubbed it, her eyes closed in concentration. “Don, I’ve had traumas in my life that I do remember; in fact, the last couple of years with that family in Japan were full of horrors. Because of that, I created a sort of mental cocoon that I use to shield myself from intense emotions, but it doesn’t repress those memories. I’ve never forgotten any of
them. This... cap. Are you sure I’m responsible for its formation?”

Don shook his head. “I’m not sure of any of this to be quite honest. It’s a theory but it seems logical. Whatever happened to you as a small child is buried behind something, and whether those memories are repressed through something you did or someone else did; the fact remains that the echo of the original trauma is still in your head.”

“Then the event that triggered this episode is still in here,” Lav tapped her forehead. “What’s happening to it now? I mean, what is it doing?”

“It could be nullified to a harmless state now that you’ve reenacted it, or it could be lurking there waiting for the same trigger or a completely new one to set it off,” Don told her.

“But that means there may be other things out there that I’ll come across that will set off another attack,” Lav said, eyes opening wide. “That doesn’t make me feel very secure.”

Don caught her hand and held it. “We’ll work together to try and safely piece your memory back together, okay? If we can recall the events without needing a trigger then you may be able to get the entire story in a way that releases the more traumatic memories through seepage rather than a hard break of the cap. If we can do that, you won’t ever have to worry about something randomly setting off another event like the one that just occurred.”

“We’ll always be here for you Lav,” Leo assured her. “If another break does occur, we’ll pull you out of that memory just like we did with this one.”

“Yeah,” Mikey agreed. “Now that we know what happens to you just before an attack we can watch for those signals. Leo can stop it before it gets out of your control.”

Her eyes turned to Leo’s. Without saying a word, they seemed to communicate volumes and Don thought once again that the bond between his big brother and their mate had reached a level of spirituality that transcended the physical aspects of their relationship.

Lavinia circled Leo’s neck with her arm and pressed her face against his neck. He pulled her against him, holding her tightly to let her know he would keep his promise to always protect her.

Catching Don’s eyes, Leo passed a questioning look across to his brother. Don shook his head slightly; they needed to talk, but not within Lavinia’s hearing.

Later, when the two brothers were alone, Don tried to answer Leo’s unasked questions.

“Lavinia has gone all these years without ever having an episode like this one,” Don said. “The thing that’s changed in her life is us and our experimentation. If she was raised in some secret government facility and treated like a lab rat, which I have to admit is what it’s beginning to sound like to me, then something else we consider fun and games might break another cap.”

“I think we’ve gone through most of our repertoire by now Don, don’t you? Nothing else even remotely bothered her,” Leo said.

“A cage represents captivity,” Don told him. “Ropes, chains, leather straps; all of the bondage gear we play with isn’t something a scientist would use. My guess is that if we had ever tried to strap her to a table or a hard surface of any kind we would have broken another cap. She’s allowed me to draw blood, Leo, and has always been completely normal. But I’ll bet if I tried to take a sample by force she would freak out just like she did this morning.”
Leo paced back and forth for a few minutes, his agitation obvious. Don waited silently for his brother to tell him what was on his mind.

“Don, can you work with Lavinia to get to those repressed memories and if nothing else at least nullify her intense reactions?” Leo asked.

“I can try. That’s all I can promise you. The mind is a great unknown and there is very little real science on repressed memory. Throw in the fact that Lavinia is a mutant of unknown origins and that she spent the first six years of her life as government property and you have a massive challenge,” Don answered. “What’s bothering you?”

“Master Yoshi sent her away so that she wouldn’t take up his battle with Shredder. Because of that decision, Lavinia has never been in a situation where she could be captured by an enemy. Being with us, the possibility of her falling into the hands of one of our enemies is very real. What happens if she gets tossed into a cage?” Leo asked.

Don studied Leo’s face as he thought about the question. As their leader and a natural strategist, Lavinia’s severe reaction to a broken memory cap was a critical consideration for Leonardo.

“I’ll work with her on the cage thing,” Don said. “I’d really like to know if facing that cage again will cause her to fall back down into a reenactment echo, or if breaking the memory cap disengages the power of the trigger.”

“I’d like to know that as well,” Leo told him. “Maybe we can find a way to force them all to the surface one at a time. I don’t want her to show this kind of vulnerability to our enemies.”

Don understood what Leo was saying, even if it did sound a little cold blooded. Better they pull the traumas out of Lavinia and help her get over them than someone who really didn’t give a damn about her.

Someone like Hun or Karai.
The rain continued as the small group of travelers settled in to wait out the storm.

Up high on the side of a mountain was not the place to be while lightening flashed nearby. Inside the protection of the hollowed out section of rock, the small band ate their noonday meal. Hours crawled by and so did their chances of leaving the mountain before nightfall.

Lounging near the fire, the talk turned to the delay they were forced to endure.

“So what’s the plan, Leo?” Mikey asked. “I mean, when the storm’s over.”

Leo looked at Don and asked, “Any chance the fire destroyed those spiders?”

“No,” Don answered as he shook his head. “They were too fast to have been caught in the initial blaze and the fire didn’t last long enough to have done any damage.”

Leo turned to Usagi next. “Do you know anything about these mountains?” he asked his friend.

“Very little that is actual fact, Leonardo,” Usagi said. “As far as this side of the mountain is concerned, I know nothing at all since no one has ever survived an excursion into that forest. I have heard some talk amongst travelers that there is a faintly visible trail on the northwest side that leads into a valley of hot springs. That valley intersects with the main road on which Hebi is travelling.”

“If he hasn’t changed direction,” Raph pointed out.

Usagi nodded. “There are other approaches to Perdred but none will get him there as quickly. If he believes we are lost then he will have no reason to leave the main road.”

“Then we still have a chance to catch him before he reaches the protection of the Jeshtare,” Don said.

“When the lightening stops we’ll move out,” Leo said decisively. “We’ll proceed in a northwesterly direction and keep our eyes open for the trail out of these rocks.”

“Leonardo,” Usagi said, his tone getting Leo’s attention. “There are rumors and legends about this mountain that you should be aware of. I do not know if there is any truth to them; the stories I have heard were not told from firsthand knowledge.”
“What kinda rumors?” Mikey asked warily.

“They have to do with a tribe who is said to inhabit the mountain,” Usagi answered. “It is said that they are cannibalistic and that they serve a demon called the Daravere. One of their rituals involves offering living sacrifices to this demon to appease his appetite and in return the demon keeps the soil rich and the ice and snow off of the mountain top.”

“Peachy,” Raph said in a low rumble.

Usagi shrugged. “As I said, it is a story I have heard and may be nothing more.”

“We’ll have to be cautious just in case,” Leo said. “Even if that is simply a myth, there are probably other dangers that will be real enough. It doesn’t seem as though the storm is going to let up before nightfall, so I suggest we rest while we can. We aren’t going to travel over these rocks in the dark.”

Don tossed another handful of sticks onto the fire before crawling into his bedroll. Mikey had volunteered to take the first watch and was standing near the cutout’s opening, yawning and stretching the kinks out of his muscles.

Usagi shifted on the hard ground, trying to get comfortable. A little to one side of him Leonardo was already fast asleep, the woman lying next to him with one of her hands on his arm. The pair had been nearly inseparable since they had engaged in a private conversation after their escape from the forest.

As much as he wanted to tell himself that she clung to Leonardo for protection, and that he provided it because she was Master Splinter’s sister, Usagi knew better. He could see the looks that passed between them and he heard the change in their voices when they spoke to one another.

However much Usagi attempted to deny the fact at the beginning of their journey it was quite obvious now that Lavinia belonged to the Turtles. Leonardo had taken a lover from outside his family and as destiny would have it, that lover was not Usagi.

At some point Usagi managed to fall asleep. He knew this because he was jerked awake by the feeling of the ground rumbling beneath his body. Sitting up quickly, he saw that Leonardo was already on his feet and Raphael was shaking Mikey to wake him.

“What is that sound?” Usagi asked.

“I don’t know,” Raph said. “Everything was quiet when I took over from Don, but then I started hearing something that sounded like thunder, except that the storm is pretty much finished.”

Lavinia took one look at Leo’s face and began packing their equipment. Donatello walked over to one of the walls and placed his hand against it, feeling a vibration coming from within the rock.

“I don’t think it’s a rock or mud slide,” Don said. “The movement stops and starts.”

“Give me your best guess,” Leo said. “Are we in danger if we stay here and wait for sunrise?”

Don shrugged. “The vibrations could be caused by a number of things. The mountain is probably pock marked with caverns and hollowed out tunnels; it is possible water ebbs and flows inside of them. It’s also possible that sections of rock heat up during the day and release gas as they cool. A third possibility . . . .” He stopped talking for a moment to grimace.
“Go on,” Leo urged him.

“Volcanic activity,” Don finished.

“We’re inside a volcano?” Mikey yelped, his eyes wide.

“Technically, we aren’t inside,” Don said.

“That’s splitting hairs,” Mikey said. “Volcanos look cool on TV; I’ve never actually wanted to be close to one.”

“I don’t know that we are. If there was ash it’s been washed away by the rain. I never noticed any smoke plumes as we travelled in this direction, but of course that doesn’t mean it hasn’t been lying dormant,” Don explained. “These are all just guesses.”

“If we go back, we run into killer spiders or ninja assassins and we lose the chance to catch Hebi before he reaches Perdred. If we go over the mountain, we take the chance on playing with a volcano but we still might grab that snake before he reaches safety,” Raph said. “I vote we go over the mountain.”

“A volcano that’s close to erupting will spew out smoke and gases,” Don said. “There will be an increase in tremors, if that’s what this is. It seems to have stopped.”

“As soon as it’s light enough to see, we’ll proceed with the original plan. Find a trail over the mountain and to the other side. If this is a volcano, then the faster we move, the sooner we get away from it,” Leo said decisively. “Make sure you’re packed and ready to go.”

They were moving just as soon as the shadows crawled far enough off of the rocks for Leo to choose a path.

Sometimes the way up took them in the opposite direction from the one for which they were aiming, but the leader would eventually find a trail that turned them back again. The climb was arduous and tricky; loose rocks rolled from beneath their feet and several times they were forced to leap over deep chasms.

Climbing steadily for a little more than three hours, the group finally came up against the one thing Leo had been dreading; a shear wall of rock in all directions.

“The good news is, once we’re on top of this, we can probably see the trail that’ll take us out of these mountains,” Mikey quipped. “The bad news; we didn’t bring any mountain climbing gear.”

“I’ve got rope in my duffel,” Don offered.

“That’s nice Donny, how do you plan to get the rope up there?” Mikey asked sarcastically.

Raph and Lav were poking around in some bushes that were growing from a crevice in the rock. Lavinia noticed a breeze shaking the leaves and pushed her hand through the thicket.

“Raph,” she said, drawing his attention. “I feel air coming from somewhere.”

“Move,” Raph told her.

When Lav stepped aside, Raph shoved his way past the stand of bushes and found himself in a cave-like opening. It was just wide enough for him enter and he found that there was a dead-
end a few feet in. Standing still as he faced the rough rock wall, he could feel fresh air blowing across his head.

Raph looked up and discovered that the air was coming in from far above him. He could see the blue sky and the clouds wafting past.

Backing out, he called, “Hey, we found somethin’ over here.”

When the rest of the group reached him, he shoved one of the bushes aside and said, “Back of this is a long, narrow shaft that opens up on top of this mountain. It looks wide enough for us to fit into.”

Leo withdrew a katana and Raph moved back as his brother slashed the thick growth out of their way. He followed the path that Raph had taken and saw the chimney of stone.

“Mikey,” Leo called.

Mikey edged past the others and joined his brother. “Yeah, Leo?”

“Think you can shimmy up this thing? You’re the best climber and nearly as large as Raph; if you fit then everyone else will,” Leo said.

Mikey eyeballed the open shaft. It looked like a tight squeeze in some places, but he thought he could make it.

“I’ll give it a shot,” Mikey said. “What happens if I get stuck?”

Leo grinned at him. “Don’t get stuck.”

“You’re hilarious,” Mikey told him dryly.

Don dug into his duffel and pulled out a couple of long coils of rope. “Hang on you guys,” he called to Leo and Mikey.

They came out of the crevice to find Don kneeling on the ground, tying the rope together.

“Put this around your waist,” Don told Mikey. “When you reach the top, you can haul our gear up, since we won’t be able to climb with it.”

“Figures,” Mikey griped as Don tied the rope around his middle. “I get to climb up first and also do all the heavy lifting.”

Lav pressed the palm of her hand against his plastron and leaned in so that her face was close to his.

“That’s because you’re perfect,” she whispered, touching his lips lightly with hers.

Mikey’s face brightened up. “I am, aren’t I?” he asked rhetorically.

Stepping back into the space, Mikey looked up one more time and then turned to press his carapace against one rock wall. Placing one of his feet knee high on the rock in front of him, he set the other on the wall underneath his rear end. With his hands on opposite walls, Mikey pushed up with his legs and arms until he was fully extended.

By alternating the position of his legs and arms, Mikey was able to steadily climb the chimney. Some spots were too narrow for him to get much extension, but tucked into a fairly tight
ball Mikey was able to slowly ascend. Moving his hands upwards for a bit, he would then hold his spot as he used his feet to push himself higher, pressure against his carapace preventing him from sliding back down.

Leo stood at the base of the chimney and watched Mikey’s progress. The agile younger brother started out slowly, but once he found a rhythm he began climbing at an impressive speed.

In two or three spots Mikey’s knees were almost touching his chest, but he got through them and knew Raph could fit as well. Finally he reached the opening at the top, and grabbing onto the rocky lip, Mikey boosted himself out of the chimney.

On all fours he looked down and saw Leo. “Made it! Tell Raph to suck his gut in on the way up!” he called down to them.

Raph grumbled something under his breath and Lav giggled, catching his wrist in her hand and touching her forehead to his arm.

Don tied his duffle, his bo, and he and Mikey’s backpacks to the rope and then tugged on it. As soon as Mikey had lifted it part way up the chimney, Don emulated Mikey’s moves, pressing himself against the rocks and starting to climb.

When Don cleared the rim, the rope came back down and Leo tied three more backpacks to it along with Lav’s bow and arrows, tugging on the rope when they were secure. Usagi went up the rock chimney next, shifting his swords around in front of him and moving a little slower than the Turtles since he didn’t have a shell protecting his skin from the rough stone.

Leo stood next to Lavinia as she prepared to take her turn climbing the rock chimney. He glanced up and saw Mikey peering over the edge; then he looked over at Lav.

“Do you want them to pull you up?” Leo asked.

Lav smiled and shook her head. “No, I’ve climbed before. Besides, if I slide back down it isn’t as though I’d be injured.”

Leo placed a finger under her chin, tipping her face up so that he could press a light kiss to her mouth. Raph chuckled from behind them.

“Didn’t want ta do that in front of Usagi, eh Leo?” Raph asked facetiously.

“I thought we’d resolved that issue,” Leo said good-naturedly, his eyes still on Lav’s face.

Raph snorted, making Lav grin as she got into position. Setting her back against the rock, she lifted her long legs to the stone and started up.

After she cleared the rim, Leo sent the two remaining backpacks and his swords up on the rope.

As Raph took his spot at the base of the chimney, he told Leo, “Follow right behind me bro’, ‘cause ya’ look naked without your swords.”

“Don’t get stuck,” Leo shot back. “I don’t want to have to try and shove you all the way to the top.”

“Not gonna happen,” Raph said with a grin.
Leo waited until his brother was halfway to the top of the stone chimney before settling his carapace against the rocks and starting the climb. Raph slowed in one spot where his larger body mass was a disadvantage, but he managed to press through it.

As Raph disappeared over the rim, Leo thought he heard a muffled shout. Pausing, he listened for a minute but heard only silence.

“Are you guys all right?” Leo shouted.

A moment passed before Raph called out, “Yeah, peachy.”

It was his all-purpose sarcastic answer and Leo began moving faster, afraid that something had happened between Raph and Usagi that was bringing tension to the group once more.

As his hands gripped the rocky edge, someone grabbed his arms and pulled him atop the mountain.

However, it wasn’t anyone from his group. Leo looked up into the face of danger.

Leo’s first glance showed him that his family and Usagi had been taken captive. Their arms were tied behind their backs with ropes that were attached to one that had been wound around their necks. Each of them was hobbled by ropes on their ankles and they were also connected to one another by thick rope strands wrapped around their waists.

Their captors looked exactly like monitor lizards, only they stood upright and had clawed hands that were currently curved around long spears. Two of those spears were pressed against Mikey; one to his ribcage, the other to his neck.

It was obvious why no one had fought back or cried out, to do so would mean Mikey’s death.

Raph caught his eye as one of the reptiles grabbed Leo’s arms and jerked them behind his back. Leo’s gaze flicked over to Mikey and then back to Raph before Leo shook his head almost imperceptibly. Now was not the time to attempt anything; they would wait for a better opportunity.

Dragging Leo over to the other captives, the Lizard man connected Leo to Raph with another piece of rope and then looked towards a Lizard who stood a little separated from the group.

“That is the last,” the one who appeared to be the leader hissed. “Bring them.”

The guards pulled their spears away from Mikey and stepped back, their weapons ready in case any of the captives attempted to escape. One of their captors gave Mikey’s carapace a hard shove and motioned him forward. The others moved when he did, pulled along by the rope that held them all together.

The mountain peak they were on was a bit lower than the one towards which they were being led. Sparse growth erupted from the stone; bushes and sometimes trees, tufts of rough grass, and here and there clumps of flowers. It was an unusual sight considering the altitude.

On a narrow trail between rocky outcroppings, shear drop offs fell away to either side. There would be no opportunity for escape here; one misstep would send the entire group plunging to their doom.

The trail climbed steadily and the air that blew against their faces grew cooler. Leo noticed
that the ground beneath his feet remained warm.

After a bit the trail widened and the ground around it evened out. There were now fields to either side of them, thick with food crops. They passed between a thick stand of fruit trees, large golden colored globes hanging in rich abundance from the limbs.

Once they passed out from under the shaded canopy made by the fruit trees, the trail led straight through a solid rock archway. What had once been a gigantic boulder had been chipped and carved to form a formidable entrance into a bustling village.

Activity stopped as the inhabitants who were out and about saw the prisoners being led past them. Their smiles and claps of excitement told the small group of travelers that they were in a lot more trouble than they had imagined.

Leo’s eyes darted around the village, taking note of the layout of the various buildings and homes. None appeared very large and he began to wonder where they were being taken.

Rounding a turn, he saw the large up thrust of rock that was in front of them and the entrance cut into its center. Every road and trail through the village merged at this point.

Mikey hesitated at the opening, but a hard shove got him moving forward. Stepping out of the sunlight and into the darkness of a gigantic cavern, the captives blinked as their eyes attempted to adjust to an interior lit only by torches.

The space they had entered appeared to be the main chamber to which a number of smaller chambers were attached. Lined up along the walls were at least forty warriors, each armed with a spear, club or thick blade.

In the center of the chamber was a deep pit from which a low rumble could be heard. On the far side of the pit was a large bell, a podium built of huge slabs of rock and an ornate chair covered in hide woven with gold threads.

Standing in front of the chair was one of the villagers dressed in white robes and to either side of him were six others similarly dressed. Each of them carried a staff topped by a shiny, metal ball.

“Priests?” Don whispered to Usagi.

“It appears so,” the ronin answered.

The small group of captives were strung out in a row several feet in front of the pit and forced to their knees before the priests. Their captured weapons were shown to the high priest who merely glanced at them before waving the warriors carrying them towards one of the smaller chambers.

Another rumble from inside the pit brought all seven of the priests forward to its edge. They spread out around it and began chanting in a low murmur, their words indistinguishable.

Leo glanced down the line at his family and Usagi. Sensing his gaze, they each in turn looked over at him quickly before facing forward again, letting him know they were waiting for his signal.

While the priests chanted, Leo tried the ropes that were securing his wrists. The course fiber dug into his skin as he pulled against it, but he discovered that the weaving wasn’t tight. With a little time, he knew he could break it and if he could, then so could his brothers.
Catching Raph’s eyes, Leo shot a look towards his brother’s bound wrists. Raph’s head lifted slightly, letting Leo know he’d gotten the message.

Before Raph could pass it along though, the ground shook under them, the rumble from the pit turning into a roar. As if on cue the priests lowered their staffs so that the metal balls pointed towards the center of the opening.

The travelers watched in astonishment as a red glow climbed up from the bowels of the pit. The cavern warmed considerably and a number of warriors started to nervously fidget.

As the reddish light began to color the priest’s robes a crimson hue, the chant suddenly ended and brilliant flashes of electricity shot out from the globes. The ground shook and the pit once more roared, but the red light started to recede.

After a moment the red glow had nearly faded away completely, but a continuous rolling of the ground beneath their knees told the captives that whatever was in the pit still wanted out.

The high priest was one of the three priests who had moved around to the captive’s side of the pit to contain the thing inside. He and the other two turned to face the group kneeling before them, a contemplative look mirrored on each of their faces.

It wasn’t a look that bode well for the travelers and Leo began straining against his bonds. He’d barely begun to move when he felt the sharp point of a spear touching the back of his neck.

Walking towards Leo, the high priest stared into his face; then moved down to direct his attention to Raphael. He stopped in front of each of them in turn, his perusal intent, until he had looked over each member of their group.

When his head came up, several warriors moved up behind the group, their weapons reminding the captives to remain completely immobile.

The high priest pointed at Michelangelo. “This one.”

Three warriors converged on Mikey and cut the ropes that held him before yanking him to his feet.

“Leave him alone!” Lavinia screamed; her eyes wide with fear.

One of the warriors pushed against her back with his knee, bending her far forward as she struggled not to fall on her face. Raph twisted against the ropes, trying to lunge at him but Leo’s pained grunt reminded him they were still tied together.

“I come from Lord Noriyuki,” Usagi called to the high priest. “We are under his protection and you live within the bounds of his holdings. Release us.”

The high priest looked over his shoulder at Usagi and said, “We answer only to the Daravere; we do not know your Lord.”

He turned away to follow Mikey as he was pushed towards a cage that was standing to one side of the pit.

“Wait, what are you going to do to him?” Don yelled, shoving against a warrior who began dragging him to his feet.

The high priest ignored them, but one of the secondary priests signaled to a group of guards
who were waiting near a small chamber. The remaining five captives were forced to their feet and pulled away from Mikey.

“Mikey!” Lav shouted; turning back frantically as they were forcefully removed from the cavern.

One of the guards touched her abdomen with a spear, hissing a warning. Each of them now had a spear against their backs, pushing them into a small anteroom off the main chamber. Inside, their weapons lay on one of several long tables that lined the walls.

They each glanced towards Mikey before the rock walls cut off their view. The cage had been opened and he was being pushed into it.

The cage he stepped into was tall and narrow, and once the door was closed, his carapace and plastron were pressed against the heavy metal bars. On a signal from the high priest, two warriors began to turn the crank that pulled on the chain attached to the top of the cage.

As the cage was lifted, Mikey had a sudden flash of understanding. It was feeding time at the zoo and he was the main course.

“If you’re thinking about roasting me I just wanna tell you that I’d taste so much better slowly aged first,” Mikey said with a show of courage he was far from feeling.

His humor fell on deaf ears. All he could do at this point was hope that the others would find a way to save themselves so that they could come save him.

Inside the anteroom was a large cell cut out of solid rock, the front barricaded by thick metal bars. Opening the cell door, the guards forced the group inside.

One by one their ropes were removed and they were shoved against the walls where manacles attached to heavy chains were hung. Their wrists were snapped into manacles that kept their arms suspended above their heads, and their ankles placed into manacles at floor level.

With a smile, one of the guards tossed the key to the manacles onto a low wooden table in the middle of the cell, chuckling to himself as he did so.

Once they were all secured, the guards backed out of the cell and slammed the door shut.

“We gotta get out of here and get ta Mikey,” Raph said as soon as they were gone. “They’re gonna feed him ta that thing.”

Leo yanked hard against the chains that were embedded in the rock wall to no avail; they didn’t budge. Don tilted his head up and spit on his wrist to lubricate it before twisting downwards against the metal but it was too tight.

Raph was pulling and tugging with all his might, cursing when nothing he tried worked. Usagi hoped that his fur might make sliding loose a bit easier, but the manacles were too thick.

Lavinia was eyeing the key that lay a few feet in front of her. If she could get her arms loose, she knew she could get to it.

“The key is close enough for me reach,” Lav said, her eyes fixed on it.

“Not like this,” Raph told her. “It might as well be back at the lair for all the good it can do us laying over there.”
Turning her wrists inside the manacles caused the chains to clang against the rocks. Don shook his head when he saw what she was trying to do.

“Lavinia those are too tight,” Don said in warning.

“I can reach the key,” Lav insisted.

“Damn it, Lav. It’s too far,” Raph growled, watching her twist in the manacles.

“No. I can get out of these and reach that key,” she said stubbornly.

They watched as she tucked her thumbs into her palms and began pulling her hands down, struggling against the heavy wring of metal binding her wrists.

Don leaned forward. “Lav, stop, you’ll rip your skin off.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Lav said as she continued pulling against the manacles. Her eyes were half shut, a pained grimace on her face.

“They’re too tight,” Raph repeated.

A high pitched scream of terror pierced the air, interrupting Raph.

“Oh my God, that’s Mikey,” Lav exclaimed and in her panic, yanked her arms down with all her strength.

The diminishing echo of Mikey’s cry was covered by the sound of breaking bones. With a loud gasp, Lavinia’s upper body hit the floor hard. Her hands, stretched out in front of her, were twisted at unnatural angles; layers of skin along the knuckles peeled back and bleeding.

Lav tucked her hands under her chin, where the dripping blood could touch her skin and be reabsorbed. Her ankles were still chained to the wall, but by twisting the chain, she was able to turn her feet at such an angle to allow her to inch forward on her belly to the short table which held the manacle’s key.

By the time she reached it her hands were healed enough so that she could snatch the key off the table.

Don’s feet were closest to her and she stretched her arm out to unlock the manacles on his ankles. Placing the key between his toes, she dropped back to the dirt floor and lay there panting.

With his legs free, Don bent at the waist and swung his feet towards Leo, who was hanging next to him. He shoved the key into the lock on the manacles binding Leo’s wrists and turned until he heard a very satisfying click.

As soon as his arms were free, Leo grabbed the key and unlocked the manacles on his feet. Moving swiftly he finished freeing Don, and then Raph, darting across the small cell to release Usagi.

Don was bending over Lav as Leo took the manacles from her ankles.

“How are your hands?” Don asked her, his brow furrowed with concern.

Holding them out to him as she stood up, she said, “Almost healed. We have to get to Mikey.”
As though to punctuate the urgency of her statement, Mikey screamed again, the anguish in his voice bouncing off of the high ceiling of the outer chamber.

Usagi spun to Leo. “Let us open this cell door quickly. Our weapons are just outside.”

Leo swept past him with the key and started working on the door. Usagi did a double take as he glanced at Lavinia’s hands and noted that they appeared to be completely uninjured.

They made it into the anteroom before they were noticed. A loud yell and guards began to flow in from the open archway, through which Mikey could be seen. He was struggling in the dangling cage as some sort of fiery red glittering ooze crawled up from the pit and touched his feet.

Their view of him was blotted out by the armed guards. With a loud cry, Raph yanked up one of the long tables and holding it in front of him he barreled into the guards.

Leo reached their weapons first. Snatching up Don’s bo, he tossed the staff to his brother. Catching it one handed, Don spun as guards started to slip past Raph’s barricade. Batting aside a spear thrust aimed for his plastron; Don brought his bo up and clipped the side of the guards head, sending the man straight to the ground.

Usagi leaped over the fallen guard and kicked aside another that was reaching for him. The samurai’s foot struck the man’s head and bounced it off the hard packed floor, knocking the guard out cold.

Reaching the weapons table, Usagi grabbed up his swords and turned quickly to join the battle.

“Raph!” Leo shouted.

Raphael tossed the table into a group of guards and turned towards his brother. Leo flipped Raph’s sais to him just as a fresh contingent of guards rushed towards him. Raph deftly caught his weapons and a wickedly huge smile stretched across his face as his hands tightened on the familiar grips.

Lavinia dodged away from a guard as he swung a club at her and then spun a kick at his head. Her foot connected with his chin, snapping his head to the side, and he slumped to the ground.

A quick forward roll took her to the weapons table and she grabbed up her tonfas. Lav glanced at Leo as her eyes began to darken and he heard the snap as her blades extended.

Leo tucked Mikey’s nunchakus into his belt and swiftly joined the fight.

The guards were falling before the traveler’s onslaught. Clubs and spears were no match for the steel wielded by their captives, or the skill with which the traveler’s fought.

Just as the group punched their way through the anteroom and into the main chamber, one of the guards sounded a horn. The priests spun around and saw their sacrifices had broken free. One of the priests darted over to a large bell and began ringing it.

“Reinforcements!” Don shouted as he jabbed his weapon into a guard’s solar plexus. The lizard went down on his knees and Don slammed the end of his bo into the lizard’s head.

Sounds of running echoed through the long tunnel leading into the cavern from the village. Warriors began streaming into the cave, intent on recapturing the travelers.
“Mikey!” Lavinia screamed as Mikey once more cried out. Her tonfas spun, blades slicing into the calf muscle of an attacking warrior.

Focused completely on the orange banded Turtle, Lavinia ran towards him, ignoring the warriors who turned to intercept her.

“Raph!” Leo yelled as he saw her dash to rescue Michelangelo. “You and Don cover Lav! Get Mikey down from there!”

Raph glanced over his shoulder and saw Lavinia slide under a club and then barely manage to twist away from a long knife. The blade caught her upper arm and tore a long gash across her skin, which she ignored as she sped to save Mikey.

A terrible flashback of the night on the rooftop when they almost lost her flooded his memory. Raph yelled to Don and leaped after Lavinia, his sais swinging with deadly accuracy.

Don swept through three warriors as he raced to catch Lav and his brother. He could hear Leo and Usagi behind him, the duo working in perfect harmony as they slashed a bloody path through their adversaries.

Raph slammed a shoulder into a warrior who was diving for the running woman, driving the attacker into a wall with a resounding thud. Don moved up next to Raph, using his bo to sweep another attacker off his feet and then delivering a kick to his jaw that knocked him out.

Lav reached the crank attached to the chain which was holding Mikey’s cage over the pit. She started to kick the locking mechanism when Don rushed up next to her and grabbed the handle.

“It’s too heavy for you. Help Raph swing the cage over when I raise it,” he told her.

The priests had fled the room as soon as Raph and Don reached their caged victim. Warriors began to run from the cavern as well, the disappearance of the high priests and the bloody carnage the strangers were inflicting too much for them.

As the cage came up, Raph leaned out to grab hold of it. The red ooze came up with it, a long tendril wrapped around Mikey’s ankle. Mikey’s eyes were closed, the cages tight confines keeping him upright. His body quivered and shook; his face contorted by pain.

Lav glanced into the pit. She could not see anything except the red ooze; it flickered and glittered with its own light. A smell rose with it; the distinct scent of blood and urine.

Usagi watched the last of the warriors flee the cave and turned to find his comrades. Leo was beside him, breathing heavily, and Usagi passed him a quick smile. Turning further, he spotted the others trying to reach Michelangelo.

“Do not touch him!” Usagi shouted, sprinting towards them.

He heard Leo coming up behind him and saw the startled look on Raph’s face as his hand closed around the bars of the cage.

“We gotta get him out of this,” Raph said, pulling the cage towards himself.

Don slowly released the chain enough for it to slacken and allow Raph to maneuver the cage onto solid ground.
"You cannot touch him while the Daravere has a hold on any part of his body," Usagi warned them. "The infection will spread to you."

Leo lifted his katana and sliced through the tendril. A deep reverberation issued from the depths of the pit, a concussion of sound that shook the ground beneath their feet.

The red ooze slid back into the pit. However, the tip of the tendril was still attached to its prey and it crawled further up Mikey’s leg, curling around his calf.

“How do we get that off of him?” Don asked as he joined them.

“It needs a host to feed on. We could offer it someone else, but I do not know that it will abandon one host to move to another,” Usagi said, turning his eyes to Leo.

“Open the cage, please,” Lav begged. “We can’t leave him in there.”

Raph reached for the top of the cage and started to tilt it on its side, careful not to allow Mikey’s shifting body to touch him. Don braced an edge as it came down, and then Leo cut through the lock.

The door fell open and Mikey rolled out onto the ground. He was semi-conscious; shivering and moaning; in obvious pain.

Before they realized her intent, Lavinia threw herself onto the ground next to Mikey and wrapped her arms around him.

“Lav, no!” Raph shouted and reached for her. Usagi grabbed his arm, pulling him back quickly.

The Daravere suddenly began to glow a deep red and a thin tendril shot towards her. Lav pressed her hand to Mikey’s chest and the green glow of her power suffused both their upper bodies in a rich glow. When the tendril came in contact with her energy, it jerked back as though burned.

Lav pushed harder, sending her energy further into Mikey’s body. When it reached the leg the Daravere was attached to, the ooze squeezed tighter and Mikey cried out.

Backing off, Lav held her energy just at the edge of the portion on Mikey’s body that the Daravere had claimed. Lavinia could not force it off of Mikey, but neither could the ooze advance. They were at a stalemate.

Leo looked at Usagi. “She should be able to hold it long enough for us to find a more attractive substitute. Have you any suggestions?”

Usagi surveyed the cave. The only villagers still present were those that had been killed.

“We shall have to go out and capture someone. I must tell you Leonardo-san, offering another living being to this entity weighs heavily on my mind.”

“It does mine as well,” Leonard said. “If we don’t find a substitute, the creature will devour both Mikey and Lav. I can set my conscious aside to save their lives.”

“Let’s go,” Raph growled.

Leo turned to Don. “Stay with Lav and Mikey; if anything happens, ring that bell. It’s
obviously loud enough to be heard out in the village.”

Don nodded, swinging his bo staff into place on his back.

“My maybe we can find one of those priests ta feed ta this thing,” Raph suggested.

“Lavinia, can you hold on?” Leo asked, squatting near her.

Lav turned her head to look at him. “Yes. Just . . . hurry.”

For a moment more he studied her face. He could already see the stress and exhaustion draining her energy.

Standing, he beckoned Usagi and Raph. “Let’s go.”

Racing for the cave entrance, Usagi saw the determined look on his friend’s face and asked, “You are worried. Her power has limits?”

Glancing at Usagi from the corner of his eye, Leo said, “Yes, if she uses too much too fast.”

He offered no further explanation and Usagi did not ask again.

At first glance the village appeared to be deserted. The three stopped in the center courtyard, looking around and then back at each other.

Then Leo heard a very faint, muffled sound from one of the huts and leaped towards it. Flinging open the bamboo door he burst inside with his swords drawn.

A mother sat huddled in a dark corner, two small children crushed to her breast. Her eyes were wide with fear.

Raph appeared behind Leo, who turned quickly when he felt his brother’s presence.

Shaking his head, Leo said, “No.”

Raph saw the occupants as Leo stepped out of the hut. There was no way, not even to save Mikey and Lav, that they would take children or their mother.

When he came back out, he saw Usagi and Leo were searching other huts. All they found were either the very old or children with their mothers. The men were all in hiding.

“What the fuck kind of people are these?” Raph growled as Leo and Usagi met him back in the courtyard. “What kind of man runs off and leaves the helpless behind?”

“I don’t know, Raph,” Leo told him, eyes narrowed. His hands were gripping his katanas too tightly and he willed himself to relax.

“They all disappeared too quickly,” Usagi said. “Their escape must be part of a preordained plan.”

Raph’s head came up. “Like something religious, huh? Man doesn’t leave his kids behind for anything except maybe his religion. Those priests got the shell out of that cave pretty damn fast when they saw we were too tough for the guards.”

Leo looked at his brother, catching Raph’s train of thought. “Those priests are the only
ones with the power to keep the Daravere in that pit.”

“Stands to reason they wouldn’t want anything ta happen ta those priests.” Raph said.

Usagi turned back to look at the cave. “The priests escaped through an exit at the back of the chamber where the Daravere is kept. Perhaps there is a way through the maze of rocks to a place of safety.”

Leo was already moving. “Let’s find it before they have a chance to get much farther.”

He didn’t add that time was running out for them, nor did he need to. Usagi could feel the tension rolling off of Leo; his friend’s urgency driving him.

“She’ll hold on Leo. She’ll find a way,” Raph said, trying to reassure himself as much as his brother.

Usagi found the small, easily missed path through the rocks almost five minutes into their search for it. He called to his companions softly, unsure of how far away their quarry might be. When he had their attention, he sprinted down the path.

The two ninjas followed as silently as their lifetime of training had taught them to be. Not even the faintest whisper of sound could be heard.

The path took them around the cave to the back of the large swell of rock and earth. A steep drop-off was to their right as they continued to follow the trail, occasionally seeing an errant footprint or dislodged stone that told them they were on the right track.

Usagi was out in front when he turned a bend and came upon two guards, both armed. Just beyond them was a long line of guards and villagers, escorting the seven priests.

One of the priests was just behind the two guards and his eyes went wide as he saw the pursuers. With a shrill cry, he began to run.

The guards leaped at the ronin, swinging their heavy clubs at his head. Usagi’s katana was out, catching a club on its edge. He felt someone next to him and saw Raphael barrel into the other guard, coming in under the swinging club.

“Mind the edge!” Usagi shouted at the Turtle as he struggled against his adversary on the narrow trail.

Leo looked up at the steep rocks on his left. The priest was getting away and the path was blocked by the fight with the guards. Sheathing his katanas, he grabbed the nearest solid outcropping and began to climb as quickly as he dared.

The fleeing priest heard a sound from overhead and looked up. Running along the dangerous ledge above him was one of the pursuers, jumping and leaping as rocks were dislodged by his feet.

Panicked, the priest began to run faster, calling for help to the guards who were further along the trail in front of him. Before anyone could come to his aid, Leo dove at him.

The priest sprawled face first into the rocky path with Leo riding his back to the ground. The momentum rolled Leo dangerously close to the edge of the path and he scrambled for a hand hold to keep from plummeting over the side of the embankment.
“Leo!” Suddenly Raph was there; his hand snatching at Leo’s outstretched one.

Their hands clapped together and Raph yanked Leo to safety. When they turned, they saw that Usagi was keeping the priest pinned to the ground, holding a katana to the captive’s throat.

“Let me go!” the priest shouted at them, eyes wild.

Raph strode over and grabbed the captive by the front of his robes, hauling him to his feet without ceremony.

“Tell us how to get that demon off our brother,” Raph snarled in his face.

“It is impossible,” the priest shrilled. “The Daravere will never relinquish its hold once it has captured its food.”

Leo bent down to retrieve the priest’s staff. The small metal ball on the end was intact; undamaged by its fall to the ground.

“Use this.” Leo held it up for the priest to see. “You use it to keep that thing in the pit; you can use it to drive the creature away from our brother.”

The priest’s eyes rolled, the whites showing brightly. “I’m not strong enough! It takes a full quadrant to hold the Daravere at bay.”

Raph turned, yanking the priest along with him. “You’ll just have to make do, now won’t ya’? All ya’ need to drive off is a little piece of that thing.”

Ignoring the priest’s further spluttered protests, the three travelers made their way back down the trail, stepping over the bodies of the guards. Seeing the bloodied remains shut the priest’s mouth better than threats had done.

They were running as they left the path and approached the cave entrance, dragging the priest with them, bruising and scraping his toes when he didn’t lift them quickly enough.

The first thing Leo saw when they entered the sacrificial chamber was Don’s anxious face.

“Donny…” Leo breathed out the frenzied question as he rushed towards the trio.

“Hurry,” Don answered, glancing down at Lav and Mikey.

Leo followed his gaze. Lav’s head was resting on Mikey’s plastron, her face turned toward the Daravere. She was breathing heavily, her brow damp from exertion.

The Daravere rolled on itself, periodically testing the edge of her green shield. Mikey’s foot and calf had started to change color, the sea green of his skin fading slightly where the Daravere held him.

Mikey’s head twisted and turned, moaning as pain began to reach past Lavinia’s ability to numb. She was using all the power she had left to keep the Daravere from advancing; unable now to mute her lover’s suffering.

Raph jerked the priest towards them and Leo shoved the staff into his hand.

“Drive it off,” Leo ordered through gritted teeth.

The priest was blinking rapidly, his chest heaving as he stared at the tendril attached to
Michelangelo’s leg. He pointed the metal ball on his staff at the Daravere and sang a piece of the chant they’d all heard earlier.

A small electrical bolt shot from the ball, crackled in the air and reached out to flick the red ooze. A piece of the Daravere jerked upwards and struck at the priests staff, its movement as fast as a cobra’s.

Jumping back, the priest shrieked and pulled his staff up and away from the creature.

“It is too strong,” the priest practically whispered. “It is too strong!” he repeated with a shrill wail.

Raph grasped the skin at the base of the priests head and yanked it backwards.

“Do it again. Get closer if ya’ have ta,” Raph snarled at him.

“I... I... I can’t g... get that c... close,” the priest stuttered. “It will attack me!”

The tip of Raph’s sai was suddenly at his throat. Digging the blunt tip into the skin hard enough produced the tiniest droplet of blood.

“Ya’ got a better chance with the Daravere than me,” Raph told him. “Ya’ get it off my brother, I’ll let ya’ live.”

The implication was very clear as the priest attempted to swallow past the metal point digging painfully into his throat. Lifting the staff once more, the priest watched Raph’s burning eyes as the Turtle slowly released him and backed away.

Summoning all the courage he could muster, the priest repeated the chant, pointing the staff at the Daravere and stepping towards it. The flash of electricity was much larger than the last; the priests fear of Raph lending energy to his magic.

A high pitched screech came from inside the pulsing red ooze, and its tipped lurched skyward, releasing Mikey’s calf. It started to move towards the priest and another bolt of electricity shot from the staff, scalding the creature.

The Daravere loosened its curl around Mikey’s ankle and started to slide away from the Turtle. Emboldened, the priest moved towards it, shooting another bolt into its glittering depth.

The creature was now pulling away from its prey, crawling inexorably towards the pit, where the majority of its body surged and twisted. The priest continued to shoot at it, walking closer as he saw the ooze begin to drip over the side and back into captivity.

A feeling of power swelled the priest’s chest and for a small second, he lost his focus.

Approaching too rapidly, his foot came down on a rock and he stumbled. The split second lack of concentration pulled his staff away from the Daravere and it shot out at him, catching his extended arm.

Screaming in agony, the priest beat at the tendril as it pulled him towards the pit.

“Use your staff!” Leo yelled at him, but the priest was mindless in his terror.

Raph started towards him, hand outstretched, but Leo jumped forward and caught his brother’s arm.
In the blink of an eye, the priest disappeared over the lip of the pit, his screams fading to nothing as he fell into the main body of the Daravere.

Complete silence enveloped the cavern. Leo let go of Raph after giving his arm a reassuring squeeze. Raph glanced at him and saw the guilt mirrored in his older brother’s eyes.

“Nothin’ we could do,” Raph said in a low voice.

“Guys,” Don called.

Leo turned and walked over to Mikey and Lav, Raphael on his heels. Lav’s head was up, although she was laboring at the effort. Extending an arm, she reached to touch Mikey’s injured leg.

Her power spread a light green glow over his leg, expanding until it reached all the way to his toes. His small whimpering cries of pain tapered off as the color returned to his skin.

Then the glow faded and Lav turned to look into Mikey’s face. His eyes flickered partway open, the blue shining brightly enough for everyone to see.

“Hey babe,” he said in a low whisper.

“Rest,” she told him, pressing her mouth to his.

When she lifted her head, his eyes slid shut. With a small smile, Lavinia collapsed on his chest.

The ground seemed to tremble suddenly and Usagi looked towards the pit.

“We must leave immediately. The creature will not be satisfied with that small meal. With no one here to contain it, it will flow out of that pit and envelope the village,” Usagi said.

Another tremor emphasized his words, as did the sudden sound of shrieks and calls from outside the cave. The remaining villagers were fleeing.

Don raced across the cavern to where their gear had been tossed in a pile against a wall. Strapping his backpack on and draping his bag over his shoulder, he grabbed the rest of their supplies and bolted back to where the others waited.

“I’ll carry Lav,” he said, squatting to scoop her into his arms.

Raph pulled his gear onto his back, and then strapped Mikey’s on as well.

“I’ve got Mikey,” he told them, draping his little brother over one shoulder. “You two sword guys keep your arms free until we get the shell off of this mountain.”

Leo snatched up his own and Lav’s gear while Usagi slipped his pack over his shoulders. The ground shook again, tumbling small rocks from the wall and sending the travelers running from the cave.

“Which way?” Leo called to Usagi as they cleared the entrance.

“Not back the way we came,” Usagi shouted, jumping back as villagers barreled past him. “I believe if we follow the trail the priests took, it will deliver us safely to the other side of this mountain.”
The ground beneath their feet seemed to walk from under them. Several larger huts collapsed, sending village hold outs screaming.

“Hell, he’s got my vote,” Raph yelled and turned towards the path they’d discovered earlier.

When they reached the section of the trail that started to wind down the mountain, Leo called to Don, who was directly behind him, “Watch your step, Donatello. The path is narrow here and the drop is unforgiving.”

Don glanced to his right and blinked. Tightening his grip on the slack women in his arms, he trailed along behind his big brother, keeping his eyes on Leo’s carapace as they moved.

When they reached the dead guards, Usagi, who was leading, unceremoniously shoved the bodies over the edge. Don pressed Lav’s face against his plastron, even though she was unconscious and could see nothing.

Another hard tremor shook the mountain side, sending rocks tumbling down around them.

“Fuck,” Raph cursed, dodging back as a large boulder swept past him and bounced off the trails edge to plummet over the side.

“Move faster,” Leo ordered, glancing back at his brothers before leaping after Usagi.

Don started to jog down the path, concentrating on his footing as he went. He could hear Raph directly behind him.

“There has to be a way off the mountain,” Leo called to Usagi, “otherwise they wouldn’t have taken this path.”

“They knew that if the Daravere escaped, it would destroy the mountain top,” Don yelled to them. “They would have kept the trail off of here cleared. It should be visible.”

“Here!” Usagi shouted.

Another wider trail pushed through rock as it wound downward; in places steps had been carved into stone to make the descent easier. Usagi ran ahead, his blade out in case they came across any of the villagers, but no one else was on the trail.

A booming crash turned Leo’s head. As he looked back over his shoulder, he saw an entire rock wall collapse onto the path they’d just left. Boulders the size of cars rolled down out of sight, but lighter weight stones bounced against each other and became airborne.

Halfway down Leo saw that the trail they followed took a sharp turn to the south, but another, more faint path continued in a northerly direction.

Usagi had run past it but Leo’s call stopped him. Pointing, Leo said, “I think this is the trail you were told about.”

“Yes,” Usagi agreed. “We should follow that one.”

“Pick one fast,” Raph said, catching up to the group. “That rock slide is gonna bury both of these.”

Leo signaled Usagi to take the lead again and stood aside as Don and Raph rushed after
him. With a quick glance up towards the moving line of tumbling rock, Leo brought up the rear.

Within seconds they could see a wide flat field below them. Small outcroppings of rock stuck up from the ground, but they had definitely reached the base of the mountain.

The sun was starting to set as they dashed off of the path just as the rolling line of rock changed the landscape on that side of the mountain. None of them stopped moving until they were safely out of the fall zone.
Hunter's Interlude

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 5,641
Chapter pairing: Raph/Lav, Don/Raph, Leo/Lav/Mikey, Leo/Lav, Raph/Lav/Mikey
Chapter Rating: NC-17 Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, threesome, het sex, Tcest, language
Chapter Summary: Mikey and Lav recover from their ordeal and Usagi comes to understand some things about Leo. Raph daydreams about their first trip to the farmhouse and what happened to make them leave earlier than planned.

Chapter Notes

Preview image of Lavinia created by the talented LilithFullMoon from DeviantArt.
Raph heard a low sigh and left the fire to squat near Lavinia. He watched as her eyes slowly fluttered open, relieved to see the brilliant green color that indicated she was all right.

Lav turned her head when she felt his presence and blinked up at him.

Licking her lips, Lav asked in a slightly raspy voice, “Mikey?”

“He’s okay, Lav.” Raph leaned over and kissed her softly. “He went with Usagi to get some fruit that’s supposed to be edible. Ya’ know Mikey; if he’s hungry then he’s okay.”

“Don and Leo?” she asked, needing the reassurance of a roll call.

Raph smiled his understanding. “They ain’t too far. They decided to scout around a little and do some strategizing. I told ’em all to do whatever they needed to ‘cause I was gonna stay here and watch my baby sleep.”

This time Lav smiled and shifted under her blanket to lift her hand so that she could reach out to him. Raph took her hand, raising the edge of the blanket with his free one and turning to lie down next to her.

“Who undressed me?” Lav asked, becoming aware that she was naked under the blanket.

“Me and Don,” Raph admitted. “There are some hot springs all around us and he suggested we wash your stuff. Your clothes were pretty dirty after ya’ went crawling on the ground next to Mikey.”

“Hot springs sound nice,” Lav said.

“We’ll go soak in one when ya’ get more energy,” Raph said.

“And have something to eat?” Lav asked hopefully.

Raph laughed, resting their entwined hands on her stomach as he leaned over to kiss her neck and then her ear.

“Ya’ saved Mikey’s life,” Raph whispered, “just like ya’ saved mine before.”

Lav turned her head enough so that she could look into his eyes.

“You’ve saved mine a few times,” Lav replied. “It’s only fair I return the favor.”

When she squeezed his hand, Raph took the opportunity to kiss her mouth. He knew she was tired and he only meant to kiss her lightly, but her lips responded to his by opening and offering him more.

Pulling away from the kiss, Raph touched his forehead to Lav’s. “I was scared, Lav. I thought I was gonna lose both of ya’ this time,” he told her, his gold eyes reflecting the pain of that memory.

“Never,” Lav promised, reaching up with her free hand to cup his cheek. “I’ll never do that to you.”

“Good,” he said with a small smile, “’cause that would really piss me off.”

Lav’s soft giggle fed his soul. “I like it better when you aren’t angry with me.”
The upward curl of Lav’s full lips drew him again and Raph gently bit at them before surrendering to their seductive call. Her tongue met his and Lav’s moan told him she welcomed the intimacy.

She rolled onto her hip as their mouths fed each other. Her hand slipped out of his so that she could place her palm against his plastron and trace over the scutes until she touched flesh.

Raph began pressing more insistently against her, his hand moving beneath the blanket to caress her warm skin. The feeling of her body and her touch was adding to the growing fire in Raph’s belly.

“Lav, I need ta . . . ta . . . .” his voice tapered off into a husky rasp, Raph’s eyes searching hers for understanding.

Lav’s fingertips danced lightly across his exposed side, sending a spark shooting into his groin.

“To give me your energy?” Lav teased in a sultry tone as she smiled at him.

“Yeah,” Raph admitted, leaning towards her mouth. “I need ta give ya’ a lot of it.”

Raph’s hand drifted across Lav’s stomach and down between her legs. His fingers stroked through the silky hair covering her vulva and then dipped deeper into the soft folds of skin.

Lav’s moan of pleasure encouraged his exploration as their tongues continued to meet in a needful caress. Raph shifted nearer and she rolled onto her back, her widening thighs urging Raph’s cock to leave the protection of its hidden pouch.

Raph’s hard shaft pressed against Lavinia’s leg and she rubbed against it, silently asking him to move closer still. Lav knew Raph needed this intimate contact as assurance that she was whole and unharmed, and she gladly offered him all that he required.

Pressing a knee into the ground, Raph lifted the other leg over one of Lavinia’s and then followed with the second. The blanket shifted to one side and he reached back to grab it, pulling it over his carapace while still plying her mouth with his hungry kiss.

Lavinia pressed her heels into the back of his muscular thighs when she felt his cock at her entrance and then tilted her pelvis towards him. Raph could feel the heat emanating from Lav’s core as it warmed the head of his dick. It almost seemed as if his manhood was straining towards her of its own accord, desperate for the friction of her tight interior.

A churr vibrated the pair as Raph slowly pushed inside Lav’s vagina. A delicious snug feeling quickly enveloped his shaft, stimulating the head of his penis as he continued to enter her.

Drawing back from Lavinia’s mouth, Raph stared into her eyes for a long moment, knowing that she could read his feelings from his own golden orbs. A small smile lifted the corners of her mouth as Raph began to thrust.

Lifting her arms to his neck, Lavinia held onto him as he plunged into her. Her tight grip kept his face close to hers so that their eyes were locked together. Completely focused on his emotions, Lav began lifting her hips to meet each of Raph’s downward movements.

“This is forever, ain’t it, babe?” Raph asked between panting breaths.

“Yes Raph, forever,” Lav answered him, her breathing ragged as his thick cock stroked her
insides and slid across her clitoris.

“No leaving me,” Raph insisted. “I need ya’; I need ta be inside ya’. I love how it f . . . feels ta fuck ya’. I’m gonna fuck ya’ forever.”

“Please,” Lav begged, feeling the tight swirling pressure begin to build in her pelvis. “Harder Raph-ael, fuck me . . . harder.”

A wide grin stretched his mouth as he began to drive viciously into her body. Lav’s arms slid from their locked position and her hands gripped the thick muscle on either side of Raph’s neck, her nails digging in as he leaned back to push into her with full body thrusts.

“Ahh, ahh, Raphael!” Lavinia cried out as her orgasm hit, shaking her body with its intensity.

As her pussy clamped down around his shaft, Raph gave in to his own overwhelmed sensations and climaxed, his wordless shout vibrating the air around them. Pressed into her as far as he could go, Raph rode out his orgasm, working to control his breathing because he knew in a few minutes he would need the oxygen.

Barely emptied, the surge of Lavinia’s power brought his cock to life once more. Engorged and needy, Raph began to thrust his length into Lavinia’s willing body. Her panting moans, the caress of her nails, and the sight of her perfect breasts bouncing under him brought Raph to the edge quickly and then he once more spilled over, his second orgasm no less strong than the first.

Head down, Raph slowly lowered the weight of his body onto his forearms. Embedded inside Lavinia, Raph’s cock twitched out the final dregs of ejaculate as the pair clung to each other. Finally, Lav relaxed her grip on his neck, playing her fingertips across the gouges she’d left so that they would heal.

When he felt the tingle of her power against his skin, he gave her a quizzical look. Normally, he preferred to wear the scratches she left behind as a reminder of their coupling.

“I’d rather not give our enemies that kind of information about us should they manage to get a glimpse of you,” Lav said softly.

Raph chuckled. “Leo’s rubbing off on ya’.”

“All of you are,” she said smugly. “You’re teaching me to be very stubborn.”

He leaned down to nip at her jaw. “Ya’ were already stubborn when we met. Don’t try ta lay that one on my doorstep.”

Her gentle laughter made him smile and he pressed a deep kiss to her mouth. Their bodies remained locked together, Lav’s arms twined around Raph’s neck once more.

“Ahem!”

Startled, the pair broke their kiss and turned towards the owner of that voice. Mikey stood looking down at them, his grin wide and knowing.

“Let me guess; Raph’s taking your temperature?” Mikey asked teasingly.

Lav’s eyes widened as she tried to locate Usagi. She was blushing furiously and Raph caught her chin in his hand so he could turn her eyes back up to his.
“The blanket’s covering us babe,” he told her gently.

Mikey sat on the ground next to them and laughed. “It’s still pretty obvious what you guys were doing. Don’t worry; we heard the two of you talking and Usagi went to join Don and Leo before he got far enough over here to see you.”

“That’s embarrassing,” Lav murmured.

“No it ain’t,” Raph said firmly. “That ronin is full grown and knows damn well that ya’ belong ta us.”

“Belong?” Lav asked, a half smile lighting her features.

“Ya’ know what I mean,” Raph said. “We belong together, all of us.”

“That doesn’t mean we have to give him a show,” Mikey said.

“That don’t mean I’ve gotta hide anything either,” Raph snapped.

Lav pressed a hand to his face and stroked it gently. “Usagi has behaved honorably with us, Raphael. He has been a very good friend and I think he understands perfectly the type of relationship the five of us have. You’re right; I believe we make him more uncomfortable by trying to hide our natural affection for each other. But just as with Master Splinter, I don’t particularly want Usagi to witness us having sex.”

Raph turned his head and kissed her palm. “I see your point,” he said simply and got off of her, carefully covering her body with the blanket.

“You should have let me stay with Lav while you went looking for food,” Mikey said as Raph resumed his prone position next to Lav. “I was the one who almost got sucked dry by some tentacle thing. I need my rest.”

“Ya’ should be well rested by now,” Raph retorted. “I carried your heavy ass down off of that mountain; ya’ didn’t have ta do a thing but lay there.”

“I was unconscious,” Mikey protested.

“What have ya’ been eating anyway?” Raph asked, ribbing his brother mercilessly.

“You’re just jealous of my muscles,” Mikey told him. Flexing an arm, he leaned down to kiss his own bicep. “These babies are solid.”

Lav watched their byplay with tender amusement. Things always seemed more normal when Raph and Mikey were sniping at each other.

Don’s voice interrupted them. “I’m going to assume that you two are so loud because Lav’s awake.”

“Donny,” Lav murmured, tilting her head back so that she could see him.

“Oh she’s awake all right,” Mikey said. “Raph woke her up so he could give her something.”

A quick jab to his ribs from Raph bent Mikey over, but didn’t stop his laughter.

Don kneeled next to them and Leo crossed behind Mikey so he could squat near Lavinia’s
legs. When she glanced down at him, Leo smiled and settled a hand on the blanket covering her knee.

“How do you feel?” Leo asked.

“ Wonderful,” Lav said honestly. “I wouldn’t mind a bath and some food though.”

“I promised her some time in one of those hot springs,” Raph said.

“Now that’s an idea I can get behind,” Mikey announced. “A nice soak will really build up the old appetite.”

“Like ya’ need any help in that department,” Raph told him.

“You guys go ahead,” Leo said as he stood up. “I’ll keep an eye out while you bathe.”

“No Leo, you go with them,” Don said, catching Leo’s wrist as he started to walk past. “You need a break. I can stand guard.”

Before Leo could argue the point, Usagi spoke up from his spot near the fire. “All of you should go together and enjoy a hot bath; I will keep watch. These springs are unique and you should experience them as a family.”

Leo caught his eye and silent understanding flashed between them. The unspoken communication was not lost on Raph and he slowly sat up, although he said nothing.

“Thank you my friend,” Leo said. “I think that would be good for us.”

As Raph got to his feet, Leo held his hand down to Lav and helped her to stand. She wrapped the blanket around herself and quickly found her backpack. As she pulled things from it, Mikey darted over and snatched up the orange scarf he’d gotten for her.

Clasping a bar of unscented soap in her hand, Lav turned to find Mikey holding the scarf open.

“Here, use this,” Mikey said. “That way you won’t get the blanket wet.”

Blocking her from Usagi’s view, Mikey placed the large scarf over her shoulders as she shed the blanket. The sheer material came to mid-thigh once she’d twisted it around herself; offering cloudy images of Lav’s nude form as she walked towards the larger of several hot springs that were in the immediate area.

Usagi watched his five travelling companions strip themselves of their gear, averting his eyes when Lavinia removed her covering. Adding a few more sticks to the fire, he moved away from it to take up a post in deep shadows, staying far enough from the flames so that they would not interfere with his night vision.

Surveying the area, Usagi’s eyes fell on his friends as they bathed in the springs. Lavinia was standing with her back to Leonardo as he created lather from the bar of soap and then began to run his hands through her hair. The woman’s eyes were closed and even at a distance Usagi could see the look of bliss upon her face.

Michelangelo swam close to the pair and pressed against Lavinia, his mouth seeking hers as Leonardo continued to wash her hair. Raphael was relaxed against an embankment, his eyes hooded as he watched the three of them and then he was joined by Donatello, who slid into place
between Raphael’s legs. The larger Turtle leaned forward to accept the kiss that his brother offered to him as Donatello began to stroke the emerald green thighs.

Turning his head, Usagi moved quickly so that he was out of sight and hearing range of the pool. It was obvious that the family was used to this type of group intimacy. Leonardo had chosen his brothers over Usagi three years ago, but at the time the future of that choice remained unclear. Tonight Usagi received his final confirmation of the fact that Leonardo’s love was entirely given to his family alone, in every way possible.

A good while later, Usagi returned to the campsite to check on their fire and found that the Hamato clan had finished bathing. As he approached, he saw that Leonardo was sitting with his legs outstretched and that Lavinia was kneeling between them, facing away from him so that he could comb her hair.

Usagi froze in place as he watched the sensual ritual unfold. Lavinia’s orange scarf was pooled around her waist, her upper half completely bare. Leonardo slowly slid the comb through the wet strands of her long hair, the fingers of his free hand playing with the damp curls that sprang up beneath them.

Lavinia sensed Usagi’s presence first and her eyes turned in his direction, but other than that she did not move. Their gazes met and locked, and in hers Usagi saw an acknowledgement of her place in Leonardo’s life.

In that moment, Leonardo realized that Usagi had rejoined them. Looking at his friend, Leonardo reached for the scarf and slowly lifted it onto Lavinia’s shoulders. The look in Leonardo’s eyes was one Usagi had never seen before; at once possessive and hungry, it was fierce with pride of ownership.

The short tableau gave Usagi a small epiphany. Usagi loved Leonardo for his strength, his courage, and the qualities that made him a leader. Those very qualities were the reason why they could never be together. To an alpha male such as Leonardo, his natural dominance drove his choice of lover as much as anything else. In a relationship with Usagi, they would have either been equals, or Usagi as the elder of the pair would have expected to assume the ascendant role.

Leonardo’s family was subordinate to him, even Raphael. Usagi knew that there were times when Raphael, himself a fiercely alpha male, took control of their coupling. He had heard them the night before their encounter with the spiders and had smelled the musk of sex coming off their bodies when they’d returned from the woods.

The fact remained that though others might assume the dominant role during sex, clan leadership was still Leonardo’s position in the family and that was clearly understood by all of them.

With a sigh, Usagi moved into the camp. He saw that the other three brothers were comfortably sprawled on their bedrolls, balancing steaming bowls of something thick and aromatic against their chests.

“Just in time for dinner,” Mikey said brightly, pointing his spoon towards the pot sitting at the edge of the fire.

“I would prefer to bathe first, thank you,” Usagi said politely. “The dirt against my skin has grown uncomfortable and I could not enjoy my meal.”

Don finished his food and stood up. “I’ve got the next watch; I really need to stretch my
As he strode into the darkness, Leo leaned forward to kiss Lav’s neck and then got up. Usagi left them as Leo began to fill bowls for himself and Lavinia.

Usagi took his time soaking in the hot water, letting it play through his fur and cleanse it thoroughly. At the beginning of this hunt he’d had a secret hope that perhaps Leonardo might have a change of heart and choose to remain with him once Hebi was destroyed. That hope was gone now and though he hadn’t meant to become so invested in that desire, its loss was still painful.

After Leo had eaten, he left to scout their perimeter and then to spend some time with Don. Talking things through with Donatello was Leo’s way of putting any lingering anxieties to rest and since the purple banded Turtle did much the same thing for the other three family members, they understood.

While Lavinia put on some dry clothes, Raph adjusted their bedrolls so that they were close to each other. Mikey wandered up to him, dragging his own bedroll as Usagi returned from his bath.

“That fire doesn’t seem to be giving off all that much heat,” Mikey announced with a sheepish look.

Raph’s mouth twisted into a cocky grin as he helped his brother spread his bedding out. Lavinia smiled happily when she saw the sleeping arrangement, immediately crawling onto her bedroll and holding her hands out to the two Turtles.

Usagi watched them slide under their blankets; all three snugly pressed against each other. Mikey wandered up to him, dragging his own bedroll as Usagi returned from his bath.

“Are you sure you want me here tonight?” she asked.

“Oh yeah, you’ll keep me warm,” Raph said, wrapping his arms around her.

Raph was most content when he could sleep with Lav snuggled in his arms. He didn’t have to worry about her if he knew exactly where she was. He felt that this was his job; protecting her gave him purpose.

Her lying on top of him was also a nice prelude to other things. He wiggled a little, adjusting her so he could feel more of her warm skin against his body. They’d already bonded enough for this evening, but he couldn’t stop his mind from remembering things that warmed him further.

Like that time at the farmhouse. The two of them in this exact position had led to other types of physical interactions, some of which had included his brothers. One of those encounters
had involved an audience, quite unbeknownst to them. That had in turn led to them having to leave the farmhouse earlier than they had planned.

“Hey, quit hogging the heater.” The sleepy voice of his kid brother interrupted Raph’s thoughts.

Raph turned his head and saw Mikey rolling closer to them. Putting an arm out, he curled it around Mike’s shoulders and pulled his little brother against him. Having the two of them near him went a long way towards easing the memory of almost losing the pair.

“Love ya’,” Raph said gruffly, planting a kiss on the top of Mikey’s head.

Amend that, Raph thought as Mikey fell asleep next to him. The beginning of the end of what was supposed to be a month at Casey’s farm had begun a couple of days earlier, with something as mundane as a supply run.

It had started out innocuously enough. Lavinia announced that she needed to make a trip to the market. They were out of several perishable items, including oranges for Mikey’s juice.

Mikey quickly offered to drive the van and Raph said he’d ride along. Don was leaned comfortably against a big tree in the yard, head buried in a book, and Leo was in the woods doing who knew what.

Raph stuck his head out of the van window and told Don where they were going as they sped past. Don lifted a hand to them without looking up.

The late afternoon sun was just going down over the horizon, but it was still light enough so that Mikey needed the big hat he had pulled down over his head and an oversized shirt with the collar pulled up to hide his upper body.

As an added precaution, he parked down the street from the market, which was the busiest establishment on the sleepy little town’s main thoroughfare.

Lavinia jumped down from the passenger seat and leaned in to announce, “I’ll be back in a few minutes,” before closing the door.

They watched her dart across the street and walk down the sidewalk to the market. Raph’s eyes were glued to her as she moved; he wondered idly if he’d ever get used to how beautiful she was. Or ever stop wondering what she could possibly see in four mutated turtles, considering how she could have her pick of men.

Mikey was humming along with something on the radio. Raph was pretty sure his youngest brother never experienced the same kind of doubts that floated through Raph’s head from time to time. Mikey told anyone who’d listen that he was a great catch and Raph thought his brother probably believed it himself.

It was about fifteen minutes later when Lav strolled out of the market carrying several large bags. She was also being trailed by two men who were obviously much too interested in her.

“Mikey, roll down the window, I need ta’ hear what’s going on over there,” Raph said, leaning into the front seat.

Mikey looked in the side view mirror and saw what it was that had caught Raph’s eye. His finger quickly found the window control and he lowered the glass, reaching to turn the radio off so they could both hear.
“Why don’t you let us help you with those heavy bags little lady? It’s not right for someone as pretty as you are to have to lug stuff around,” one of the men was telling Lav.

“I’m used to it, thank you though,” Lav said dismissively without turning her head.

“Now that’s a damn shame,” said the other man. “A woman like you should have people doing things for her so you can enjoy yourself. Why don’t you dump those bags and let me and my buddy here show you a good time?”

“You’re very thoughtful, but my boyfriend is waiting on me,” Lav told them.

One of the men jumped out in front of her and she was forced to stop. Raph could tell from the expression on her face that she debated on dropping her groceries in order to physically move the man, but apparently she thought better of it.

“What kind of boyfriend lets a pretty gal carry heavy bags and doesn’t help? Maybe you should get rid of the loser and come hang out with us,” the man suggested.

Lavinia eyed the man for a moment and then a slow smile spread over her face.

“I like that idea. You’ll have to give me the opportunity to get him out of here. Tell me where I can meet you in a couple of hours,” she said in a seductive voice.

The men exchanged excited glances before the one in front of her said, “There’s a little bar about a half mile from here called Joe’s Tavern. We’ll wait for you there.”

“That sounds like fun. You had better run along now before he sees me talking to you and spoils my night,” Lav told them.

Raph could hear them snicker as they trotted off. Lav’s head turned to watch them leave, the expression on her face one of amused tolerance.

When she reached the van, Raph slid the side door open and took the grocery bags from her. She climbed inside, shutting the door after her, and Raph tugged her down onto the seat next to him.

“I guess you heard that?” she asked as Mikey pulled away from the curb.

Raph snorted. “Yeah, I heard. That a good idea, leading them on?”

Lav shrugged. “It got rid of them fast didn’t it? I probably won’t ever see them again anyway. If I need to make another supply run, I’ll do it in the early morning. I doubt either of those men roll out of bed before noon.”

Lavinia shifted and pulled Raph’s thoughts back to the present. One of her legs came up and she wrapped it around Raph’s thigh. Her foot now rested against Mikey’s leg and he moaned in his sleep.

When she slept on top of Raph they were usually in his hammock. Even in sleep she knew not to “rock the boat”. Lovemaking in his hammock took into account the swinging nature of his bed and greatly intensified their coupling.

Raph decided having her either under him or on top of him was tied for his favorite position. It really all came down to the circumstances. His mind once more took him back to that time at the farmhouse.
The night after Lav’s encounter with the men from town, Raph was lying on the couch at Casey’s farmhouse when Lavinia came in to grab some cups that had been left sitting on the fireplace mantle.

Raph had been feeling a little sleepy. The days practice and competitions had been non-stop and then he’d overeaten at dinner because it was one of his favorite meals. The windows were open to let in a nice fresh breeze and he was comfortable against the couch cushions.

In fact, he would probably have just fallen asleep there for the night if Lav hadn’t walked past him wearing a bright red negligee.

He blinked and then his fingers curled.

“Yo, Lav,” he called. “Did Don give ya’ that outfit?”

Lav looked down at herself and then at Raph. “Yes.”

“He’s spoiling ya’,” Raph said with a smirk.

“Do you really think so?” she asked.

“Shell yeah, but that’s okay ‘cause when he gives ya’ stuff like that he’s spoiling us too,” Raph told her.

Setting the cups back down, Lav swarmed over Raph, flattening her body against his plastron as she said, “Oh Raph, sometimes you say the sweetest things.”

Raph grinned. “Don’t go telling anybody.”

Lavinia laughed. “I won’t tough guy. I can keep a secret, but it’s going to cost you.”

Squinting at her, he grinned lustfully and said, “Tell me your price.”

Lavinia pressed a kiss to his chin. “Just stay where you are,” she instructed.

Slithering down his body, she rubbed her scantily clad breasts against his plastron, her green eyes glinting up at him. Hands on Raph’s thighs, Lav stopped when her head reached Raph’s lower plastron and she began licking the crease where thigh met groin.

“Oh damn,” Raph muttered, pushing himself part way up on his elbows so he could watch her. Reaching a hand out, he grabbed a section of negligee and pulled at it.

“What ya’ got on under this thing?” he demanded.

Her lips barely left his skin as she answered, “You miss the point of lingerie Raph. There isn’t supposed to be anything under it.”

His next comment was stolen by a deep gasp as Lavinia sucked hard on the skin inside his right thigh. Raph’s legs fell a little further open and his hips bucked in surprise when her mouth closed over his slit.

“It didn’t stay hidden for long. With a grunt, Raph stopped struggling to contain his erection and dropped down.
Lav’s mouth covered it in a flash, sucking it down into her throat and winding her tongue around the thick rod. The hot, wet feel of her tongue flicking against the sensitive underside of his cock made it swell quickly, becoming massively hard in seconds.

Raph fell back and pressed the palm of his hand to his forehead, attempting to stay still as she’d told him to, but it was damn hard not to reach for her as she moved her mouth back up to the head of his dick and tickled it with the tip of her tongue.

His hips lifted to follow her mouth when she pulled away, but she was simply turning her head to suck at the base of his dick. The action sent a tingling sensation all the way up his spine and Raph churred in surprise.

Lavinia wrapped one of her warm hands around his cock and started to jack him while sucking softly at different spots along his shaft, her tongue darting out at intervals to lick at the head of his dick.

“Whoa, what a show!” Mikey exclaimed from the doorway.

His grin nearly split his face in two as he took in the scene of Lavinia lavishing her attentions on Raph’s cock. The red negligée she was wearing was riding up her back, no doubt pulled up by Raph, and she had absolutely nothing on underneath.

The sight of her round bottom moving while she worked his brother over was too much for Mikey, and he nearly leaped across the room towards the pair, his cock twisting and already begging for freedom.

Lav moaned as Mikey’s hands began to caress her bare ass and the sound vibrated her throat around Raph’s dick. Raph in turn grunted his pleasure.

Mikey’s cock was out and hard. Without preliminaries, he lined up with the moist opening between Lavinia’s legs and plunged his cock into her.

The combined sounds of their pleasure; low moans, whimpers, and churrs filled the room and drifted out through the open window. Outside that window were two sets of prying eyes, although the family didn’t know it at the time.

Raph’s mind was pulled away from the memory when forest green skin moved into his peripheral vision. His eyes were only partly opened and Raph tilted his head slightly to watch as Leo pulled his bedroll closer to Mikey.

Leo looked across his sleeping younger brother and offered Raph a contented smile as he curled his body around Mikey’s. Raph smiled back, shifting his shoulders and squeezing Lavinia lightly.

Sleeping like this reminded him of sleeping in the nest back at the farmhouse. The nest was a pile of mattresses pulled from various beds and tossed onto the floor in the loft. It was Leo’s idea that they would all sleep together in that manner but it was Mikey who named it. Raph loved sleeping in that nest, surrounded by his brothers and clan sister.

The second time they went to the farmhouse together, they’d had to pick up the mattresses, take them outdoors, and beat them clean. That first excursion to Casey’s farm had ended abruptly and there had been no time to put anything away properly. They had been forced to leave quickly and unexpectedly on that occasion, and all because of two horny townsmen turned peeping toms.

Allowing his eyes to finally drift closed, Raph fell asleep. His dreams however, continued
on the path that his memory had started him down.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 7,006  
Chapter pairing: Raph/Lav/Mikey/, Leo/Don  
Chapter Rating: NC-17  
Chapter Warnings/Kinks: adult concepts and situations, threesome, het sex, Tcest, language, violence, attempted rape, kidnapping  
Chapter Summary: A flashback to the clans first time together at the farmhouse and how their vacation came to be cut short.

The front room had felt a little cold when Mikey first walked in, but the sight of Raphael lying on the couch, his hands clenched as Lavinia sucked him off, had driven the chill right out of him. Joining them didn’t require conscious thought and now even with an open window letting in a breeze, Mikey was getting downright warm.

As Mikey drove into Lav, he reached around her right hip and his questing fingers found her clitoris. Stroking and squeezing the sensitive bud, Mikey had her quivering within minutes.

Lav’s purrs of excitement vibrated Raph’s cock while she enthusiastically ravished him. Mikey’s eyes were half-closed, words of encouragement falling like praise from his mouth.

It took only a little more stimulation to pull Raph into an orgasm. As soon as he began to spill into her mouth, Lav came.

Mikey shouted when Lav began to jerk against him, her vagina clamping around his shaft rhythmically. With a final hard thrust, he buried himself in her core and climaxed.

Still bent over Raph, Lav laid her head on his groin, her hot breath tickling his spent cock. Mikey slid out of her, looking across her back at Raph, who winked at him.

With a wide grin, Mikey stuck one of his fingers inside Lav and thoroughly wet it. She lifted her head when she felt his finger leave her, catching a glimpse of Raph’s face and understanding immediately what the brothers were planning.

As the energy echo from Lav’s orgasm hit both Raph and Mikey, the latter inserted his finger into Lav’s anus, pushing it in slowly. When it was completely inside of her, he set the palm of his other hand on her butt and pushed her up towards Raph.

Reaching for her, Raph pulled her up to where she was straddling his now erect penis. Lav reached between her legs, caught Raph’s cock in her hand, and guided it into her vagina.

Mikey was pumping his finger into her ass while she got into position atop Raph. Once Raph pulled her down so that her ass was angled up towards Mikey, the orange banded turtle removed his finger and replaced it with his thick cock.

Lav moaned as Mikey entered her, his movement forcing her further onto Raph’s dick. When Mikey began to move, his rhythm dictated her ride and Raph quickly joined in, his hips lifting to meet Lav’s pussy each time Mikey drove her down.
The need for release was always stronger the second time; Lav’s mutant energy bringing them both to the edge quickly. It took neither of the brothers long to peak, their churrs of satisfaction sounding like a musical chorus.

Lav was flat against Raph’s chest and Mikey was draped across her back, all three in a state of semi-conscious satisfaction, when Leo and Don walked into the room. They had both been in the basement doing a quick patch job on the water heater and they glanced at each other after taking in the scene.

“Looks like we missed out bro’,” Don said with a grin.

“I say we leave them there and then we can have the nest all to ourselves,” Leo replied lecherously.

“Maybe a nice, warm shower together first to wash off some of the . . . .” Don began then stopped at the look on Leo’s face.

Leo was staring at the open window. In a flash, he darted for the door and wrenched it open, plunging onto the darkened porch with Don right behind him.

Quite a distance down the driveway, the tail lights of a vehicle bounced away from the farmhouse. Leo leaped off the porch and ran a few steps but realized he wouldn’t catch them on foot.

By the time he turned back around, Raph and Mikey had joined Don in the yard. Lav stood on the porch, her arms folded across her chest as she anxiously looked after them.

“What was it, Leo?” Raph asked.

Leo shook his head. “I’m not sure. There was a truck driving away from here, but it was too far off and too dark out for me to get a good look at it.”

“Do you want to try and follow it?” Don asked.

“No. It has too much of a head start, we’d never catch it,” Leo answered.

“Maybe somebody got lost,” Mikey suggested.

“I don’t think so,” Leo said slowly. “I think someone was spying on you guys.”

Lav had come down off the porch to stand next to Raph. “Spying on us just now?” she asked, her eyes wide.

Raph looked down at her and then turned to scoop her into his arms. “Ya’ ain’t got any shoes on and you’re half naked. Let’s go back inside.”

The others followed them into the house, carefully closing and locking the door. Don went to the window and shut it, pulling the curtains across the glass after securing the latch.

Mikey grabbed a blanket off the couch and wrapped it around Lav’s shoulders.

“I can fetch a couple of flashlights if you want to look for prints,” Don said as he looked over at Leo.

“We’ll look in the morning after the sun comes up,” Leo said. “We might get a clue as to who they were. I don’t want a repeat of the Dr. Finn episode; I just hope that if someone was out
there that they weren’t filming you guys.”

Lav made a sound in her throat; a distressed whimper that spoke volumes about how terrible that possibility would be for all five of them. It evoked an immediate protective response from Raph, who pulled her into a tight hug.

“We’ll find ‘em and stop them from doing any damage, okay baby? Don’t worry,” Raph whispered against her hair.

Closing her eyes, Lav nodded and pressed her face into his shoulder, letting him soothe her. They went up to bed then, after checking that all the doors and windows were locked up tight.

Leo didn’t say anything, but after the others fell asleep, he got up to stand watch. A couple of hours later, Raph appeared to relieve him, his smile telling his older brother how well Raph knew him.

The next morning, the family inspected the area around the downstairs window. No attempt had been made by the spies to hide their presence and two clear sets of footprints were visible on the bare earth. From the size of the shoes, Leo surmised that the peeping toms were men.

“I don’t think they were filming anything,” Leo said, studying the marks left in the dirt on the window sill. “I can see the impressions left by four hands here; one of the men has larger fingers than the other. If one of them was holding a phone or camera, I think we’d only see where three hands touched the sill.”

“The tire tracks belong to a pickup truck,” Don called from across the yard, jogging towards them. “It was parked farther up the drive near some trees.”

“Then it couldn’t have been Dr. Abigail Finn,” Mikey said. “She had that big research truck.”

“Ya’ should know, ya’ and Donny managed ta get trapped inside of it,” Raph teased.

“This farmhouse is pretty far off of any well-traveled road,” Donny said. “What were they looking for, a place to stay maybe?”

Mikey, Raph, and Lav looked at each other. Leo saw them and asked, “Something we need to know about?”

It was Lav who answered. “The other evening when we went into town so I could go to the market, a couple of men followed me. They were just looking for a party, so I told them I’d meet them later that night. I was afraid they were going to start a scene in the street and that got rid of them.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me about that?” Leo asked sharply.

“To be honest, I forgot about it once we were halfway back to the farmhouse,” Mikey answered.

“I did too,” Lav said. “I’m sorry; I’ve had men flirt with me before, most women have. I usually don’t think about it after I brush them off.”

“I didn’t like it much,” Raph said, “but I guess I forgot about it too. Shit Leo, you’ve seen the way men look at Lav. I quit filing them in my memory quite a while ago.”
“We should leave,” Leo said.

Four voices rose to simultaneously protest that suggestion. “I can set up a wireless warning device across the drive at the main highway,” Don said. “If anyone breaks the beam we’ll have plenty of notice that someone is coming.”

“If we’re more vigilant at night no one will get near the windows again,” Mikey said.

“And suppose these men notify the local law enforcement that strange creatures are staying out here?” Leo asked.

“If an official vehicle pulls up I’ll deal with them,” Lav said. “You guys vanish until they’re gone. I’ll tell the police that I saw a peeping Tom staring through my window and if they know who it was that I’ll forgo making a formal complaint on the promise that the authorities make the man stay away from here.”

“I can get hold of Casey and let him know what’s going on in case the cops call him ta find out if Lav has permission ta stay here,” Raph offered. “That should cover all our bases.”

“Come on, Leo, you don’t really want to leave just yet, do you?” Mikey asked.

Leo rubbed his chin, a thoughtful expression on his face. “No. I did say we’d stay an entire month. All right we’ll stay, but only if everyone is a lot more careful. I don’t think any of us wants to wind up on the nightly news.”

“Or have Dr. Finn make another appearance,” Don added with a grin.

Although he still had a few reservations, Leo gave in to his family. They were accomplishing a great many things during their stay and he didn’t want to bring a premature halt to all of that.

For two days there was no sign of anyone lurking around the vast property on which Casey’s farmhouse sat. The only time that the alarm had sounded was when a car had used the driveway as a turnaround; an act that Don immediately witnessed on his computer from the camera he’d mounted in a tree.

A couple of evenings later the guys were in the barn sparring when Lav excused herself so that she could start dinner. It was coming on to dusk, but there was still a good amount of daylight left, and the air was warm. Lav left the back door into the kitchen open but the screen latched and began cutting up some vegetables.

Movement in the yard outside of the kitchen caught her eye and Lav glanced through the window to see an older man dressed in overalls and wearing a straw hat strolling towards the back door. In his arms he carried a bushel basket filled with tomatoes, and Lav was drying her hands when he knocked.

Opening the screen door, Lav stepped onto the small porch as the man backed off of it to stand in the yard.

“Evening ma’am,” he said politely. “I was wondering if you might be interested in buying some locally grown tomatoes.”

Lav wondered fleetingly why he was walking from house to house to sell his tomatoes, but since she didn’t know the area very well, she let it go.
“I do like fresh tomatoes,” she said. “I might buy the entire basket if I can take a look at them.”

The man seemed to get flustered at the idea and stammered, “S... sure thing. You got a table I can roll ‘em out on?”

He started in her direction but the basket had tipped forward in his excitement and tomatoes began to tumble out of it. As he bent to pick them up, Lav came off the porch to help him.

Just as she leaned down, something hit her on the back of her head and she fell to her knees, momentarily blinded by a searing pain. Before she had a chance to recover, her arms were yanked behind her back and bound, and a gag was placed in her mouth.

With her vision clearing quickly, Lav started to try to stand up when someone shoved against her shoulder blades and pushed her face first into the dirt. She turned her head in time to keep from smashing her nose against the ground and felt her ankles being tied together. Then her arms were grabbed as she was yanked back to her knees, and a large potato sack was thrown over her entire body.

Cuddled up inside the potato sack, the end tied off so she couldn’t stretch out, Lav was lifted from the ground and tossed over a shoulder. While she berated herself for being so careless, her kidnapper carried her for a little ways before tossing her into a vehicle whose engine had been left running.

The motor sounded small, and from the jolts the thing took as it sped off, Lav guessed that it was some type of all-terrain or farm vehicle. With any luck it was leaving a trail, because even if it wasn’t much of one, Lav knew Leo could track it.

When the Turtles walked into the farmhouse they expected to be greeted by the scent of dinner wafting from the kitchen, but they didn’t smell anything. Next they noticed the lack of sound. They were originally headed for the bathroom so they could clean up before dinner, but stopped at the foot of the stairs as they waited for Don to take a peek into the kitchen.

“The back door is open and there’s no sign of Lav,” Don reported, sounding agitated.

“Shit,” Raph said forcefully and with meaning.

Don ducked back into the kitchen, swiftly followed by his brothers. Just beyond the back porch was a basket half filled with tomatoes lying on its side and several loose tomatoes strewn across the ground. Some of them had been stomped on in what appeared by all signs to have been a struggle.

“Someone grabbed her,” Don said, verbally stating the obvious. “No one came up the drive; the alarm never sounded and besides that, I was keeping an eye on the feed from the camera.”

“Well obviously they didn’t come from that direction,” Raph snapped.

“Look for clues, a trail, something,” Mikey called from several feet away as he walked near Leo, who was already searching the ground.

The four brothers fanned out, looking for some sign that would tell them which direction Lav had been taken. They worked in silence for several minutes, desperately trying to find a
starting spot before the sun went down.

Don was a few yards away from his brothers when he suddenly called out, “Leo!”

Raph’s head came up and he was practically on Leo’s heels as they strode towards Don. “Did ya’ find something?” he asked anxiously.

“Hay,” Don answered, pointing at a pile of dried hay lying on the ground.

“We ain’t looking for grass, Don,” Raph growled angrily.

“There’s no hay anywhere around this farmhouse,” Don explained. “This came off of something, a cart or some small vehicle that’s probably normally used for carrying hay bales.”

Leo had moved out from where Don had discovered the hay and they saw him quickly squat to examine the nearby grass.

“Fresh tire tracks,” Leo said. “You’re right, Donny, it looks like some small all-terrain vehicle passed this way.”

“I bet it ain’t carrying hay either,” Raph said. “They took Lav away on that thing. Should I go back and get the van so we can follow them?”

“No, the van won’t fit through the orchard,” Leo said. “We’ll follow on foot; we can see the tracks better that way. I doubt if this vehicle can go for long distances or that it moves very fast. Let’s go.”

=================================================================

Whatever Lav was riding in finally jolted to a stop and she was roughly lifted out of it. The man who was carrying her wasn’t in the least bit gentle about the way he tossed the potato sack she was in over his shoulder, making her grunt in protest.

Lavinia was carried a short distance before she began to perceive light through the heavy sack. Other voices joined those of her captors and all of them sounded more jovial than she would have hoped for.

The person who was carrying her dropped her suddenly and Lav hit the ground with a thud. She held back her groan of pain out of the stubborn wish to avoid giving the man any satisfaction, but was nonetheless happy that she’d landed on her hip rather than her head.

“I’ll bet that ain’t potatoes or rabbits,” a nasty sounding voice said while laughing.

“Nope,” said another male voice, his tone deeply satisfied. “She was just as easy to catch though.”

“Get that sack off of her so the others can see what she looks like,” the first man ordered.

Lav could feel someone working on the end of the sack and then she felt a rush of cool air hit her feet.

The sack was tugged up past her knees and then someone grabbed her shoulders and lifted her into a kneeling position before yanking the potato sack the rest of the way off.

Blinking to clear some of the residual dust from her eyes, Lav glanced around. She was in a very large barn and there were men standing all around her. The man who held the potato sack
and the one directly in front of Lav she instantly recognized from that day at the market.

“Hello beautiful,” the man in front of her said. “Did you miss us?”

Lav glared at him and her other kidnapper laughed.

“I think she’d like to answer you, Ray,” he said.

Ray nodded. “Go ahead and take the gag off of her, Phil. There’s no one around to hear her scream and the guys deserve to see that mouth of hers. I don’t think they believed us when we told them all of the things she seems to know how to do with it.”

When Phil removed her gag, Lav licked her lips to moisturize them. Ray squatted in front of her, his eyes gleaming in the fluorescent overhead lights. Darkness had fallen; Lavinia could see that through the barn windows, and she knew if she could somehow get away from these men she could evade them in the darkened woods.

“How did you find me?” Lavinia asked, her eyes on Ray’s face.

“You disappointed us,” Ray said, reaching out to smooth down Lav’s unkempt hair. “We had a great party planned and you didn’t show up. The next night we went over to the bar thinking you might come then, but of course you never intended to, did you?”

“It was rude of you to insist after I’d already told you I had a boyfriend,” Lav said calmly.

Phil snorted. “Feisty.”

“Well since you did agree to join us, we were damned upset,” Ray continued. “We kind of got to bitching about it and said as how we’d sure like to know where you were. That’s when Todd Burrows joined the conversation.”

“Burrows is our local postman,” Phil supplied. “He delivers the mail and spends the rest of his time getting drunk.”

“That doesn’t mean he ain’t up to noticing stuff,” Ray said. “He noticed that someone was using the driveway that went up through the apple orchard to the old Jones farmhouse. Since me and Phil had nothing better to do, we jumped in our truck and went out there.”

“Boyfriend,” Phil said with a derisive laugh. “We saw you in there servicing those two guys. There’re some weird ass people who come down from the big cities sometimes, but your group takes the cake.”

“We weren’t bothering anyone,” Lav said. “Why couldn’t you just leave us alone?”

Ray slid his fingertip along her cheek. “We had a group of men here a few years back who thought the aliens were coming to take over the world. The locals round here didn’t have much to do with them; they seemed like a radical cult of some sort and we don’t care for that. If they were still around, they’d probably think your ‘boyfriend’ was some kind of alien.”

“We don’t see aliens around every corner,” Phil said. “But we recognize another cult when we see one. We have no idea why a bunch of guys would want to dress up like giant frogs and we don’t care; but when we see a pretty gal being held by them and used the way they were using you, we feel like we’ve gotta do something.”

“They aren’t holding me against my will,” Lav insisted, choosing not to argue the ‘frogs’ or
‘cult’ assertions. “I’m very happy with them. You should let me go before they come looking for me.”

“There are men outside watching just in case they do manage to find us,” Ray said. “You don’t have to be afraid anymore; we’ll take care of them if they come here.”

“I’m not afraid,” Lavinia said in some confusion. “Those are my boyfriends. We like to play a little kinky sometimes, that’s all.”

“Brainwashed,” Phil said. Ray looked up at him. “I saw one of them TV specials about how cults trick women into staying with them. She’s gotta be deprogrammed.”

Ray stood up. “You got any idea how to go about doing that?”

One of the other men moved closer. So far they had remained quiet while the two men Lav knew from the market did all the talking, but they had begun shifting around during the latter part of the conversation.

“She’s been with costume wearing freaks too long,” he said with a smirk. “The solution to that is easy; we gotta help her remember what it’s like to screw a real man.”

“Doing something to me against my will is a prosecutable offense,” Lav said quickly. “You’ll spend years in jail for it. If you let me go right now I’ll forget about this little incident. We’ll just say it was a harmless prank.”

“If she enjoys what we do then she won’t turn us in,” another of the men said. “From what you guys said, she liked what them cult boys was doing to her. I’ll bet the bunch of us could make her feel really good.”

Ray was hesitating and the first man touched his shoulder. “Come on buddy, you were the one that said you never saw such a pretty woman in your life. Do you think you’ll ever get another chance to be with one?”

“Couldn’t we at least take her clothes off?” a man who was near the windows asked. “We saved her from those freaks; we deserve a look at the goods. I’ll bet them tits of hers are real.”

“You can do her first,” the man who had his hand on Ray’s shoulder said in a low voice. “That’s only fair, don’t you think? You first, then Phil, and then the rest of us. From what you said, she can handle three of us at once.”

“Don’t let him talk you into something that isn’t right,” Lavinia urged frantically.

Phil reached down and slapped her across the mouth. “You don’t speak unless somebody asks you a question,” he snapped. “Right now I think we know what’s best for you. We’re gonna deprogram you; might take a night, might take a few of ‘em. Don’t you worry though; we’ll put you right in no time.”

“You aren’t talking about deprogramming, you’re talking about rape,” Lavinia said hotly. “Don’t try to justify it by calling it something other than what it really is.”

Phil slapped her again and would have slapped her a third time if Ray hadn’t caught his arm. “Don’t bother; let her have her say. In a few minutes, her mouth is gonna be full and she won’t be able to talk.”

A slow smile spread across Phil’s face until it was as large and wide as the ones on the
faces of the other men in the barn. Lavinia’s heart was beating hard in her chest; she hadn’t wanted to resort to tough measures, but it looked like they weren’t going to leave her with any other choice.

“Pull some of those hay bales together,” Phil said, pointing at the square bales scattered to one side of the barn. “We’ll put her on those; it’ll be easier to get to her than just leaving her on the floor.”

“Please don’t do this,” Lavinia begged as she watched the men build a platform out of hay bales.

Her words were ignored as Lav expected they would be. She had seen mob mentality take control of normally decent people before and knew the signs. That these men were not the best representatives of their community didn’t help matters.

“Ready!” one of the men sang out, an excited grin on his face.

Phil and Ray stepped to either side of Lavinia and lifted her by her arms, carrying her to the platform and tossing her onto it. Her hands, still bound behind her, pressed into the hay as she moved them into an advantageous position.

Phil flipped open a pocket knife and stared down at her, all sense of decency gone from his lust filled eyes. Leaning over, he cut the ropes away from her ankles and then reached for the waistband of her pants.

In a flash, Lavinia kicked the knife from his hands and pushed off from the hay bale. Tucking her chin against her chest, she head butted Phil in his stomach and when he fell, Lav dropped to one knee, using the other leg to sweep Ray’s feet from under him.

Lavinia leaped skyward, pulling her knees against her chest as she did, and slid her arms under her rear and her feet. When she landed, her arms were in front of her and with a quick diving roll, she swept Phil’s knife up from where it had fallen.

Phil pulled himself up onto a hay bale, clutching at it as he tried to catch his breath. “Get her!” he wheezed at the other men who had frozen as soon as Lav started moving.

Backing away from them, Lavinia sliced at the ropes holding her wrists together. The last strand snapped loose just as two of the men dove at her.

Jumping high, Lav delivered a spinning back kick to the jaw of the nearest man and then ducked as the other threw a roundhouse punch at her head. A solid fist to his testicles dropped that man first to his knees and then onto his face as he clutched at his family jewels.

Without waiting for the rest of the men, Lav made a mad dash for the barn door. Lav could hear several of them shouting behind her but didn’t slow down as she hit the door and threw it open.

Darting outside, Lavinia almost ran head first into a figure dangling from the rooftop. Her hands came up into a defensive position immediately and a split second later she recognized Leonardo. He reached out and caught her raised arms in a solid grip and pulled her onto the rooftop.

When she cleared the roof’s edge, Lav saw that Raph had a hold on Leo’s ankles, and that both Mikey and Don were nearby. Faster than Lav could blink, Leo was tugging her over the roof’s peak to the side furthest from the brightly lit doorway.
“What took you so long? I had to rescue myself,” Lav whispered.

Men were streaming out of the barn, yelling at one another as they separated and ran into the woods that surrounded the barn. No one thought to look up, but they wouldn’t have seen the Turtles if they had.

Raph chuckled quietly. “Sor~ry babe, we stopped for an espresso.”

Phil and Ray were standing in front of the barn, looking around them in frustration and shouting instructions to the men who were searching the woods.

“Those are the guys from the market,” Mikey said.

“Mashers turned would be rapists,” Lav said darkly. “Mob mentality. They said they had guards posted outside to watch for you guys.”

“We found their guards,” Don said. “They are now officially sleeping on the job.”

“Does anybody really wanna go the long way around to get back to the farmhouse?” Mikey asked meaningfully.

“Just ta’ avoid those guys?” Raph asked. “Shell no. They wanted ta play rough, we should show them the true meaning of the word.”

“Agreed,” Leo said. “Discouraging their behavior is far better than ignoring it.”

He started to move but Lav caught his arm. “They wanted to play rough with me,” Lav stressed. “I’m the one who should deliver the message.”

A corner of Leo’s mouth lifted. “Go to it,” he told her.

With catlike grace, Lav slinked across the rooftop until she was on the overhang above the barn door. The two men who had orchestrated her kidnapping were alone in the yard, having sent the other men into the woods to search for her.

Grabbing the roof’s edge, Lav flipped backwards onto the ground behind the men. Her landing was silent and she had to clear her throat to get their attention.

“Looking for someone?” Lav asked when they spun around.

“You bitch,” Phil said in a low grow. “You’re gonna pay for hitting me.”

Lav lifted her hands, curling them into fists as she shifted into her fighting stance. “I’d much rather keep doing that for free,” she told him.

Phil came towards her, his right fist swinging in an uppercut at Lav’s jaw. Lav’s left hand went down to block his punch and her right came up towards his face. Distracted by her movement, Phil’s eyes locked onto her hand and Lav proceeded to kick his knee hard.

Falling to the ground with a shout of pain, Phil tried to roll out of the way, but Lav slammed the side of her foot into his jaw. The blow knocked him out and Lav leaped over him, avoiding Ray as he dove for her.

Spinning to face him, Lav’s hands came up defensively. His face wrinkled in anger, Ray’s fists were up as well.
“I’m gonna flatten you bitch,” Ray snarled.

“You aren’t man enough,” Lav taunted.

Her words further enraged the man and he rushed at her, fists flying. Lav ducked the first swing and as she came up, her fist caught the inside of his other arm to block his punch. Opening her hand to hold onto his arm, Lav stepped into his body and delivered a punishing strike to the side of his neck.

Ray fell flat on his face, completely unconscious. Stepping away from him, Lav looked up to see all four of her guys silently watching from nearby.

“Are ya’ done playing now?” Raph asked.

Lavinia smiled. “Yep, your turn.”

Before Raph could move, Leo said, “Burn it.”

The others turned to stare at him. Leo stood well out of the light spilling from the barn, but even shadowed they could see the dangerous look in his eyes. Lavinia could feel the anger coming off of him in waves; it surprised her because the blue banded Turtle rarely succumbed to that type of emotion.

“What do you want us to burn?” Don asked calmly. “Their equipment or the barn?”

“The barn,” Leo said decisively, “and everything that’s inside of it. Drive that all-terrain vehicle inside and include any weapons that we can take away from them. Strip the men and toss their clothes into the fire.”

“That’s kind of a drastic measure for ya’ ain’t it, Leo?” Raph asked, his tone mild.

“You know what they were going to do to Lav,” Leo answered. “They deserve nothing, but I’m going to let them live. Everything else goes, including whatever dignity they think they have.”

“I’m all over that,” Mikey agreed. “We came out here for a vacation and to get away from bad guys. I say we teach them a lesson they won’t ever forget.”

“The fire will draw the rest of them from the woods,” Leo said. “We’ll just wait for them to come to us.”

Raph cracked his knuckles and grinned. “Gods I love it when ya’ get riled up,” he told Leo.

Mikey and Lav quickly stripped the two unconscious men and then tossed their clothing, including their shoes, into the barn. Raph steered the all-terrain vehicle into the barn and parked it near the hay bales while Leo and Don used the gasoline from nearby containers to douse the hay and interior of the barn.

As the rest of the family backed out of the barn, Don handed Leo a handful of hay, setting the end ablaze once Leo had a firm grip. While Leo began touching his makeshift torch to spots around the barn, Don lit up another handful of hay and systematically set fire to the piled hay bales.

With a good sized conflagration started, the pair skipped out of the barn and joined the others.
“That fire’s gonna bring the rest of those goons back here pretty fast,” Raph pointed out.

“Good, then we won’t have to wait long. I think it’s only appropriate that all of those men meet the same fate as these two instigators,” Leo said, pointing at Phil and Ray.

Raph punched his open palm with a fist, an exhilarated grin on his face. “Hide and seek?” he asked.

Leo looked up at him, the firelight accenting the glint in his eyes. “Absolutely.”

The ninjas scattered, moving into the wooded area surrounding the barn. Just moments later shouts and loud whistling indicated the return of the rest of the kidnappers.

Two men slid into the yard, their eyes wide and unbelieving as they first took in the sight of the burning barn and then their two cohorts lying face down and naked in the dirt.

“What the hell happened here?” one of them asked.

There was no response from his friend and when he spun around, he found that he was alone. Then a shoe came out of the underbrush, flying straight at his head and hitting him soundly in the temple. Dazed, the man fell down to his knees and just barely saw a flash of green before he was knocked completely out.

When another group of men made it to the clearing, they had time to see four of their comrades naked on the ground before an almost invisible force swarmed over them.

It wasn’t long before the men had all been captured. As a final punishment, Leo directed his team to tie the men with their own shoelaces. In addition, the men were all tied to each other and left in a large nude pile on the ground.

By that time the roof of the barn had collapsed inwards, leaving a burning pile of rubble behind.

“It’s not gonna set the woods on fire is it?” Mikey asked.

“No,” Don answered. “The trees are far enough from the structure and the fire is already dying down.”

“Let’s head back to the farmhouse,” Leo said. “Someone might have noticed the blaze and we don’t need to be here if the local authorities come to investigate.”

Jogging through the woods, the family remained silent until they were sure they hadn’t missed any stragglers.

“I guess we got all of them,” Mikey said finally.

“How long do ya’ think it’ll be before they come after us?” Raph asked.

“I doubt they’ll try to tangle with us again,” Don answered, “especially since we burned their clothes. More than likely they’ll call the local authorities with their story of a cult. They’ll probably claim that we’re at the farmhouse illegally.”

“Yeah, they don’t strike me as the type ta leave well enough alone,” Raph said.

“Figure about an hour and a half before a constable shows up,” Leo said. “We need to be packed and out of there by then.”
“We’re going to leave?” Lav asked. “I can answer any questions the constable might ask. If they need to verify my story I’ll give them Casey’s phone number. Raph can call him again and tell him what to say.”

“I don’t want to call that kind of attention to you,” Leo told her. “If we vacate now and make it appear as though no one has been there, the authorities will think those men are pulling their leg. The law won’t be happy about being sent on a wild goose chase and those men will be reprimanded; possibly even jailed.”

“Won’t they go up to the farmhouse to check for themselves?” Mikey asked.

“They might, but I think they’ll be too busy explaining how they managed to set fire to that barn,” Leo said. “We can have Casey call the constables office and tell them he heard from a neighbor that those men were trespassing on his property, then demand the authorities keep them away. Fires bring news reporters and I don’t want Lavinia’s name associated with this area of the country.”

“That means we’ve got a little over an hour to shove everything in the van and make the farmhouse and barn look like no one has been there? That’s gonna be cutting it close,” Mikey said.

“It means we have to be organized,” Leo said. “Raph, you and I will work on the barn; the rest of you take the house. Don’t worry about straightening the upstairs rooms; pack our things into the van first and then concentrate your efforts on downstairs rooms that can be seen through the windows.”

Having decided what needed to be done, the group began to run faster, each of them realizing the amount of work they were facing.

When they made it back to the farmhouse, Leo and Raph broke away and headed into the barn. Since Lav had the most to pack as far as personal belongings, she ran upstairs to take care of that while Mikey dashed into the kitchen and Don took the front room.

Don made quick work of his task; straightening the furniture, locking the windows, and removing all signs of recent habitation. He moved on to the dining area, then into the kitchen to lend Mikey a hand.

It took two trips for Lavinia to bring everything downstairs and get it all loaded into the van. Besides her things, she also brought down Donatello’s duffel bag, his laptop, and Leo’s needle case.

Between them, Leo and Raph quickly put all of the things they’d brought down from the hayloft back into place. The windows were then closed and locked, and the shutters pulled across them.

Together they shut the barn doors and snapped the large padlock closed. While Leo hid the key in the place where Casey usually kept it, Raph trotted over to the house.

Before Leo joined them, he ducked into the nearby woods and cut himself a small branch from one of the trees. With great care, Leo used the leaves to brush out their footprints from around the barn and on into the dirt yard.

By the time he was done, everything was packed into the van and the inside of the house looked like it had been vacant for a while.

However, both the front and back porch were much too clean; there were no cobwebs or
“Maybe the cops won’t notice,” Raph said.

“They’re paid to notice, Raph,” Leo told him.

“So just throw some dirt around,” Mikey suggested.

Lav jumped onto the porch, saying, “Wait a second,” as she went back inside the house. She came right back out carrying the fireplace bellows.

“This will spread the dirt more evenly,” she said as she locked the door.

Mikey grabbed a double handful of loose soil and Lav used the bellows to gently blow a fine layer of it all over the porch, the swing, and the door, making sure even the doorknob was dusty. The pair repeated the process on the back porch.

When they were done, Lav tossed the bellows into the back of the van and then climbed in next to Mikey. Don got behind the wheel with Leo in the passenger seat. Raph swung in last, closing the side door and sitting behind Don.

“Do you think we missed anything?” Mikey asked as Don pulled away from the farmhouse. “It’s pretty dark outside.”

“No, I think we got it all,” Raph said. “The full moon helped.”

“I think we have just enough time to make it back to the city before sunrise,” Don said, steering the van onto the main road.

“Can we spare twenty minutes somewhere along the way and grab some burgers?” Lav asked. “I missed dinner.”

The Turtles started laughing and Leo said, “I could handle two burgers and some fries.”

“I want a milkshake too,” Mikey added.

“Well, our vacation ended early but at least it wasn’t boring,” Raph said. “Remind me to call Casey tomorrow and let him know what happened before the police do. He probably ain’t gonna be too happy.”

“Hey, at least we didn’t burn down his place,” Mikey pointed out.

Lav leaned over and rested her head on Mikey’s shoulder, a faint smile lifting her lips.

“I had a wonderful time,” she said with a sigh. “You guys have given me the best memory of my entire life.”

Mikey draped an arm across her shoulders and smiled at his brothers. The others settled in for a long drive, each of them feeling happy with their vacation experiment and hoping it wouldn’t be too long before they got to do it again.
Lav’s subconscious mind sensed something that woke her from a deep slumber. Lifting her head, she looked into Raph’s face and saw that he was sleeping peacefully. A light snort from next to them told Lav that Mikey was also soundly asleep.

Very carefully, Lav eased herself out of Raph’s arms, replacing the blanket she’d disturbed in the process. As an afterthought, she reached over and lifted Mikey’s arm, placing it across Raph’s plastron before wrapping the large, orange scarf around herself.

With a tiny smile, Lav stepped away from the sleeping Turtles and moved towards the one who was giving off the emotions she had sensed while she slept. Leaving the warm glow of the campfire, Lav walked until she could just make out a bulky shape standing in the shadows outside of the moonlight.

She stopped where she was, hugging herself against the chill night air as she watched Leonardo. He stood with his arms across his plastron, feet firmly planted on the ground and his back straight. Following the direction of his gaze, Lav saw past the tiny wooded area they were in and up to the starlit sky that spread out above it.

Lav remained silent as she used her empathic ability to probe for Leo’s emotions. There was the underlying concern that was so much a part of his character, along with the nagging doubt that sometimes resided there as well. On top of that Lav sensed a tightening resolve and determination, as though a question had been asked and answered.

“Raph is going to notice that you’re missing,” Leo said without turning around.

Of course he had known she was there despite Lav’s attempts at silence.

“I placed Mikey partly on top of him,” Lav said.

Leo twisted the upper half of his body and held his hand out to her. “That probably won’t work for long.”

Smiling, Lav moved up next to him and took his hand. They stood side by side and contemplated the stars together.

“What has you so deep in thought?” Lavinia asked.

For a moment Leo didn’t answer. Lav waited patiently, knowing he would tell her eventually.
“There is no possible way for us to catch Hebi on the road anymore,” Leo said. “Barring some unforeseen delay, he’s probably reached Perdred by now.”

“No doubt burying himself behind several layers of protection,” Lav said. “That leaves you with a decision.”

“It does,” Leo acknowledged and was silent again. Lavinia sensed his mood and gave him time to collect his thoughts. “This is the third major move Hebi has made against Lord Noriyuki since I came to know Usagi. Despite the bounty placed on his head by the Shogun, Hebi continues to slither his way out of danger. Somehow that snake always manages to gather followers wherever he goes.”

“That is the very nature of political intrigue,” Lav observed.

Leo smiled slightly and then the smile faded. “I know enough about warfare to understand what will happen if Hebi has truly managed to gather together twenty-five thousand fighters. Lord Noriyuki’s army will pay a heavy price defending his holdings, many innocent lives will be lost, and the countryside will be decimated. An attempt will be made to kill the young Lord and Usagi and the odds are bound to turn against them at some point.”

“You’ve reasoned this through thoroughly, haven’t you? I think you already know the answer though,” Lav murmured.

Leo sighed. “I have friends amongst Lord Noriyuki’s soldiers; in fact, there was a time when I led a contingent of his army against some of Hebi’s insurgents. I missed the opportunity to destroy Hebi then and I don’t want to make that mistake again. We have to find a way to get to him.”

“Then we will,” Lavinia said. “I know the others are just as determined as I am to see this all the way to the end. I don’t know as much about this Hebi as you do, but I know the lengths he’ll go to in trying to kill you. If he defeats Lord Noriyuki’s soldiers, he’ll come after our family again. I saw what he did to that village and all because they hadn’t enough food for him to steal. He is a vicious and vindictive tyrant.”

“Usagi accompanied Lord Noriyuki to Perdred on two occasions,” Leo said. “He should be able to diagram the route into the city and the buildings where Hebi is most likely staying. I’ll take the time in the morning to tell the others what we are going to do and then we’ll hit the road again. Hopefully we can get to Hebi before he has a chance to muster his fighters.”

“Will his death end it?” Lav asked.

“Yes, he’s the driving force behind this insurrection. Without him at the center, the various clans will fall to bickering about who should take the lead. They won’t be able to pull together any type of cohesive invading force. Lord Noriyuki’s soldiers can easily gather up the ring leaders and incarcerate them.”

They fell silent again, studying a pattern of stars that was completely unfamiliar to them.

“I love you, Leo,” Lavinia whispered, pressing the side of her face against his arm.

He swiftly turned to face her, his arms wrapping her in the comfort of his strength. Pressed tightly against him, Lav looked up into his eyes, circling his muscular neck with her arms.

“Lavinia,” he said softly, “I love you, too. Whatever we do from this point on is going to be more than dangerous for you. There is no way you’ll blend in amongst the citizens of Perdred.”
“If you’re gently trying to suggest I sit this one out, save your breath,” Lav said with a smile. “You and Usagi are probably well known by Hebi’s guards and that means you have the same problem as I do.”

Lowering his mouth to within an inch of hers, Leo said, “You’re a very stubborn woman.”

“I’m your woman,” Lav told him, as though that settled the matter.

Their lips connected; Leo offering his strength through the kiss and Lavinia giving her support. They stayed locked together for several long minutes and when their lips slid apart, the pair remained in each other’s arms.

Resting his chin atop Lav’s head as she nestled against his neck, Leo said, “I need to find out from Usagi everything about Perdred that he remembers. Every detail he can recall, including guard placement and rotation, and the layout of the city. I don’t know how much he’ll know since he was with Lord Noriyuki during his visits, but anything can be helpful.”

Lavinia tipped her head back and gazed up at him. “Then come get some sleep. If you’re going to spend time talking to Usagi tomorrow, you should probably lie down next to Raph for a few hours. Let him wake to find you by his side.”

Leo chuckled. “You think of everything, don’t you?”

Shaking her head, Lav said, “I leave that task up to you; I’m just a nurturer by instinct.”

Leo placed his arm around her waist and the pair walked back to the camp fire. As they approached, they saw Don coming towards them, a steaming cup of coffee in his hands.

“I was wondering where the two of you were,” Don said.

“Just heading to bed,” Leo told him. “How are you?”

“Wide awake thanks to this,” Don answered, lifting his cup. “I’ll roust Mikey to take the next watch.”

With a nod, Leo and Lav entered their camp, leaving Don to fade into the darkness. As Lav squirmed into a spot between Raph and Mikey, Leo pulled his bedding next to Raph’s. Once he was lying down, Leo shifted so that his body was touching his hot headed brother’s.

In his sleep, Raph murmured and his mouth curved up into a smile. The sense of inner peace that gave Leo was enough to help the turtle leader fall asleep.

Early the next morning Leo squatted near the small cook fire as the others gathered around him. He could see the looks of expectation on their faces and knew they had each anticipated what he was going to say.

“We’re going into Perdred,” Leo told them.

There was a general murmur of agreement and Raph said aloud, “Damn time we put an end to this.”

Leo nodded, signaling for silence. “We’ll cut cross-country to save time and to keep from being seen. Hebi probably believes we’re dead and as long as no one tells him otherwise he won’t be expecting an attack. Usagi tells me that we should be there by tomorrow night.”
“We’re going after him immediately?” Don asked.

“Yes. We can’t give him time to coordinate his loyalist troops and send them after Lord Noriyuki. If we stop him now the various factions who have offered their allegiance to him will fracture. The infighting will give the Shogun time to mount a counter offensive and put this insurgency down for good,” Leo explained.

“Ya’ got a plan?” Raph asked.

Leo glanced at Usagi before answering. “I have an idea but I need to learn as much about Perdred as I can from Usagi. He and I will discuss it during our journey and by the time we stop to make camp for the night I should have the details all worked out. Let’s pack up and start moving.”

The small band of fighters marched nonstop, working their way through wooded areas, fields, and rough rock strewn terrain. Several times they split apart to hide from farmers and land holders, and on one occasion they dodged a group of fighters who wore Hebi’s colors.

They were over the border now, no longer in Lord Noriyuki’s lands and the dangers were great. Bandits roamed freely, chased from the young lord’s domain due in large part to a system that Leo had created three years previously to deal with thieves.

Throughout the journey Leo and Usagi could be heard talking in a low tone. Although they all knew what the two of them were discussing, it didn’t keep Raph from scowling at the pair.

By the time night had fallen the group was tired and hungry. There was a small clear stream at the campsite they’d chosen and Raph took a few minutes to dangle his feet in it. During their trek he had run ahead to make sure Hebi’s people weren’t doubling back on them and had been forced to walk through a patch of heavy brambles in order to track them.

Don and Mikey put together a fire and prepared dinner while Lavinia helped rid Raphael of the various cuts and punctures on his feet and legs. Leo and Usagi were kneeling side by side, drawing a diagram in the sand as they continued to talk.

After the meal had been eaten, Leo called them over to where the diagram was laid out and as they got comfortable, he began outlining his plan.

“This is Perdred,” Leo said, pointing at the image with a stick. “Usagi tells me that we will most likely find Hebi in the palace guest suites on the North side of the complex, which is here.” Once more he placed his stick on a spot on the map. “The back entrance goes through an elaborate garden which is surrounded by a high wall. There is one gate into the garden and it’s protected by two royal guards at all times.”

Raph sat with his back against a tree stump, his feet in Lav’s lap as she rubbed them. He looked relaxed, but his eyes sparked at the mention of guards.

“Inside or outside?” Raph asked. “I’m guessing we’re going through them?”

Leo shook his head. “No. We’re going over the wall. The guards are on the outside and an army patrol makes the rounds of the palace perimeter every forty-five minutes. If they don’t see the guards they sound an alarm and converge on the garden.

“Once we’re over the wall there are more guards at the palace rear entry. Those guards will have to be removed because they will see us.”

“Are we going in through that entrance?” Don asked with a frown.
“There are too many servants, even late at night,” Usagi answered. “I observed this for myself during my stay at the palace when young Lord Noriyuki was a guest there.”

“Usagi and I are going up the wall and directly into one of the windows that leads to the guest quarters,” Leo said. “We’ll find Hebi without rousing the household and dispatch him as silently as possible.”

“Assassination ain’t exactly a samurai’s kind of job,” Raph said, glancing at Usagi before looking back at Leo. “Maybe ya’ ought ta take a ninja with ya’.”

“This is Usagi’s fight,” Leo reminded his brother. “This type of confrontation may be distasteful to all of us, but Hebi is a coward who hides behind thieves, cutthroats, wizards, and his own assassins. We aren’t going to lure him out into the open and there aren’t enough of us to face him once he gathers the invasion force. Hebi wanted to bring his war to a house full of ninjas and the last thing he’ll ever learn is how bad an idea that was.”

There was a grim determination in Leo’s voice that his family knew meant his mind was made up. Few things made Leo truly angry and attempting to kill his loved ones was at the very top of that list.

Pointing to a line that had been drawn around the city, Don asked, “Is this another wall?”

“Yes.” Leo drew an X in one spot on the line and another X on a spot to one side. “The first X indicates the main gate into the city; the second is the merchant’s entrance. Both are heavily guarded. There is no other way into the city because there are manned battlements all of the way around.”

“Then how are we getting in?” Mikey asked. “Hebi’s not going to assume we’re dead just because he stopped seeing us on his back trail. You can bet those guards know exactly what we all look like.”

“We will gain entrance through the merchant’s gate,” Usagi said. “That we cannot simply walk in goes without saying.”

“Ya’ had ta say it anyway though, didn’t ya’?” Raph asked. His tone didn’t hold any rancor; it was as if by nature he couldn’t resist a good jab at Usagi.

“Some of us will disguise ourselves and sneak past the guards,” Leo said quickly. “If we can hide inside a wagon or cart we’ll do that.”

“The guards search every wagon before it passes,” Usagi said. “Perhaps we can find a way to distract them.”

Mikey grinned and reached into his belt to produce his slingshot. “Don’t worry about a thing; I’ll distract them all right.”

“Why do I get the feeling this ain’t gonna end well?” Raph mumbled.

“You aren’t going to shoot the guards with that, are you?” Don asked with a frown.

“No,” Mikey replied, shaking his head. “I have a much better idea.”

“Mike . . . .” Leo began.

With an ingratiating smile, Mikey said, “Trust me bro’.”
It was easy to see that Mikey wasn’t going to divulge his secret ahead of time. Lav decided that Leo didn’t need anything else to worry about, so she asked a question to distract him. “How much longer before we reach the city?”

Leo glanced at her. “About three quarters of a day, but we don’t want to approach the gates during full daylight. We’ll time things so we’re going through during the evening rush.”

“The merchant’s gate is closed and locked at twilight,” Usagi explained. “Those who do not make it inside before then must spend the night outside of the city walls.”

“This is going to take some split second timing,” Don observed worriedly.

“And a shell of a lot of luck,” Raph added.

They continued to discuss plans for the next day and then Leo suggested they turn in. He volunteered to take first watch and as his family was bedding down for the night, they saw him and Usagi walk a little ways from the camp. It was clear they were still talking about what they meant to do but that fact did little to ease Raph’s worries.

As he mumbled and muttered under his breath, it was obvious he wasn’t going to sleep soon and the sounds were keeping the rest of the family awake. After a little while Mikey had enough and quickly slid beneath Raph’s blanket and between the hot head’s legs. When Raph started to protest, Don swallowed his words with a kiss and Lavinia stroked his brow lovingly. It wasn’t long before Mikey coaxed an orgasm out of his temperamental brother.

Raph was fast asleep by the time Usagi came back alone and settled into his blankets. He cast one curious look at the little group that was all bunched together and then turned over to get some sleep.

By mid-morning the travelers had reached the outskirts of a small village. There were several items they needed before they could continue on, but showing themselves was not an option.

While everyone else hung back out of sight, Leo and Mikey slipped into the village to do some ‘shopping’. They were both carrying bundles when they reappeared a quarter of an hour later and Mikey was grinning widely enough to proclaim his enjoyment of the adventure.

Since they weren’t sure when or if the items they’d permanently borrowed would be missed, the group left the area as quickly as possible. They moved fast for about an hour in order to put distance between themselves and the village, sure that and the careful eradication of any tracks would throw off anyone who might want to come after them.

Mikey had snagged some fruit while he was in the village and that was their lunch. They were too far into the danger zone to chance an open fire and if the need arose for them to make a run for it, they didn’t want to waste time gathering their belongings.

About an hour after the sun reached its highest point they heard the jingle of bells and then barking dogs. As they neared the city the group had angled back towards the main road and now from their vantage point behind a growth of saplings they watched a sheepherder push his flock towards Perdred.

As the flock passed their hiding place, Usagi swiftly dug into his pack and removed a long cloak. Shifting his scabbard from his side to his back, he donned the cloak and pulled the hood over his head after removing the tie that held his ears upright.
“If luck is with us, I will meet you at the appointed rendezvous inside Perdred,” Usagi said. “Should I not see you, I will complete the mission alone.”

“We’ll be there,” Leo assured him.

Usagi picked up the long stick he had acquired earlier in the day and stepped out of hiding. They watched him walk down to the road and once there he began to follow the sheepherder.

“What was that all about?” Raph asked. “Where’s Usagi going?”

“When he was a boy he used to help a neighbor take care of his sheep,” Leo said. “He’s going to ask the sheepherder for a job helping him take his sheep into the city. His price will be so low that the man won’t be able to refuse. No one is going to suspect a sheepherder of actually being a dangerous samurai warrior.”

“Peachy,” Raph said with grudging admiration. “That gets him into the city; what about us?”

“Some of us are going to hitch a ride,” Leo said. “I’ll explain once we reach a certain spot along the road. From what Usagi tells me, it will serve our purposes perfectly.”

Picking up Usagi’s pack, Leo led off without giving them time for more questions. After a while the trees and saplings gave way to bushes, which lasted for only a short distance before they were out in the open. However they didn’t have to worry about being seen from the road as the ground on that side of it began to climb steadily.

When they reached a steep point Leo stopped and staying low to the ground, crept to the edge of the hill they were on. The others followed his example and found themselves looking down on the road.

At first the road was empty but as they watched, a pair of travelers appeared and rode by on horseback, completely unaware that they were being spied upon. Signaling for silence, Leo moved away from the edge and out of earshot of any passersby.

“What are we doing here?” Raph demanded.

“This is the best place for us to stop a wagon that’s heading for Perdred,” Leo answered. “You, Don, and I are going to hide wherever we can; Mikey and Lav are going to ride next to the driver.”

“And once we get to the city, what keeps the driver from ratting us out?” Raph asked skeptically.

“He won’t know we’re there,” Leo said.

It was easy to see that Raph was losing his patience. “Leo, if you don’t stop being cryptic and just tell us the plan, I’m gonna have your face for dinner.”

Leo shot him a withering look before answering. “About fifty yards back there’s a rocky outcrop. We’re going to leave our packs there and retrieve them when our mission is complete. There are bound to be some loose boulders around the base and we’ll roll one or two of them to the top of the hill.

“When we see a suitable wagon approaching, Mikey is going to run out to warn the driver about falling rocks and the rest of us will shove the boulders hard enough to send them across the
road. Hopefully the driver will be grateful and that will give Mikey the opening he needs to ask for a lift into the city.”

“I’ll persuade him,” Mikey said confidently.

“While Mikey is doing that, the three of us will slip into the wagon,” Leo said. “With the disguises that Mikey and Lav will be wearing, I doubt he’ll refuse to help them out.”

“What disguises?” Lav asked, glancing at the bundles that Leo and Mikey carried.

Mikey set his bundle on the ground and opened it to reveal that it was a long heavy cloak. There was also a woolen scarf and a cane inside.

“You have just become very, very old,” Mikey told Lav, his blue eyes twinkling.

“I hope my acting skills are up to it,” Lav murmured as she took the cloak from him and shook it out. “I’ve never had much chance to practice the ninja art of disguise.”

“What’s Mikey going to be, her husband?” Don asked.

Leo tossed his bundle to Mikey, who pulled it open. The bundle itself was a full length dark blue skirt and contained a lighter blue and slightly frilly top. Wrapped inside a small blanket was a large clump of horse hair.

“I had to remove the tails from three horses to get that,” Leo said.

“Not her husband,” Mikey replied, the grin on his face growing wider, “her daughter. I’m gonna look so good!”

Raph looked over at Don and said, “He likes dressing as women just a little too much.”

“Yeah,” Don said in agreement.

Taking the disguises with them, the group proceeded over to the rocks that Leo had said were nearby. From the loose boulders they chose three of good size; not too large because they didn’t want it to block the road, but not small enough to make a wagon driver feel as though he wasn’t in any danger.

Getting them up the hill and into position was a chore. Mikey insisted that it was he-man’s work and that he was too delicate to be moving boulders. They all knew he was only trying to lighten the mood, but Leo was too worried to appreciate the playfulness. Partway up the hill he’d snapped at Mikey about focus in a tone that had cut short the younger turtle’s antics.

After the boulders were in place, Lav and Mikey quickly changed into their disguises. Lavinia bunched her hair at the nape of her neck and wound the scarf around her head and face, leaving only her eyes uncovered. Her bow and quiver were positioned on her back so that once she was wearing the cloak it appeared that she was slightly hunchbacked. With the hood on the cloak up it was difficult to see even her eyes.

Mikey tied the horse tails together with some string and used his mask to fashion a pony tail. Don applied a little adhesive to it and helped place it on Mikey’s head, adjusting it so that it looked as if he had hair.

With the skirt and top on, Mikey could almost pass for female. It was when he struck a pose that the costume actually worked; pulling it off was all about Mikey getting into character.
From that point it was a waiting game. An hour passed without their seeing anything more than a father and son pushing a melon cart down the road. In the next hour two separate groups of riders went by, and in the hour after that was a procession of pigs and some oxen, followed by their handlers.

Raph had been lying back on the grass, staring up at the clouds for three quarters of the last hour, lulled by the boredom. Mikey had stopped trying to act as if he was alert even earlier than that. Only Lav and Don were keeping a watch on the road with Leo.

“Ya’ got a backup plan for us getting into the city, Fearless?” Raph finally asked.

If he hoped to get a rise out of his brother it didn’t work. “Yes,” Leo responded without looking at him. “We’ll wait another hour after which we’ll jump any riders who go by, then ride until we’re near the gate. Mikey and Lav will walk through as planned and the rest of us will try to smuggle ourselves through on any available transportation.”

“Sounds sloppy,” Raph muttered, chewing on a blade of grass.

“Sorry I can’t wrap it up in a bow for you,” Leo said. “We’ll make do.”

Raph didn’t say anything for a minute, but from the way his brow wrinkled, it was obvious that something was still on his mind. Finally he asked, “Ya’ worrying about Usagi?”

He tried to leave any hint of an inflection out of his voice but he wasn’t fully successful. Leo didn’t turn, but he did glance at Raph from the corner of his eye.

“Yes,” Leo answered simply, without elaborating further. He was tired of trying to assure Raph that Usagi was nothing more than a friend to him. Either his brother would have faith in Leo, or he wouldn’t.

To his surprise, that didn’t get the rise out of Raph that he half expected it would. “He’s good at what he does, Leo,” Raph said calmly. “He’ll know what to do if we’re late.”

“I know,” Leo said, though he was still concerned. If they didn’t get to the city on time, Usagi would go inside and attempt to face Hebi alone. Usage was not an assassin and without Leo’s guidance, he would end up fighting Hebi’s retainers and not the snake himself.

Mikey was sprawled out on the grass, the side of his head pressed to the ground, and he suddenly sat up.

“I heard something coming,” Mikey said. “It sounds heavy.”

Don snatched up the binoculars he’d brought with him and looked down the road. “It’s a hay wagon,” he said breathlessly. “A really big one.”

Raph immediately flipped onto his feet and raced over to one of the boulders. Lav picked up the cane and moved over next to Mikey.

“Remember to hold him long enough for us to get in the wagon,” Leo admonished his younger brother. “Get his undivided attention so he doesn’t notice us.”

“No sweat bro’,” Mikey said, taking Lav’s hand and leading the way down to the road.

When the wagon was still yards away, Mikey darted out onto the road, his skirt held up in one hand as he waved the other to get the driver’s attention.
“Stop!” Mikey called in a high pitched feminine voice. “Look out! Avalanche!”

The startled driver pulled back on the reins and yanked his horses to a stop. Just as they were slowing down, the three brothers on the hill shoved the boulders over the edge.

With a loud thud, the boulders hit the road one after the other, bouncing once and then rolling off to the grassy embankment on the other side. As soon as they released the boulders, the brothers silently scrambled down the hill, moving with practiced speed towards the back of the wagon.

Mikey walked with mincing steps towards the driver, who was staring at him in wide eyed amazement.

“You might have been crushed,” Mikey exclaimed in an alluring falsetto. “Oh my, that was very frightening.”

“Where did you come from?” the driver asked.

“I was resting on the side of the road up ahead,” Mikey said, pointing to illustrate his explanation. “I heard your wagon and saw the boulders shake loose. If I hadn’t been there they would have fallen right on you.”

“Um, thank you,” the driver said, somewhat belatedly.

Mikey batted his eyes and said coquettishly, “If you really wanted to thank me, you could offer us a lift to the city.”

“Us?” the driver asked suspiciously.

“My mother and I,” Mikey explained. “Mother, come on out. It’s safe now.”

Lavinia walked unsteadily out of hiding, leaning on the cane as she slowly moved onto the road.

“She can’t go far without having to stop and rest,” Mikey said. “We hoped to reach the city before they closed the merchant gate. I have a new job there and mother is going to stay with friends.”

“Where are your belongings?” the driver asked, looking between the pair with a frown.

“We lost everything to bandits,” Mikey said. “I threw all of our things at them and while they were fighting over it, my mother and I got away with our lives. Please, could you let us ride with you? It isn’t that much farther to the city and I promise we won’t be a burden.”

Mikey gave the driver his most beseeching look and could practically see the man melt under his blue gaze.

“All right,” the driver said. “But your mother will have to sit in the back. There is no way she’ll be able to climb up here.”

“Thank you,” Mikey said, thinking about how ungentlemanly the driver was in not offering to help an old woman. “Come on mother.”

The driver watched as Mikey led Lav around to the back of the wagon. He lost sight of them once they were behind the piles of hay and Mikey winked at Lav as he lifted her onto the
wagon.

An olive green hand crept out of the hay, one thumb up in the air. Breathing a sigh of relief that his brothers were all on board, Mikey sauntered around to the front and hoisted himself onto the seat next to the driver.

The man looked a little surprised that Mikey had joined him, probably expecting he’d sit in the back with his ‘mother’, but he didn’t say anything. Slapping the reins, he got the horses moving and the wagon jolted forward.

Just under two hours later Mikey caught sight of the city of Perdred. Built on a wide, flat plain, it was surrounded by an immense wall of stone. Mikey wondered how many people had to die for that wall to be built.

It took another half hour to reach the point where the road branched off, one route leading to the front gate, the second going around to where Mikey assumed they’d find the merchant’s entrance. The driver turned his wagon onto the second branch and veered away from the main gate.

Ten minutes later Mikey heard the sound of heavy activity and in another minute he spotted the merchant’s gate. Two guards stood on either side of the opening while another group of guards questioned and searched everyone who presented themselves for admittance.

There was a good sized crowd milling around, but it was generally peaceful. Merchants, workers, and vendors alike were trying to get inside before the gate closed for the night. They were doing as they were told because that lessened the chance of a delay.

The hay wagon driver reined in his horses and stopped at the end of the line. Far ahead of them Mikey spotted the sheep herder and his new assistant passing through the gate. Usagi was unmolested as he disappeared inside, his disguise passing muster with the guards.

“Oh dear, I’m the one who’s supposed to cook that mutton tonight,” Mikey said as they slowly crept forward.

“You’re a cook, eh?” the driver asked, his first words since Mikey had hitched a ride with him. He was a large raccoon with a well fed appearance. “You must be good if you’ve gotten a job in the city.”

“I am good,” Mikey said, noting the driver’s sudden shift in mood.

“I like to eat,” the driver said, stating the obvious as he leered at Mikey with new interest. “Do you have a man?”

Mikey hid his disgust because they still needed to get through the gate. “Alas, I’m a spinster,” he said woefully. “My mother is particular about the men who have courted me. When they find out that she would have to live with us, they always leave.”

The driver scratched his chin, his nose twitching. “Your mother,” he said speculatively. “She looks like she’s on her last legs. You wouldn’t want to be left all alone in this world, would you?”

“The line is moving,” Mikey pointed out sweetly. As the wagon moved forward, Mikey said, “I hope we don’t get locked out.”

“We won’t,” the driver said, tipping Mikey a wink. “This hay is headed for the palace
stables. The gates will stay open until we get through.”

“That’s a relief,” Mikey murmured.

Glancing behind them, Mikey saw a rag tag bunch of mercenaries leading their horses towards the gate and then some carts laden with cloth. Close on their heels was a burly group of males leading a wagon full of scantily clad women.

It was past dusk before the hay wagon neared the gate. The guards were busying themselves with the vegetable vendors who were in line in front of them and Mikey began looking for an opportunity to create his diversion. From where he was seated he was much too visible and the driver was still eyeing him.

Lav must have realized he needed some assistance, because she suddenly called out in a querulous voice, “Daughter! I need you!”

“I have to help my mother,” Mikey said quickly. “Thanks for the ride, we’ll walk through.”

He jumped down from the seat as gracefully as he could manage, giving the driver no time to protest, and rushed around to the back. Lav waited for him to help her off the wagon, well aware of the fact that there were numerous eyes on them.

“They’ll search the wagon,” Lav whispered as Mikey put an arm around her, guiding her towards the entrance. “Don is in the hay, but Leo and Raph are clinging to the undercarriage.”

“I’ll get the wagon through,” Mikey said in a low voice. “Distract the guards.”

Lav nodded and disengaged from her ‘daughter’, stooping over to lean on her cane as she shuffled towards the nearest pair of guards.

“We need to go in now,” Lav said in a voice that cracked, accosting the guards. “My daughter has to get to her job.”

Mikey stood next to her, holding his skirt and swinging his body to and fro. The guards looked them over and then one of them approached Lavinia.

“What do you have to declare? Where are your wares?” the guard asked.

“We have nothing,” Lav answered, her voice rising slightly. “Bandits took everything. Why aren’t the roads better protected? Why are you all here instead of back there where you’re needed?”

“Let me see underneath your cloak,” the guard demanded, reaching for Lav.

“Impudent cub,” Lav said hoarsely and then began to cough. She leaned forward, coughing hard into the face of the guard, who backed away as fast as he could, wearing a look of extreme disgust.

With the guards attention focused on Lavinia, Mikey slipped his slingshot out from under his top and place a pebble into the leather pad. Keeping the slingshot hidden by the folds of his skirt, Mikey let the pebble fly, hitting one of the mercenaries.

The man immediately spun around and shoved one of the men who accompanied the traveling burlesque show. Someone yelled something and fists started flying.
“Fight!” Mikey exclaimed, drawing the guard’s attention. Several of them rushed towards the melee and Mikey looked at the hay wagon only to find that the driver was too interested in watching the fight than in going through the gate.

With careful precision, Mikey launched another pebble, this time hitting one of the wagon’s horses on its flank. The horse let out a frightened whinny before bolting forward and nearly shaking the driver from his perch.

The two gate guards jumped aside as the wagon flew through the opening and then they gave chase, leaving the gate unguarded. Mikey and Lav darted inside along with a throng of others who did not want to stay anywhere near the commotion that Mikey had started.

As the wagon careened through the darkened back streets of Perdred, Raph and Leo dropped from their hiding place and quickly rolled away from the wheels. A second later Donatello hurtled off the back of the wagon and the three brothers dashed to a hiding spot behind a set of large, wooden planters.

They hunkered down as the guards ran past them, trying to catch the runaway wagon. In another few minutes Mikey and Lavinia appeared, looking left and right for some sign of them.

“Over here,” Raph called in a low husky voice.

The pair swiftly joined the brothers. “How far are we from the palace?” Lav asked.

“Not far,” Leo said. “Usagi told me of a safe place where we are to meet him. We can reach it through the back alleys and avoid being seen.”

He led the way, remaining in the shadows, and stopping only when he heard someone nearby. After traversing several long, dank alleyways, Raph moved up next to him and hissed, “Ya’ sure ya’ ain’t lost?”

“I’m sure,” Leo said.

Raph waited for a minute but his brother didn’t add anything more. “Cut the tight lipped crap, Leo. We ain’t your army, we’re your team. If something happens to ya’ and ya’ haven’t shared this plan of yours, we ain’t gonna know what ta do.”

For a second Leo felt edgy that Raph was choosing now to question him, but then he remembered that was one of Raph’s jobs on the team. He also had to concede that his brother had a point.

“We’re looking for a particular tavern,” Leo said. “Higher class nobles stay there so it’s near the palace. There are stables connected to the tavern and we’re going to hide there until the city settles in for the night.”

“What’s the tavern called?” Raph asked.

“’Winking Owl Lodge’,” Leo told him. “The sign over the door has a giant owl on it.”

Raph couldn’t resist asking, “Usagi drink there much?”

In the darkness Raph couldn’t see the mischievous upward twist at the corner of Leo’s mouth. “Not at that tavern.”

Raph’s eyes narrowed before he caught on that Leo was screwing with him. With a light
chuckle, he said, “Okay, I’ll give ya’ that one and I won’t even ask if the two of ya’ ever got drunk together.”

“I don’t get drunk,” Leo said, his eyes scanning the buildings ahead of them. “I’m too much of a tight ass, remember?”

Before Raph could make a comeback, Leo signaled for his family to hold their positions and then disappeared around the corner of a building. He wasn’t gone long.

“The tavern’s up ahead,” Leo said in a low voice. “We have to cross the main thoroughfare. Avoid the lanterns, single file, one minute intervals.”

Leo went first so they would know which direction to take. He was visible to them only long enough so they’d know where to go and then he vanished into the shadows.

When the first minute passed, Don set off after Leo and then Lav made her way across the street a minute after that. Raph gave Mikey a little push to get him moving, indicating that he’d bring up the rear.

The sound of loud voices stopped Raph just as he was about to follow his family. Pulling back into his hiding spot, he watched a group of half drunken revelers make their way down the street and into another tavern. As soon as he heard the door slam shut behind them, he darted across the thoroughfare, not wishing to take chances on turtle luck.

Everyone was waiting for him in an alley next the tavern. As soon as Raph arrived, Leo took them to a wooden fence attached to the corner of the building. Leaping up to catch hold of the top, Leo peered into the darkness beyond the alley to make sure the coast was clear before vaulting over.

Mikey held his nunchucks out for Lav to use as a springboard and then the rest of the Turtles leaped over the fence. It was full night now and the dim lights from the few tavern windows did little to dispel the darkness as the group crossed the yard between the tavern and stables.

There was no one about when they reached the open door that led into the stables and Leo took them all the way to the back, picking out an empty stall nearest the back exit. The way he looked around was a good indication that he expected Usagi to have arrived before them, but there was no sign of the ronin.

“Don’t worry, he’ll be here,” Don said quietly, tapping Leo’s arm to reassure him.

Leo merely nodded, his lips pressed tight. When his family settled down to wait, Leo remained crouched at the entrance to the stall, both tense and alert.

As Mikey leaned back to get more comfortable, he brushed against Don who made a face and tilted away from him. “Phew Mikey, it’s time to take off the disguise, that horse hair wig is getting ripe.”

“I was just starting to enjoy having hair,” Mikey lamented, slowly peeling the make-shift wig off so that the adhesive wouldn’t also remove his skin.

Mikey tossed it into the next stall and after he and Lavinia removed their costumes, he bundled the clothes together and threw them in with the wig.

When Mikey was seated again, Raph asked, “I heard ya’ chatting up that wagon driver;
“Dude, he was totally into me,” Mikey said. “I think he was gonna propose before mom here called me away.”

“You were being a hussy,” Lav teased. “The two of you were never properly introduced.”

“I’m pretty sure he planned to bump ‘mom’ off as soon as the wedding bells stopped chiming,” Mikey added.

Leo’s hand suddenly went up and the four of them fell instantly silent. As soon as they did, they heard what had alerted their leader; the faint shuffling sound of someone walking across hay.

“Leonardo?”

It was Usagi’s voice, calling softly into the dark stable. Leo stood up and stepped into the open. “We’re back here,” he said just as quietly.

Usagi joined the group, moving swiftly into the stall. Tossing a folded cloth onto the ground, he removed and dropped his cloak before sitting down on top of it.

“Did you meet with any difficulties?” Usagi asked as he fastened the tie around his ears.

“None,” Leo answered. “No one saw us enter the city.”

“That is good,” Usagi said. “We will have to wait here until the palace settles in for the night; there is too much activity in and around it at the moment.”

“I hope we don’t have to wait too long ‘cause the growling of my stomach is gonna give us away,” Mikey complained.

Usagi leaned forward and began to untie the folded cloth he’d brought with him. “I thought of that,” he said. “My employer paid me enough to enable me to buy some day old bread. It is not a feast, but it is edible.”

Mikey reached for a loaf of the bread, splitting it in half and handing a section to Lavinia. “It looks like a feast to me,” he said before biting eagerly into his portion.

Time passed but it seemed to do so exceptionally slowly. Raph played with his sai, balancing one of his weapons on his finger and then flipping it so that it would stick into the ground. Mikey wove pieces of hay together, attempting to create a solid mat of sorts.

Donatello dozed and Lav leaned against his shoulder, her eyes half closed but fixed on Mikey’s hands, marveling at how dexterous his six large fingers were. Occasionally she would glance towards Leo and Usagi, who sat next to each other. Neither spoke so whatever they planned to do had already been arranged.

Once or twice Lavinia saw Raph look at his older brother before returning to his weapon play. She could sense his unease, but whether that was from the enforced wait or Usagi’s close proximity to Leo was anyone’s guess.

On occasion Usagi would rise, go to one of the windows and look up towards the sky before returning to his place next to Leo. Lavinia figured that he was watching the movement of the moon in order to gauge the passage of time.
After one such trip to the window, Usagi remained standing and nodded at Leonardo who immediately got up. The others took that as a signal and also rose to their feet, including Donatello who did not even need to be nudged awake.

“We must be exceptionally wary,” Usagi said in a low tone as everyone gathered around him. “Between here and the garden wall we may encounter citizens on their way home from the taverns, characters of an unsavory nature, and those who are attached to the palace in some capacity.”

“Usagi will show us the route to the point where we plan to gain entry into the garden,” Leo said. “Once we are past these surrounding establishments, the approach to the palace is across open ground. I’ll help guide Usagi since he is not well versed in the art of invisibility. Use what shadows you can find; I saw some clouds starting to blow in so we may be lucky enough to have them shield the moon occasionally.”

“Of the three primary entrances, the back entrance is the least secure,” Usagi said. “They rely too much on the garden wall for protection, but the guards are not allowed to place a full contingent inside because the clan leader’s consort does not want them tramping through her garden and destroying things.”

“Move so that you don’t draw the eye,” Leo said. “The palace windows are going to be our greatest hazard since we won’t know if anyone is looking out.”

“We passed this class ages ago, bro’,” Mikey said. “Let’s go have some fun.”

Leo started to remind him that they were setting out to kill someone, but Raph shook his head, stopping his brother. Mikey didn’t need a lecture, he was merely nervous and letting off steam.

With a last glance around at his family, Leo led the way out through the stable’s back entrance. There were a few more buildings along their route and lights shown through windows in a couple of them. They encountered one inhabitant lying half in the street, the upper part of his body on some steps. Don checked him quickly and then indicated that the man was drunk and out cold.

Finally they reached the point where the palace grounds began. Usagi had taken them around to a spot nearest the northwest corner of the palace itself, out of view of the main and supply entrances. It was also on the farthest side of the wall from the garden gate.

“There are only two windows with an unobstructed view of the grounds,” Usagi whispered, pointing them out. “For someone to see us through the other windows, they would have to lean far out and then we would see them as well.”

“We ain’t gonna give anyone a reason ta look out the window,” Raph said, keeping his voice low.

It was his subtle way of stressing that they were ninjas and Leo was silently thankful that Raph hadn’t been any brusquer.

“Since we don’t know when the last guard patrol made their rounds of the palace, if you hear their approach, hit the ground and flatten yourselves as much as possible,” Leo directed. “Fan out and go.”

Remaining close by Usagi’s side, Leo hunched down low and ran for a few yards, moving
with the shadows provided by the clouds and into those thrown on the ground by the sparse clumps of tall grass. He didn’t look over to check on his family, knowing they would also be using as much of the natural cover as possible.

They were at the halfway point when Leo’s keen sense of smell picked up the scent of sweat riding the wind. He reached out to tug on Usagi’s sleeve, pulling the samurai to a halt. When Usagi looked over at him, Leo pointed to the ground and immediately fell into a prone position. Usagi dropped beside him swiftly, pressing his face into the crook of his arm so that his ears wouldn’t stick up in the air.

Less than a minute later they heard the guards. Leo watched them come around the southwest corner of the palace and march along the west wall. There were ten of them, heavily armed and wearing full armor.

Midway along the wall the guards stopped and spread out, all of them facing the open field where the group of hunters lay hidden. They remained in that position for a full ten minutes and Leo barely breathed for fear they would see the movement. After what seemed an eternity, the guards fell back into their formation and marched northward.

As soon as they were out of sight, Leo was on his feet again. From the corner of his eye he saw his family following suit and was pleased to note that they were all staying as invisible as possible.

They reached the garden wall without further incident. The palace guards were nowhere in sight and Don touched a finger to his wrist guard, indicating that he was keeping track of the time.

The wall around the garden was about eight feet tall and made of rock covered in plaster that was smoothed to a flat finish. Above them they could make out the branches of a tall tree, its limbs weighted by a heavy crop of fruit.

Leo pointed at Lav and then at the tree. Understanding his meaning, Lav stepped into Raph’s cupped hands and he boosted her to the top of the wall.

Crouching catlike, Lav took a quick look around and then leaped onto the nearest tree branch, scrambling across towards the trunk. From her new position Lavinia had a good view of the palace entrance and spotted the two guards who were stationed there.

Looking back at the wall, Lav saw Leo land silently, his body low so as to avoid being seen. When their eyes connected, Lav lifted two fingers and then gestured towards the guards.

Leo lowered his hand down to where the others waited, giving them a signal. A second later Raph bounded to the top of the wall, joining his brother. Once more Leo flashed a sign to Lavinia, indicating that she should wait for him and Raphael to get into position before proceeding with their plan.

The two brothers hugged the wall as they dropped over the side into the garden. Leo was satisfied to find that the grounds were lush; filled with trees and shrubs, tall flowering bushes and rows of staked vegetables. There were numerous places for his ninja to hide.

Making no sound, the pair crept towards the entrance, working their way around to either side of flag stone steps which led up to the wide patio. There was no cover on the patio itself, but thick bushes planted up against the palace wall allowed them to get within several feet of the guards.
Leo knew that Lavinia would be tracking him from her vantage point in the tree. Once he and Raph were in position, Leo lifted his hand high and turned his thumb down.

Lavinia shot two arrows in rapid fire succession, both finding their targets in the guard’s throats. As the men slumped over, Raph and Leo sped from their hiding places to grab the guards and haul them out of sight into the bushes.

The entire transaction took less than a minute and was completely silent. That was the primary reason for having Lav take them down with her arrows; Leo did not want any outcry to raise the household.

As soon as the brothers grabbed the guards, Lavinia swung back down to the top of the garden wall and waved to the three who were waiting. Mikey used the chain between one of his nunchucks to springboard Usagi onto the wall and then the two turtles leaped up to join him.

Lav returned to her spot on the tree branch while the other three hopped off the wall and slid into the shadows underneath the tree. They were almost immediately joined by Raph and Leo, the latter carrying the guard’s uniforms.

Keeping his voice low, Leo said, “I don’t like how easily we could be seen by the patrol if we climb up on the outside wall. We’ll wear these uniforms and chance the servant’s staircase; I didn’t hear a sound from inside the palace when we were taking out the guards.”

“It is possible that with a declaration of war pending, the servants are too frightened to come out of their rooms at night. The change of plan is sound,” Usagi agreed.

Leo tossed one of the uniforms to Usagi and proceeded to pull on the second one. He removed his mask before placing the uniform cap onto his head, tucking the mask into his belt. The last step was to seat his weapons on his carapace as normal; the guards carried personal weapons as well as the lances that were standard issue.

Usagi could not hide his ears beneath the cap, but he did tie them lower so that they hung down against his back.

“Your second disguise in one day; you’ll be a ninja before you know it,” Mikey observed with a laugh.

“I fear it is another thing for which Hebi must pay,” Usagi replied somberly, although the hint of a smile touched his lips.

“The two of ya’ still plan on doing this by yourselves?” Raph asked gruffly.

“Yes.” Leo looked at him. “Innocent people have died because Usagi and I were unable to capture Hebi the last time he threatened Lord Noriyuki; this time we will destroy his evil. It must be the two of us who set things right again.”

“That snake is damn slippery,” Raph said, his eyes locked on Leo’s. “Don’t let pride keep ya’ from calling for help.”

“I won’t,” Leo promised. “Keep Lav where she is and find a strategic place for Mike and Don. You’ll have to watch for replacement guards and if you see them take them out before they can sound the alarm.”

Leo turned on his heel and headed back towards the palace entrance, using the garden as cover. Usagi stayed with him, knowing that the route Leo chose would render them invisible from sight through any of the upper windows.

Indicating that Usagi should stay hidden, Leo bent low and crossed the flag stone steps, stopping when he reached the entrance. Peering through he ascertained that no one was about before darting back to where Usagi waited.

“How close are the servant’s stairs to the entrance?” Leo asked.

“Quite close,” Usagi said. “Turn left as you enter and then right after twelve paces. The stairs are near the kitchens.”

Leo picked up one of the guard’s lances and handed the other to Usagi. “Part of the disguise,” he explained, “and they may come in handy.”

Entering the palace, the pair quickly made their way to the stairs without encountering anyone. In fact, the silence was causing Leo some misgivings. When he had stayed in Lord Noriyuki’s castle he had noticed that the kitchens were always bustling.

“It is quiet,” Usagi said, poised on the bottom step.

“If this were a trap, I should think it would already have been sprung,” Leo said. “I agree though; it is very quiet. We haven’t taken into account Hebi’s wizards.”

“Perhaps we have counted too much on their belief that we have been destroyed,” Usagi said. “It would be comforting to once more have an army at our backs.”

Leo looked up, his eyes narrowed as he contemplated the staircase which was shrouded in darkness. “We do have an army at our backs; an army of ninjas. We’ll accomplish what the Shogun has been unable to do, wizards or not,” he said confidently.

They cautiously ascended the stairs, each hugging a wall to avoid the inevitable creaking at the center of the risers. At the first landing all was quiet and they continued on up.

On the second landing Leo spotted a guard only a split second before the Neko saw him. With a movement so swift it was hard for Usagi to track him, Leo leaped at the cat, crushing the guard’s mouth with the heel of his foot.

As the guard fell back, Leo unsheathed one of his swords and severed the Neko’s head from his shoulders.

“We cannot hide that,” Usagi whispered.

“Keep going,” Leo urged. “Let’s find Hebi’s room before anyone discovers the guard.”

When they reached the next landing, the pair heard a noise and stopped moving. Leo lay flat on the stairs in order to look into the corridor and saw a chamber maid with an armful of linens go into a room and close the door.

“Clear,” Leo hissed, dashing up to the next set of stairs with Usagi right behind him.

The fourth floor was where Usagi had guessed Hebi would be staying. The samurai and the ninja both held their lances in one hand, the other poised to draw their swords at a second’s notice. Each step was taken with infinite care in their effort to preserve the element of surprise.
Once more Leo crawled across the topmost risers so that he could get an advance view of the fourth floor. At the top of the landing stood a guard, turned so that he could see both the servant’s stairs and the corridor window. Leo counted himself lucky that the Neko wasn’t more vigilant or he might have seen the ninja, but the guard was staring out the window.

When Leo turned his head, he saw another guard posted in front of an ornate set of double doors. This had to be Hebi’s room and it was immediately clear that it wouldn’t be possible to remove the guards separately.

Sliding back down to where Usagi waited, Leo leaned in close and whispered in his friend’s ear, “There is a guard at the top of the stairs and another in front of Hebi’s door. Taking out the first one will alert the other and he’ll bring the house down on us.”

“What do you propose?” Usagi asked.

Leo propped his lance against the wall and whispered, “I’ll get past the first guard unseen. As soon as I’m gone, count to ten slowly and then jump the guard. I’ll be in position to remove the second one simultaneously.”

Usagi watched as Leo drew a pair of shuko spikes from his belt, placing them on his hands before climbing to the ceiling. In a moment the ninja disappeared into the darkness, gliding silently over the first guard’s head on his way to Hebi’s door.

At the count of ten Usagi raced to the top of the stairs, sword in hand. The sound of his feet turned the guard, who opened his mouth as if to shout, but Usagi decapitated him before he could do so.

Spinning swiftly, Usagi looked down the corridor and saw Leo standing over the dead body of the second guard. Breathing a quick sigh of relief, Usagi retrieved the lances and joined Leo in front of the door to what they hoped was Hebi’s room.

Leo tried the handle and found it to be locked. Removing a small kit from his belt, Leo inserted a pair of tools into the locking mechanism and soon had it open.

With another glance around the corridor, Leo and Usagi entered the room. It was dark inside but the moonlight that shone through the open window showed them that the large room was empty save for the form under the blankets on the bed.

The shape was distinctly that of a huge snake. Leo and Usagi looked at each other briefly and drew their katanas. Before they moved away from the door, Leo pushed his lance through the handles to keep anyone from interrupting them.

On their toes, the pair approached the bed, separating so that they could stand on either side of it. Usagi glanced up at Leo who nodded and readied himself.

Reaching out slowly, Usagi caught hold of the top edge of the blanket and yanked it back. Leo’s eyes widened as he saw the pile of pillows lying across the bed. Before he could react, a shape rose up behind Usagi, blotting out the samurai’s moonlit shadow.

“No!” Leo shouted as Hebi’s sharp fangs flashed down towards Usagi.
The Assassination

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 5,864
Chapter pairing: none this chapter
Chapter Rating: R Chapter Warnings/Kinks: Adult concepts and situations, language, violence/gore
Chapter Summary: Ninja and samurai join forces to destroy an evil being who has threatened the lives of both family and friends.

Leo’s cry warned Usagi to move. Without thought, the samurai launched himself across the bed, hitting the mattress and rolling over to the other side as Hebi’s fangs closed on empty air right behind him.

As the snake whipped around for another strike, Leonardo’s blades were there to block him. Off balance due to the position of the bed and Usagi’s moving form, Leo over extended his reach. Hebi saw the sword coming in time and twisted aside, but not before a katana sheared off the end of one tooth.

Hebi’s tail lashed out and slapped against Leo’s plastron, sending the ninja hurtling backwards. Leo hit the wall carapace first, denting the wooden planks before bouncing off of them and landing on his knees.

Before he could rise, Hebi surged over the bed, coming towards him with incredible speed. In the years that had passed since their last encounter, Leo had almost forgotten how quickly the snake could move.

Just as Hebi loomed over him, Usagi regained his footing, slashing at the snake’s body as it passed him. Hebi’s scales were thick and tough, but the sharp tip of Usagi’s katana managed to penetrate slightly and to cut a shallow trench in the snake’s skin.

The sting was enough to draw Hebi’s attention, his upper half curving away from Leo as the evil snake sought out the samurai. Both of Usagi’s blades came up and as Hebi dove at him, Usagi slashed at his eyes with his katana.

Hebi hissed as he reared back from the flashing sword and Usagi sprang for this throat, his shorter wakizashi hungry for blood. At the same moment, Leo lifted his katana and leaped for Hebi’s tail.

Coiling his body rapidly, the bottom half of Hebi’s body slid away from Leo’s attack and the ninja’s sword skewered the floor. The momentum took the snake’s throat far out of Usagi’s reach and then Hebi slithered quickly over the bed and away from his two assailant’s.

“You are no match for me Miyamoto Ussagi,” Hebi said. “Nor isss your interfering kame friend. I felt your ssstepsss vibrate through the floorboardsss before you entered.”

“And still with such advanced warning your trap failed to catch us,” Usagi said as he slowly moved around the end of the bed.
“Perhapssss the trap hasss not fully been sssprung,” Hebi countered.

Hanging next to the bed was a thick rope cord and as soon as Hebi spoke his tail curled around it. Before either Usagi or Leo could prevent it, Hebi yanked down on the cord.

A loud gong sounded throughout the palace and Leo and Usagi glanced at each other.

“He has summoned the guards,” Usagi said, stating the obvious.

“They’ll punch right through those doors,” Leo warned.

Hebi began to laugh. “I will mount your headsss on ssstakesss and carry them before me into battle againssst Lord Noriyuki. His landsss will sssoon become mine and everyone who ssstandsss in my way ssshall forfeit their livesss!”

“You shall die first snake!” Usagi shouted, bounding forward as he rushed towards Hebi.

Hebi slithered out of his way as Usagi struck at him, his swords slicing nothing more than air. Usagi spun on his heels, anticipating Hebi’s counter move and leaping aside before the snake’s tail smashed the floor where the samurai had been standing.

Leo made a diving roll forward as his friend jumped out of Hebi’s way. Coming up under Hebi’s mid-section, Leo slashed at his under belly. The attack was unexpected enough that Hebi was a millisecond too slow in twisting away from the strike and felt the sword bite at his skin.

As Hebi slithered across the room, Usagi rushed up next to Leo. They both saw that the wound on the snake’s under belly was small, barely more than a nick, but it was enough to make Hebi grow cautious.

As the two friends prepared to attack again, the noise of running footsteps reached them. From the sound it was clear there were many guards rushing to the aid of their Lord Hebi.

Leo glanced back towards the door and then around the room, looking for something they could use to bar the entry. He was glad that the doors weren’t made of the thick rice paper that was normally favored, but the wood was still too thin to hold anyone back for long.

The room was empty of furnishings save for the structure that Hebi slept upon.

“Usagi, the bed!” Leo shouted, sheathing his swords as he dashed towards the heavy wooden podium.

Usagi backed away from Hebi, seating his wakizashi in its scabbard but keeping his katana pointed at the snake. Leo bent at the knees, gripping the wooden platform and straining to lift it, trusting Usagi to watch his back.

Hearing his friend struggle with the piece of furniture, Usagi reached down with his free hand and helped Leo lift it onto its side. Hebi made as if to rush them and Usagi stepped out to meet him, drawing his short sword once more.

Knowing that Usagi would shout for him if he was needed, Leo ignored Hebi and concentrated on shoving the bed up against the doors. Fortunately, it was wide enough to block most of the entrance but Leo knew that if enough weight was thrown against it, the bed frame would fall.

Seeing the lance that Usagi had carried into the room, Leo swept it up from the floor and
braced the butt end against the bed before digging the bladed tip into the wooden floor. The added buttressing would buy them a little more time.

Leo turned to see Usagi battling against Hebi, leaping to avoid the snake’s rippling coils whilst trying to strike a crippling blow of his own. Hebi was a wily combatant; dangerous, strong, and quick.

Usagi jumped backwards, barely dodging Hebi’s whipping tail. Landing next to Leo, who had drawn his twin blades, Usagi said, “We are running out of time.”

“Attack as one,” Leo said through gritted teeth. “Now!”

Moving together, the pair darted for Hebi, separating to attack different sections of his large body. Hebi contorted his form, sliding his bottom half away from Usagi as he swept forward to meet Leo’s charge.

The snake’s strike was like lighting, his head flashing down at Leo with teeth bared. Leo’s sword came up to block him and Hebi clamped down on it, yanking it from the turtle’s hand and sending it skittering across the floor.

Leo had been disarmed by Hebi in exactly that manner once before and anticipated the move. As Hebi’s head twisted to release the sword, Leo slashed at his exposed neck with his second katana.

Cold steel bit into Hebi’s skin and the snake cried out, whipping his body away from the pain much faster than any mammal could manage. It saved him from certain death, but he was far from unscathed. Blood splattered the wooden floors beneath his coiling body as Hebi sped towards the barricaded door.

So focused on reaching his reinforcements, Hebi momentarily forgot about Usagi. Leaping high, the samurai dropped his short sword and wrapped both hands around the handle of his katana. With a reverberating battle cry, Usagi plunged his sword into the center point of Hebi’s back.

Hebi’s head reared up as he shouted in pain before spinning back at the samurai who was still riding him. Usagi saw Hebi’s teeth coming towards him and swiftly back flipped off of the snake.

As Usagi moved so did Leo, running towards the door and then dropping onto one hip to slide beneath Hebi’s writhing form. Once more his sword found its way past Hebi’s thick scales as he cut another bloody swatch along the snake’s exposed belly.

Hebi responded to the pain by curving away from his adversary. His movement was fast and the twisting coils struck Leo a hard blow as the turtle began to stand. The strike bowlled Leo over, sending him careening into the underside of the bed.

Hebi’s thrashing tail caught the backs of Usagi’s ankles just as the samurai landed. Falling onto his back, Usagi’s eyes widened as he saw Hebi’s mouth coming down at him.

Though Usagi quickly rolled to avoid the snake, Hebi’s broken tooth raked across his shoulder, drawing a cry of pain from the samurai. On his stomach, Usagi scrambled for his wakizashi, which lay a few feet in front of him.

Before Usagi’s fingers could close on the handle, Hebi’s tail coiled around the samurai’s body and yanked him off of the floor.
“Thisss iss the end for you Ussagis!” Hebi exclaimed victoriously, opening his mouth to deliver a final deadly bite.

“No!” Leo shouted, gaining his feet and racing towards the snake.

With a desperate lunge, Leo propelled himself onto the back of Hebi’s neck and drove his katana through the snake’s skull.

The power in Leo’s strike pushed his blade all of the way through Hebi’s head and mouth until the tip protruded from beneath the snake’s chin. Wheezing out his last breath, Hebi’s tail uncoiled and Usagi dropped to the floor.

On his rump, Usagi pushed backwards to scoot out of the way as Hebi’s dead form slowly sank to the floor. Leo yanked his sword free and jumped down, rushing over to help Usagi stand.

A crashing sound at the door drew both of the warrior’s attention around to their makeshift barrier. Wood splintered outwards from a heavy blow, the tip of an axe showing through the door just above the sideways bed.

Usagi scooped up his wakizashi and said, “We must leave quickly.”

Leo saw the bloody gash on Usagi’s shoulder as his friend leaned down. “Usagi, you’re hurt, you’re bleeding.”

“I have no time for an injury,” Usagi replied with a grimace. “Retrieve your other sword, we must escape.”

As Leo darted over to grab his second katana up off the floor, Usagi wrenched his sword from Hebi’s back. They came back together in the center of the room just as the sound of splintering wood told them the door had given way.

Both glanced at the smaller door in the wall next to where the bed had stood, but the sudden pounding on that door made them abandon that as a choice for escape.

“To the windows,” Leo urged, rushing towards the row of windows that occupied the outermost wall.

Surging through the openings, Leo and Usagi dug their fingers and toes into every available protrusion and began to climb down. They were nearly to the next floor when they heard the thud of the bed being pushed over and the shouts of Hebi’s guards.

A second later, the windows were filled with the bodies of those same guards, all yelling at once at the fleeing assassins.

“We may be forced to jump,” Usagi said, glancing up at the guards. “They are preparing to start down after us.”

“No, Lavinia will stop them,” Leo told him confidently. “Keep going.”

Two of the guards were straddling the windowsill, getting ready to climb down. Before either could move, twin arrows, fired in rapid succession, pierced their necks. Neither had the opportunity to cry out as they plummeted past Leo and Usagi to land heavily in the garden below.

The remaining guards pulled back from the windows quickly and horns began to blare almost simultaneously. Leo and Usagi crawled past the third floor, moving over the uneven stone
as fast as they could.

Just above them an archer leaned out of a window, readying an arrow in his bow. Before he could take aim, one of Lavinia’s arrows found his forehead. The twang of his string was loud, but his shot went far off course as he fell dead.

There was a raucous clamoring from inside the palace as the guards left the windows.

“They are going down the staircase to intercept us,” Usagi said.

The pair were moving past the second floor and Leo glanced down. Below him he could see Raph carrying an armful of uprooted shrubs, which he tossed through the garden entrance.

“Raph’s taking care of it,” Leo told him.

In another minute they were near enough to the ground to drop the rest of the way. Landing lightly on their feet, they were just in time to see Raph setting fire to some dried foliage he’d found in a nearby bin, which he’d thrown atop the shrubbery.

A blaze erupted instantly, catching at the fresher leaves and creating a heavy smokescreen. As Raph leaped off the patio, Leo and Usagi caught up to him.

“Sure am glad they keep up with the weeding,” Raph said with a grin. “Did ya’ kill that bastard?”

“Yes,” Leo said, all business. “Where are Mikey and Don?”

“They went for horses,” Raph said. “The outer patrol ain’t reached us yet, but they gotta be close.”

“Where?” Leo asked.

Raph understood what he meant. “Back to the wall we came in by. We figured the patrol would still be on the far side of the palace.”

They heard coughing and shouting coming from the garden entrance as the guards encountered the smoky blaze. Together, the brothers and Usagi raced back towards the garden wall.

As Leo neared Lav’s hiding spot, he saw her turn towards the back gate and loose an arrow. A loud cry told him she’d hit her target and then she looked back to see Leo’s approach.

“The gate guards were trying to enter the garden,” Lav called down to him. “I got one of them, the other ducked back outside.”

“The patrol?” Leo asked.

“I can hear them, but they haven’t come around near the gate yet,” Lav said.

“What about . . . .” Leo began.

Before the full question left his mouth, he heard the whooping sound of Mikey’s catcalls, nearing them swiftly.

“They’re here!” Lav announced, somewhat unnecessarily.
Leo boosted Usagi onto the top of the wall and then he and Raph sprang up to join him. Lav unleashed another arrow towards the house and then leaped down next to Usagi, glancing at his shoulder as she draped her bow across her back.

Racing towards them on horseback were Mikey and Don. The duo had brought along another pair of saddled horses and they galloped close, pulling the horses up near the wall. Leo leaped into the saddle of the first horse and Raph joined him, sliding in behind his brother. Usagi mounted the second animal and Lav jumped down behind him, wrapping her arms around his waist as he spurred the horse on.

“We chased the other horses out of the stable and set it on fire!” Mikey shouted above the din as more alarms rang out behind them. “It’ll take the guards a while to catch their rides!”

“How are we getting out of here?” Raph asked his brother, his voice loud enough for the others to hear.

“Back through the merchant’s entrance, the way we came in!” Leo answered. “I’ve got a plan!”

“I hope it doesn’t involve Don blowing something up!” Raph yelled.

“No high tech gadgets around here either! I guess you won’t be working any magic!” Mikey teased, glancing over at the genius.

They were nearing the gate and Leo abruptly turned his horse, heading towards a set of corrals where a multitude of sheep were penned up for the night. Don spotted a heavy cart parked near the corrals, one that had obviously been built to move cattle.

Doing a quick calculation as his eyes swept the path from the cart to the gate, Don suddenly slowed his horse. “Mikey!”

Surprised that his brother was stopping, Mikey pulled back on the reins and his horse skid to a stop as well. “What are you doing?” Mikey asked.

“Hold onto my horse,” Don said, tossing the reins to his brother and sliding out of the saddle.

Jogging over to the cart, Don quickly kicked the braces out from under its wheels, then leaped into the driver’s seat. Yanking down on the wooden post next to the seat, Don released the hand brake and then jumped out again, racing around behind the cart.

Drawing his bo staff, Don jabbed one end at an angle into the ground under the cart. Setting his carapace towards the middle of the bo, Don pushed upwards as hard as he could.

The cart started to roll forward, picking up speed on the path because of its small incline. Due to the precise placement of his bo staff, the cart rumbled ever faster towards the closed gate.

At that exact moment, Leo bounded out of the saddle and into the corral. Startled, the sheep began bleating loudly, milling around the turtle as he unlatched the gate and swung it open.

“Hu-ya! Hu-ya! Run sheep!” Leo yelled, flailing his arms wildly and swatting at the animal’s rumps.

Once the sheep began charging through the gate, Leo hopped back over the fence and swung into the saddle, taking the reins from Raph. Usagi swept towards the loose sheep, expertly
guiding them towards the merchant’s entrance.

Don ran up to where Mikey waited and once he was again in the saddle, grinned at his younger brother. “Who needs high tech gadgets when you’ve got physics?”

As if to emphasize his point, the careening cart plowed into the closed gate, crashing through it and scattering the guards.

“Energy and force, Mikey. Yee-ha!” Don shouted exuberantly, riding towards the running sheep.

Laughing gleefully, Mikey called after him, “Go Donny!”

Flowing in behind the frightened animals, the small band watched as the guards attempted to regroup and stop their escape. Loud shouting and horns blaring behind them warned the guards to stand their ground, but before they could get set, the sheep plowed into them.

Once more the guards were forced to jump aside, though one incautious fellow attempted to hold his ground. The sheep hit his legs full force, bowling him over and then trampling him in their wide eyed panic.

The contingent of horse riders galloped through the gate amidst the sheep, moving in tandem with them.

After they cleared the entrance, the sheep began to spread out and the riders spurred their horses to move faster, racing along the road that had brought them into Perdred. The archers in the battlements, alerted by the shouts of the guards, began to shoot arrows at the fleeing group.

As arrows rained down around them, the riders bent low over their horses, using every trick they knew to add speed to their escape. Fortunately, it had taken too long for the archers to realize their targets were leaving the city rather than trying to enter and the group was soon out of range.

“Don’t slow down,” Leo urged. “We need to be off of this flat land before the guards catch up to their mounts and come after us.”

“The horses cannot continue at this pace for long,” Usagi warned.

Leo pushed on for another mile and then felt the sweat beginning to lather his horse’s neck. Pulling back on the reins he slowed the animal, lifting his hands to signal that the others should follow suit.

“Let’s keep them at a steady canter,” Leo said. “Give them a chance to rest and cool off. We’ll cut off the main road when the terrain starts to get rocky and head back to where our packs are hidden.”

“Usagi, may I tend to your wound?” Lavinia asked.

The samurai glanced back at her. “With your healing gift?”

“Yes,” Lav answered. “I can bind it in more conventional ways if you prefer. I am a trained physician.”

Though the brothers heard the exchange, they did not say anything, choosing to allow Usagi to decide if he was comfortable with Lav’s offer.
“I am a samurai and you are a healer,” Usagi finally said. “We cannot ask to be something other than we are. To bind the wound we would have to stop and that is not prudent. I will accept your kind offer with thanks.”

Usagi did not know what to expect when Lavinia raised her hand to his wound. He anticipated her touch, steeling himself for additional pain, but it did not come. Though the horse’s gait was rough, the woman’s hand was steady, resting just above the gash that had torn through his stolen uniform and ripped open his skin.

A green glow began to form along his shoulder and in seconds engulfed the entire wound. Following the glow came a tingling sensation that danced across his skin and raised the fur on his neck. It was not unlike the feeling he’d once had when a bolt of lightning had hit a tree quite close to where he’d sheltered from a storm.

The feeling intensified, but it was not painful. As he watched, the torn skin began to knit in an almost slow motion reversal of the path Hebi’s tooth had taken. All bleeding stopped, and the blood that painted both his skin and the uniform disappeared, sinking back into Usagi’s own body.

Next his fur returned to cover the section of damaged skin, coming back as thick and lustrous as it had been before the fight with Hebi. In barely more time than it had taken for Usagi to acquire the wound, it was gone.

Lavinia lowered her hand and sighed. It was barely a whisper of sound, but it told Usagi that healing took energy from the woman and explained why she’d passed out after protecting Mikey from the Daravere.

“Thank you,” Usagi said simply. “Your gift was much needed.”

“You are quite welcome,” Lavinia replied.

At Leo’s request, Raph had been keeping an eye on their back trail. They could still hear the sounds coming from Perdred and the area had gotten brighter, indicating that lamps throughout the city were being lit.

When Raph commented on that fact, Usagi said, “They will make a show of searching for those who broke into the gardens. After a time the guards will claim to have discovered and killed those responsible for the trespass. In this way they will save face, will avoid admitting that their security was inadequate, while also keep Hebi’s presence and his death a secret.”

“What does it matter if people learn about Hebi?” Mikey asked.

“Because the Jeshtare clan has denied their involvement with Hebi,” Leo answered. “They know the shogun has been searching for Hebi and they do not want him to learn that they have been giving Hebi shelter. The knowledge of their subterfuge would bring the shogun’s army down on the Jeshtare.”

“They will of course pursue us,” Usagi said, picking up the explanation. “I doubt they will do so for any great length of time. We will have to continue moving quickly with no stops until we are at least out of the Jeshtare lands and back inside Lord Noriyuki’s.”

“Without Hebi’s backing, the Jeshtare will not be able to amass the army they meant to use in order to wage war against Lord Noriyuki and then against the shogun himself,” Leo said. “Those who have pledged their allegiance to Hebi will withdraw it immediately.”

“What we must continue to be wary of are those assassins who have been offered payment
for our heads by Hebi,” Usagi said grimly. “Word of his demise will not reach them quickly so they will believe the bounty still stands.”

“That combined with the normal contingent of bandits along the roads will make our return trip nearly as difficult as the one coming in,” Leo said.

“Yeah, but this time we’ve got horses,” Raph said. “We can travel faster.”

“Unfortunately, they’re going to tire quickly,” Don said. “They’re already winded. If we’re attacked and have to make another run for it, they may collapse under us. Not to mention the fact that they’ll have to be fed and watered.”

“If we follow the roads, we will find sufficient water for their needs as well as our own,” Usagi said. “We will also find bandits and assassins.”

“Seems to me that if we stay on the road we’ll be making it easy for those Jeshtare dudes to catch up to us too,” Mikey said. “Shouldn’t we focus on losing them for good first?”

“What do ya’ say, Leo?” Raph asked.

Leo took a moment to answer. “Mikey’s right,” he finally said. “Though we’ll have to pay attention to what’s in front of us, our task of the moment is discouraging the Jeshtare from continuing their pursuit.”

Lavinia hadn’t involved herself in the conversation up to this point, but now she had a question. “Won’t the Jeshtare be worried that if we escape we might carry word of their involvement with Hebi to Lord Noriyuki or to the shogun himself? What would keep us from doing that other than separating our heads from our bodies?”

“That is a concern,” Usagi acknowledged. “Because they will not admit to having knowledge of Hebi’s death, word of that fact will not reach the snake’s followers for many moons. However, Lord Noriyuki will want the information to spread quickly so that his enemies will be dissuaded from launching continued attacks against his people. The Jeshtare will fear the reprisals that will come about from their treachery.”

“Catching and killing us would be their best solution of course,” Leo said. “If they don’t, then there is a chance that continuing to deny involvement with Hebi will keep them safe from the shogun. Better yet, they could claim to have been the ones to slay Hebi. It would be our word against theirs and for the most part we are unknown to anyone.”

“Lord Noriyuki will believe us,” Don said.

“I don’t want to put him into the position of explaining our presence or our raid across the border to the shogun,” Leo said. “Though Lord Noriyuki did not officially sanction what we’ve done, he is our friend and Usagi is known to have pledged his loyalty to the young Lord. It would be best if we only inform him that Hebi is dead, but not how we’ve come to have that knowledge.”

“Plausible deniability,” Don inserted.

“Does that mean that once we’re back on Lord Noriyuki’s lands the Jeshtare won’t want to be seen there?” Mikey asked. “They’ve gotta know that because of the trouble Hebi has stirred up there’ll be army patrols close to the border.”

“There are patrols,” Usagi said, a hint of a smile curving his lips. “They are done by the brigades from outposts established throughout Lord Noriyuki’s lands. I believe these are familiar
to Leonardo."

“The brigades!” Leo exclaimed. “Lord Noriyuki followed through with that plan?”

“How could he not?” Usagi countered. “The concept was masterful and greatly strengthened
the Geishu clan’s holdings. The shogun himself was impressed with how adroitly Lord Noriyuki
handled the challenge of having only a small army.”

Raph was becoming impatient with the conversation and interrupted to ask, “What the shell
are the brigades?”

Though Leo did not want to address that question, he knew that Raph couldn’t be ignored.
“A while back Hebi’s followers were invading portions of Lord Noriyuki’s lands, taking over
villages and towns in an effort to displace the young lord. The bandits were growing bold as a
result and Lord Noriyuki, who did not have the manpower necessary to handle the problem, was
hard pressed to effectively deal with the situation.”

“Leonardo came up with the plan to form brigades throughout the land,” Usagi said. “These
were made up of men and women who could not leave their homes to join the regular army, but
who could benefit from the additional stipend offered for their service. They serve in outposts that
lie near towns and villages and patrol a set area.”

Raph’s face darkened at the reminder that Leo had left his family three years earlier in order
to spend time travelling with Usagi. Tightening his grip on the edges of Leo’s shell, Raph silently
berated himself for letting that memory continue to bother him. He’d had plenty of proof over the
intervening years that Leo belonged body and soul to his brothers, but Usagi’s attempts to seduce
the Turtle leader at that time still irked the hot head.

Sensing that Raph would feel better if their discussion returned to the problem at hand, Leo
said, “In answer to your question Mikey, the Jeshtare won’t chance being caught crossing into Lord
Noriyuki’s domain. That would be seen as an aggression and with Hebi dead, any move of that sort
would be ill-advised.”

“So to summarize, the Jeshtare will only pursue us for as long as they think they’ve got a
chance at actually catching us,” Don said.

“Meaning we’ve got ta’ stay ahead of them,” Raph said. “Stopping ta eat or sleep is gonna
be a problem.”

“They will have brought extra mounts with them,” Usagi said. “Our horses will tire and
there’s will not.”

“Could we find places along the way to trade out?” Lav asked. “Like they did back when
mail traveled by pony express?”

“These horses are very fine by most standards. I am sure we would have no problem making
an even exchange at our first stop,” Usagi said. “We will most likely need to make another trade
near the border and the work horses we will have no doubt acquired will not be enough.”

“We’ve got other stuff we can barter,” Mikey said. “Our camping gear has to be worth
something in trade.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” Leo said. “We won’t require the gear once we’re across the border.
Our presence no longer needs to be kept secret, so we can seek shelter at outposts on the way to
Lord Noriyuki.”
“Keep your gear, it would only draw envy to a poor farmer and make him the target of bandits,” Usagi advised. “We should choose a route that will take us past a grove of trees found only in this part of Jeshtare land. The fruit born by those trees is much sought after and sweets made from them would bring the farmer more ryô than the price of his horses.”

They had been riding at a canter for several miles and the horses breathing began to sound labored. Leo slowed his mount in response and the others quickly followed suit.

“Damn, wish I could spot some sign of who might be tracking us,” Raph grumbled after a period of silence. “It’s too dark ta even see the dust they’re probably stirring up.”

“If they were close we’d hear them,” Mikey said. “Sound carries out here.”

“Then it would be a good plan to keep our voices down,” Leo cautioned. “However fresh their horses, they can’t chance moving fast and perhaps missing us. As long as they have to go as slowly as we do in order to follow our trail, we’ll be able to rest our horses.”

“How long ’til we reach that rocky outcrop where we hitched a ride?” Raph asked. “For a while there we were moving a lot quicker than that wagon we rode in on.”

“Not far,” Leo answered. “We’ll grab our packs and leave the main road at that point. We can ride parallel to the road but out of sight until sunup. After that, we’ll have to move farther away to avoid detection.”

The group fell silent then, the only sounds that of their horse’s breathing, their hooves impacting the ground, and the creak of saddles. Early morning darkness surrounded them and the riders used senses other than their sight to search for danger.

Before long a heavier shadow fell across the road and it was with a collective sigh of relief that the travelers recognized the rocky outcropping they’d been looking for. Turning their horses from the road, the riders picked their way single file across the rock strewn landscape, careful that their mounts not break a leg on the uneven path.

Ground tethering the horses on a patch of sweet grass, the group quickly found their packs. Leo and Usagi stripped out of the stolen uniforms, shoving them under some rocks to hide them from view. The riders took the time to drink from their canteens but no more than that; danger followed them, its messengers taking many forms.

Once they’d secured their packs to the saddles, the riders switched horses. Usagi climbed into the saddle of the mount who had carried Leo and Raph, giving the horse a break from the weight. Raph took Don’s horse and Lavinia swung into the saddle behind him. Don shared Mikey’s horse while Leo mounted the steed once ridden by Usagi and Lav.

Leo prodded his horse forward, taking the lead. He found a way through the rocky field, going slowly to keep the horses safe and to avoid leaving tracks for their pursuers to follow.

When they were out of sight of the road, Leo angled back so that they were riding parallel to it. The terrain was grassy but even and Leo urged his mount into a lope, covering another couple of miles before slowing down again. Keeping pace with him, the others maintained a prudent silence.

They were all extremely tired by the time the sun began to show itself. Lav rested against Raph’s carapace, dozing in the saddle with her arms locked tightly around him. Donatello had glanced over at her from time to time and then finally succumbed to the urge to emulate Lav’s actions. Balancing his chin on the top edge of Mikey’s carapace and tilting his head so that it lay
alongside his younger brother’s, Don napped.

Having to keep his head straight so that Don could maintain his balance as he snoozed was the only reason Mikey didn’t fall asleep in the saddle. Raph’s eyes were bleary yet determined, and the signs of exhaustion were obvious in the set of both Leo and Usagi’s shoulders.

A wooded area came within view and Leo led the group towards it as the sky lightened further. They used the outer edges for cover, avoiding going deeper into the trees where they might take a chance at losing their direction.

The sun was still climbing the sky when the smell of water hit their horse’s nostrils.

Leo felt the muscles in his mount’s shoulders tighten and immediately pulled back on the reins. From the corner of his eye he saw that Usagi was likewise controlling his horse. Raph’s mount had taken a small leap before the large turtle checked his movements, the horse shaking his head in displeasure.

Unfortunately, Mikey’s eyes were glazed and his reflexes slow. His horse whinnied as soon as it caught the scent of water and then bolted.

Startled by the movement, Mikey’s slack hands lost the reins. He lurched forward to grab at the horse’s mane as he tried to stay in the saddle of the runaway horse.

Donatello suddenly found himself clutching at thin air. With a shout of surprise, he was thrown from the plummeting horse.

In shock, the others watched him fly into a heavy clump of trees and bushes while Mikey sped off into the distance.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 5,366
Chapter pairing: none this chapter
Chapter Rating: R
Chapter Warnings/Kinks: Adult concepts and situations, language, action/suspense, sexual innuendo, tcest
Chapter Summary: With Hebi gone and his followers hot on their heels, the clan must find a way to safety. Because their actions were not officially sanctioned, the political climate may force their allies to disavow them.

Chapter Notes

~~This incredible preview image was created by the incomparable NeatTea from DeviantArt.
Leo kicked his horses’ sides, spurring his steed into a fast run as he chased after Mikey, calling back to the others, “Find Donny!”

Racing to catch his brother, Leo saw that Mikey had gotten a double handful of his horse’s mane. Holding on for dear life, Mikey couldn’t chance relinquishing his grip to make a grab at the reins, which flopped just out of reach against the sides of the horse’s neck.

Leaning far over his ride, Leo used the flat side of one of his swords to smack his own horse’s flank. Squealing loudly, the horse shot forward and Leo angled him towards his brother’s runaway mount.

Quickly sheathing his sword, Leo came up alongside Mikey and tilted in the saddle so that he could reach for the reins. It took a couple of tries but finally his fingers closed on the leather
strap and Leo simultaneously yanked back on both his horse and Mikey’s horses’ reins to bring them to a stop.

Breathing heavily, Mikey gave Leo a grateful look. “That’s one wild ride I’d rather not experience again.”

“Me either,” Leo said, passing the reins back to Mikey. “Walk him back; we need to check on Donny.”

While Leo was chasing after Mikey, Raph and Usagi urged their mounts into a lope, quickly reaching the shrubbery that Don had fallen into. Leaping from his horse, Raph swiftly tied its reins to a low tree branch as Lavinia shot past him.

“Donny! Donny, where are you?” Lavinia called, pushing aside vegetation.

Raph overtook her and jumped to take the lead, using his larger body to blaze a trail. Behind them they could hear Usagi cutting a path with his blades.

“Donny! Answer me bro’!” Raph yelled.

“Over here!” Don shouted.

Following the sound of his voice, the trio altered their course. “Where are ya’?” Raph asked, still unable to see his brother.

“Over here,” Don repeated. “Keep coming this way.”

In a few more feet they finally saw him lying amidst a tangle of broken branches and vines.

“Are you okay?” Lavinia asked, grabbing some of the branches off of him and tossing them out of the way.

“I’m fine,” Don said in an aggrieved tone. “I’m tangled in these vines and they have thorns.”

“You’re a real mess there, Donny-boy,” Raph said with a grin, his hands on his hips as he stared down at his trapped sibling.

“Thank goodness Mikey didn’t bring his camera,” Don said. “Where is Mikey? Is he okay?”

“Leo caught him,” Lavinia said. “He’s fine.”

“Better than you,” Raph added.

“Funny,” Don said, huffing with exasperation. “How about getting me out of this?”

“Allow me to assist,” Usagi said, using his wakizashi to cut away the vines pinning Donatello to the ground.

Once Don was freed, Raph reached down and grabbed his brother’s arm, pulling him to his feet. Don’s body was covered in scratches from the vines and he had several lacerations caused by the broken branches.

“Who are you? What are you doing here?”
The gruff voice startled the foursome, who pulled their weapons as they spun around. Standing a good ten yards from them were two male risu, each armed with a bow. Both had arrows nocked and pointed at the small group.

“We’re just passing through,” Don answered in an even voice. “We had a little trouble with a horse.”

Don wasn’t sure if they’d heard him because both men were staring at Lavinia. “It is a Harionago,” one of the men said, his voice trembling.

“See the cuts upon his body?” the other said, clearly speaking of Don. “She has begun to attack him. Kill the demon!”

Both men shifted, their arrows now aimed at Lavinia. Before they could release them, they felt the prick of fine steel upon the backs of their necks.

“Lower your bows,” Leo said tersely. “The woman is not a demon.”

When they hesitated, Leo pressed in, the razor edge of his katana a reminder of how sharp his weapons were.

“She is a healer,” Usagi said. “Her gifts are so strong that her fur will not grow.” In a low voiced aside, he told Lavinia, “Please repair Donatello’s injuries.”

Lavinia wrapped her hands around one of Don’s forearms, focusing her energy on healing him. He grinned down at her as his wounds disappeared.

The men slowly lowered their weapons and then dropped them to the ground. Mikey scooted forward quickly and snapped them up before Leo sheathed his swords.

Stepping back from the men so that he would be out of reach, Leo moved around them to join his group.

“Are you bandits?” one of the men asked.

“No,” Leo said, “merely travelers. We’ve just journeyed through lands that were not welcoming and are trying to make our way to those that may be more favorable. Our mounts need food and rest. Do you know of a place where we might trade for fresh horses?”

The men looked at one another, almost as though silently communicating. Then the one who’d spoken before said, “We are but poor villagers. We have work horses and could perhaps spare a few, though it would be a hardship.”

“My name is Leonardo,” Leo said. “There may be other things we could offer in trade along with the fine mounts we currently ride. We have blankets, cooking items, things of that nature.”

Once more the men silently communed. The quiet one nodded and his friend said, “I am Haruto and this is my cousin Sota. We are of the Titamari clan. Our village is deep within the forest, half a day’s trek from here.”

“Normally we do not lead strangers to our homes,” Sota said. “However, you do have something besides your horses that we would accept in trade.”

“An illness has befallen a number of our people,” Haruto said. “If your healer could remove the sickness from them, we would give you fresh horses.”
“I can remove the sickness,” Lavinia said after receiving a glance from Leo.

“Then come with us,” Haruto said. “These trees mark the boundary of our territory. It is easy to become lost within them.”

“Our horses require water,” Usagi said. “The scent of it is making them difficult to manage.”

“There is another source of water nearby,” Sota told them. “Our own horses are tethered near it. Come.”

The pair waited while the group of travelers brought their horses into the forest. Leading their mounts, the Hamato family and Usagi followed Haruto and Sota along a winding path that was just wide enough for the horses.

Walking up alongside Lavinia, Usagi said, “We worried about having goods with which to trade for horses, but it seems we do have another valuable commodity.”

“It is how I’ve made my way through life,” Lavinia acknowledged. “Barter is a much older concept than paying for items with coin.”

“In a world where things change quickly, healers will always be necessary,” Usagi said. “Even the wealthiest of men require their services, and are at the mercy of them.”

In a quarter of an hour they smelled water and held tightly to their horses reins as a small pond came into view. Leading their mounts to the water, they allowed the animals to drink their fill.

As they were preparing to leave the watering hole, Raph pulled Leo aside. “Do we trust these guys?”

Keeping his voice low, Leo replied, “We need horses. Take these men at face value and stay alert.”

“Always,” Raph said.

Most of the trek back to the Titamari clan village was made on foot. There was one area where the trees were spaced widely enough that the horses could be ridden, but for the most part they had to be led single file.

When asked why they had brought horses with them, Haruto explained that once they reached the clearing where they’d encountered the travelers, they were going to ride to the nearest town. There they hoped to find medicine and if possible, a healer who would be willing to make the return trip to the Titamari village.

In answer to Leo’s question about the cause of the illness, Sota said that they did not know. At Lavinia’s urging, both men outlined for her its symptoms, which included violent vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps.

After a few hours the group stopped for a quarter of an hour to eat bread and fruit, and to allow the horses to drink from a small stream. Raph leaned against the trunk of a tree in a position that kept both Titamari men within his range of vision.

Don and Lavinia sat on a patch of grass and Leo squatted nearby so that he could hear their conversation.
“I believe I know the illness that’s overrun their village,” Lavinia said. “They never mentioned fever as one of the symptoms, which leads me think that it might be Escherichia coli.”

“E. coli?” Don asked. “That’s usually a harmless bacteria, isn’t it?”

“Yes, but some strains have features that allow them to cause a variety of diseases,” Lavinia answered.

“If this is an outbreak of E. coli, then curing the villagers will only be a bandage,” Don said. “We’ll have to find the cause of the disease and eradicate that as well.”

“You two need to remember that we can’t remain here for long,” Leo said. “Usagi and I have been taking care to hide our trail through this forest so that the Jeshtare can’t follow us, but one of them might have knowledge of the location of the village.”

“How long can you give us?” Don asked.

Leo looked off towards Raph as he thought, then let his eyes drift over to where Mikey and Usagi sat talking to their new companions. “If we reach their village by midafternoon, we should leave there just after dark.”

“About seven hours? That’s not much time,” Don said.

“Look, we know that E. coli is usually spread through food sources, so we should find out what the people who are ill have in common,” Lavinia said. “If the outbreak is large it’s possible that we’re dealing with contaminated water. If it’s a smaller sampling of villagers, then it will be something they’ve eaten or come into contact with, but that other villagers normally wouldn’t.”

Leo stood up when he saw the Titamari men do so. “It’s time to go. Why don’t you two walk with Haruto and Sota and question them about the people who are ill. That way you’ll get a head start on learning something about what caused the illness.”

For the remainder of the journey Donatello and Lavinia walked alongside the two Titamari men, quizzing them about the ones who had fallen ill. Most of them were men, but they lived in different areas of the village. There were a couple of women amongst the group and one young boy. Since the majority of those who were ill fell mainly into one gender group, Don and Lavinia had hopes of finding the cause rather quickly.

The entry point into the village was guarded by an old growth of massive trees that dwarfed the travelers. It was only after passing between a gigantic pair of twin trees that the group got their first glimpse of the Titamari village.

Homes were built amongst the trees, each structure so close to one of the enormous trees that they almost seemed to blend together. Villagers came out of their homes to stare at the visitors, making it obvious that this clan rarely had any.

An elderly squirrel, supporting himself on a carved wooden cane, approached Haruto and Sota. “Who are these strangers? You have not been gone long enough to have gotten help,” he said.

“We met them on the outer rim of the forest,” Haruto said. “The furless one is a powerful healer. We have seen her heal one of her companions. They have agreed to help us in exchange for fresh horses.”

The elder eyed the group, appearing curious rather than frightened, and then nodded. “If
they can cure us of this illness, then they may have horses. I will alert the council.”

He turned and left them as he walked towards a larger structure built around a massive tree in the center of the village. Several men had gathered there and at his approach, they went inside.

Facing the travelers, Haruto said, “That is Eiji, he is the village elder and a member of the council. Sota will take you to the horse pens if the healer will go with me to visit the ill.”

“I’ll go with her,” Don said quickly. “I assist the healer in her work.”

“And I do the heavy lifting,” Raph said, unwilling to have Don and Lavinia out of his sight.

“Of course,” Haruto said. “I too would be cautious.”

As Leo, Usagi, and Mikey split off to go with Sota, Leo stopped long enough to whisper to Raph, “Yell if you need us.”

“Same goes for you,” Raph replied in a low voice. “Don’t let them give us nags.”

Raph watched those three walk off and then turned his attention to Haruto who was pointing towards one of the homes.

“We will go to see Kazuo first,” Haruto said, leading them to the structure. “He is a member of the council and is very ill.”

They had not quite reached the door of the home when a women opened it and came out. Haruto explained their mission and the woman stood aside, excitedly waving the group into her home.

The home was small and somewhat crowded once they were all gathered in the main living area. Haruto indicated another room off of the main one and because it was an even smaller bedroom, only Lavinia and Don entered.

There was a stench in the air that spoke of sickness before the pair even saw the small risu who lay on a tatami mat. His face was scrunched in pain, his fur matted, and a bucket sat nearby, the contents reeking of bile.

Lavinia immediately knelt next to him, pulling back his blanket in order to press one hand to his chest and the other against his stomach. Don watched as the green glow of her healing power suffused the risu’s torso.

In a little over a minute the glow faded and Lavinia lifted her hands. Kazuo let out a sigh and smiled weakly at her, looking much better than he had when they’d entered the room.

“Rest,” Lavinia told him. “You are well now.”

When she and Don exited the bedroom, Lavinia smiled and nodded at the woman, who rushed into the room to see her husband. Haruto led the trio from the home where they paused to breathe in some fresh air.

“Kazuo is one of those who tend the sheep?” Don asked.

“Yes,” Haruto said. “All of those who have fallen ill care for our flock of sheep. To the west of our village the forest gives way to a field of rich grass. The sheep are the primary commodity of our village and many of the men share the work required to tend to them and guard
them from predators. When it is time to trade in the larger villages or at the palace, these are the men who drive the sheep.”

“Ya’ eat those sheep too don’t ya’?” Raph asked.

“Yes, we also consume the milk they produce and the cheese we make from it,” Haruto answered.

“That isn’t what’s making them sick,” Lavinia said. “The illness is almost exclusive to the men who tend the flock. If it came from those consumables, everyone would be sick.”

“So why don’t we go look at this field of theirs?” Raph asked. “Seems like a good starting point for figuring out what’s doing the damage.”

“Let me take care of those who are the most critically ill first,” Lavinia said, “then we do some research.”

“Just so long as we still have daylight to see by,” Don said.

“There are six others who are in a grave condition,” Haruto said. “Come, we will visit them and then I will take you to where the sheep are kept.”

While they made the rounds, Leo and Mikey stood outside of the horse pens waiting for Usagi to examine the clan’s stable of horses. The samurai had a greater knowledge of horse flesh than the turtles, so they left the selection up to him.

“You think we can eat something before we start riding again?” Mikey asked. “I’m starving.”

“It depends on what Don and Lav discover and how long it takes them to fulfill our obligations here,” Leo said, watching as Usagi checked the hooves on one of the horses.

“I hate when you say ‘it depends on’,” Mikey griped. “My stomach always pays the price.”

“Don’t give your stomach so much control over you and you won’t have that problem,” Leo said, a corner of his mouth lifting in amusement.

“You should start charging for those words of wisdom instead of handing them out for free,” Mikey replied snidely.

Usagi approached them. “I have found suitable horses. We will have five of them in trade for our four and Lavinia’s services. They are in much better shape than I had expected.”

Sota joined them and Leo told him, “It is possible that men will come here looking for us, though we took great care not to leave a trail. Should that happen, please tell them all they want to know. We don’t want anyone to be hurt because of us.”

“Our village has survived raids from bandits and other clans for many lifetimes. The trees are a great protection and we know how to defend ourselves,” Sota assured him. “I would be surprised if those who seek you even venture into our forest. It is very easy to become lost.”

For a moment Leo fought an internal battle over how much he should say, but he could not in good conscience leave these people in harm’s way without telling them the kind of danger they might face.
“We were being pursued by the Jeshtare,” Leo said. “I do not know where your loyalties lie, but our mission was for the Shogun himself. I cannot tell you more than that or your lives would be in danger.”

Sota seemed to think about his words for a moment and then smiled. “There is no love lost between the Jeshtare and Titamari clans. We sell sheep to them but have always taken great care to ensure they do not know where our village lies. It has been a long held belief by my people that the Jeshtare would someday run afoul of the Shogun and we have pledged our loyalties to him alone.”

“If they don’t know that your village is here and if we’ve done a good job of hiding our trail, then hopefully the Jeshtare won’t come this direction,” Leo said.

“I will stable the Jeshtare horses to keep them out of sight,” Sota said. “They could use the rest and if by chance the Jeshtare get close enough to look into the pens, they will not see their horses. Besides, the forest floor is dense; any signs of our passing will have been obliterated within moments.”

Leo looked at Usagi and Mikey. “When we talked of trading horses, I didn’t stop to think of the repercussions to the people we trade with. The Jeshtare could be vindictive enough to punish them for doing business with us.”

“Please do not let that concern you in our regards,” Sota said. “If you will look up into the trees, you will see that the Jeshtare would be ill advised to attempt any aggression.”

Looking up, the trio saw that in the canopy far above their heads what appeared to be a duplicate village had been built.

“Awesome,” Mikey said, staring at the suspension bridges that connected the trees.

“We are even safe from fire,” Sota said. “These trees do not burn. We might lose what is here on the ground, but that can be rebuilt. Scaling trees is not a difficulty for us.”

“The most visible signs of our passing are in the tracks left by Michelangelo’s runaway horse,” Usagi said. “They will most likely continue on in that direction and bypass this forest completely.”

“Besides, if they’re chasing us, why would they take the time to attack anyone who helped us?” Mikey said. “Even the Jeshtare have to know that harming people on their own lands is a bad idea.”

“You could stay the night,” Sota offered.

Leo shook his head. “I’d rather not take the chance that the Jeshtare get in front of us.”

“We are all tired Leonardo,” Usagi reminded him. “The accident this morning was due to fatigue. Exhaustion would cause us to lose our edge.”

Usagi’s words made sense. Combined with Mikey’s complaints of hunger, it was an argument that Leo could not ignore.

“A few hours only,” Leo said.

“You could sleep in the council house,” Sota said. “It has several exits, including a way up into the trees, so that you would not be trapped if someone should attack.”
“Thank you,” Leo told him. “We’ll accept your kind offer.”

They set about stripping the saddles and their gear from the Jeshtare horses and Sota took them to the council house. Whatever meeting Eiji had conducted there earlier had disbanded and they found a large room in which to lay out their bedrolls.

Haruto led Raph, Don, and Lavinia out of the forest and into an open field that stretched as far as the eye could see. A range of hills lined one side of the field; a heavily wooded section of the forest lined the other, creating a natural fence line which kept the sheep contained.

They trekked for more than a mile before seeing the sheep and the men who guarded them. Immediately alert at the sight of strangers, the guards jumped to attention, holding their weapons at the ready.

A sign from Haruto made them lower their weapons and they returned to their seats on slopes above the sheep.

“When the outbreak of illness began to occur, is this the area where the sheep were kept?” Don asked.

Haruto shook his head. “We move them periodically to give the grass time to regrow. If they are allowed to strip a section completely, it would be forever barren.”

“Were they in one particular area when those men fell ill?” Lavinia asked.

“Yes,” Haruto said, pointing towards the hills. “If we proceed in that direction, I can show you where the sheep were recently relocated from.”

They walked at a fast pace for another couple of miles across the grassy plain until they reached an area which had obviously been picked over by hundreds of greedy mouths. Don immediately noticed that one section contained a plant that the sheep had clearly avoided.

Walking over to it, he saw that some of the plants appeared to have had small buds removed from them. “What is this plant?” Don asked. “The sheep didn’t eat it but it looks as if someone used parts of it for some reason.”

“It is too bitter for the sheep,” Haruto said. “Our herdsmen sometimes chew the buds in order to stay awake. It contains a compound which provides them added energy.”

Layers of sheep manure dotted the ground around and between the plants. Some of the area was muddy due to water runoff from the hills.

“It’s been irrigated by manure tea,” Lavinia said, moving to stand next to Don.

At her words Raph frowned. “That don’t sound too good.”

“It’s not,” Don said, looking at Haruto. “You should remove and burn these plants. This is where the illness is coming from. The manure has infected the plants with a bacteria that causes severe sickness.”

“It will be done right away,” Haruto said. “We have other places where this plant grows, should we remove those also?”

“If there are no sheep feces in contact with the soil around them or the water that helps them grow, then they’re safe,” Don said. “If you grow any crops, be sure that the fertilizer you use on
them has been broken down by heat to remove any harmful bacteria.”

On their way back to the village, Haruto stopped to confer with a couple of the sheep herders. After relaying instructions for the destruction of the contaminated plants, they returned to the village.

Feeling comfortable that Don and Lav were in safe hands, Raph parted from them as they went on to help some more of the sick villagers. He found Leo waiting outside of the council house.

“Don and Lav figured out that it’s some plants making these guys sick,” Raph said. “Haruto’s having the plants burned while Lav finishes up curing the sick folks.”

“We made a trade for horses,” Leo said. “We’ll have five instead of four and they’re in good condition. Mikey and Usagi convinced me that we should have a proper meal and a couple of hours of shuteye before we leave, otherwise we’ll all be falling out of our saddles.”

“In there?” Raph asked, nodding towards the council house.

“We’ve got the bedrolls set out,” Leo said. “I’ve already found the exits and there’s a way up into that tree if we’re attacked. From what Sato tells me, no one is going to find us here. They don’t like the Jeshtare.”

“If they get ahead of us they could block our way across the border,” Raph warned.

“I have considered that Raph,” Leo said.

“Not saying ya’ haven’t,” Raph replied. “Just got a concern is all.”

Leo sighed. “I know; sorry. Usagi was right though. Fatigue is catching up to all of us.”

“He’s all right,” Raph said slowly, the mention of Usagi making him thoughtful. “I got respect for Usagi, always have. I even like the guy. ‘Course, I liked him more before he tried to take ya’ away from us, but I can’t fault him for having the hots for ya’. Can’t say I won’t be happy to go home and leave him here though.”

“Raph . . . .” Leo began.

Lifting a hand to stop the speech before it could get started, Raph said, “I know, I know. Those feelings only go one way and I don’t have to worry that he’ll tempt ya’ . Still bothers me to look up and see him watching ya’ with a kind of hungry look in his eyes. He tries to hide it and does okay when he thinks anyone’s looking, but there’s times when he don’t realize someone’s watching him. It makes me uncomfortable.”

“I know you think I don’t understand, but I do,” Leo said. “Still, he’s our friend. A very good one who deserves to be treated as such. Whatever he does or doesn’t feel for me, he keeps it to himself. Enough years have passed since that episode between us in the lair that you should be able to put aside your animosity.”

“Working on it,” Raph said as a corner of his mouth lifted into a cocky grin. “At least I ain’t pulling ya’ down and mounting ya’ right in front of him to mark my territory.”

Leo’s eyes sparkled with humor. “You already came close to that once during this journey.”

He was saved from hearing Raph’s raunchy rejoinder as Mikey and Usagi came out of the
council house and walked over to join them. Raph told them of their discovery of what had caused
the mystery illness and that Lav was finishing up taking care of the sick villagers.

The shadows were growing long by the time Don and Lav made an appearance. Right away
Leo could see that Lav’s energy resources were completely drained; Donatello was virtually
holding her up.

“I forget sometimes how healing so many people at one time wears her out,” Raph said in an
aside to Leo. “It’s a good thing ya’ decided we’re gonna rest here for a while.”

Don looked relieved when Leo informed him that they planned to stay until at least the
middle of the night. Cook fires were being lit around the village, and Sota built one in a large pit
near the council house. He invited the visitors to sit while he roasted meat for their dinner, offering
them sweet ale or water to drink.

Darkness had fallen by the time they had finished eating. Most of the villagers had already
turned in and both Sota and Haruto bade their guests a good night and farewell, leaving them seated
around the dwindling cook fire.

Though tired, they were all too comfortable to get up just then, so they sat in companionable
silence. Lav leaned against Don, who kept one arm around her shoulders in case she fell asleep.

Suddenly Mikey snapped his fingers and jolted them all out of their semi-dazed stated.
“Hey, I don’t know why we didn’t think of this before, but how come we don’t open a portal and
go home? We got rid of Hebi, which is why we came here in the first place, so we don’t need to
stay.”

Leo rubbed his eyes, surprised he hadn’t thought of that. Looking over at Usagi, he said,
“You could come home with us and open another portal there to take you directly back to Lord
Norigyuki’s castle.”

“Could we do that later?” Don asked in a soft voice. Nodding his head at Lav, who had
fallen into a deep slumber, he added, “She could use the sleep before we start packing up to go
anywhere.”

“A few more hours won’t make any difference,” Raph said. “Who’s got the first watch?”

Leo stood up and stretched. “Haruto said they have night guards for both the village and the
sheep. None of us needs to stay awake. I sleep lightly enough to hear if any trouble starts.”

Yawning widely, Raph rose and crossed over to the sleeping Lavinia, gathering her in his
arms and lifting her. Mikey gave Don a hand up as Usagi pulled the larger pieces of wood away
from the center of the fire, allowing it to die down to glowing embers.

The room containing their bedrolls was a large one and Usagi’s was a little ways from those
belonging to the family. It had not escaped his notice earlier that Michelangelo had placed Leo’s
bedroll between his own and Raph’s. Possessiveness was apparently a trait shared by more than
Raphael.

All of them fell asleep quickly and slept soundly until around midnight, when Leo’s internal
alarm clock woke him. One by one he shook the others awake, waiting until last to rouse Lavinia.
It was easy to see that she was still quite drained, though she insisted on packing her own things for
the return trip home.

They stepped out of the council house into the darkness of a sleeping village. Feeling eyes
on him, Leo glanced up into the trees and saw that one of the guards stood there looking down at them.

Don produced chalk from his duffel bag and handed it to Usagi after the group had gathered in front of the trunk of a very large tree. Usagi quickly drew the symbols for the gateway portal onto the trunk and then he and Leo began to chant.

It took only a few seconds for them to realize that something was wrong. Though they continued to chant, the symbols did not glow, nor did the portal open.

Stunned, Leo and Usagi ceased their chanting and looked at one another, brows furrowed.

“Maybe you got the symbols wrong,” Mikey offered hopefully.

“The symbols are correct,” Usagi said. “I have drawn them many times.”

Raph glanced around at his companions and then his gaze rested on Leo. “So what the shell’s going on?”

“Something is keeping the portal from opening,” Leo said.

“Either the symbols or the spell to open it is being blocked,” Usagi added.

“What exactly does that mean?” Raph demanded, growing impatient.

Leo crossed his arms, his expression grim. “It means we can’t go home.”
Chapter Summary

Upon hearing Leo’s pronouncement, Raph’s expression began to change until it resembled that of a dam about to burst. Before he could go into full tirade mode, Donatello spoke up. “Wouldn’t the Daimyo be the only one capable of keeping the portal from opening?”

“There is a counter spell which can hold the portal closed,” Usagi said. “Master Splinter taught it to me when assassins were attempting to enter the lair after your minds had been trapped by wizards. It must be chanted as the portal starts to open.”

“Ya’ think someone’s in the lair?” Raph asked. “Someone who doesn’t want us to go home?”

“What would be the point of that?” Don countered. “It’s harder to try and find us here. It would make more sense for them to lie in wait for us in our own home and allow us to use the portal to return there.”

Usagi looked thoughtful. “I am not sure that the portal the assassins used to gain entry to your home was the same as that of the Battle Nexus. It has always been my understanding that the Nexus portal cannot be opened by someone bearing evil intent.”

“Ain’t there a wizard’s portal?” Raph asked. “That’s what Kojima the assassin used to travel to New York the first time Hebi put a price on you and Leo’s heads.”

“Wizards!” Mikey exclaimed suddenly, drawing everyone’s attention. “Weren’t there three of them working for Hebi? We killed one, but that leaves two of them floating around somewhere.”

“Wizards wouldn’t need to be in the lair to know when we attempted to access the portal,” Leo said. “The last time they sent someone into our home their assassins were killed. They have no way of knowing who is in the lair now and therefore wouldn’t waste the energy sending more assassins to again be massacred.”

“Their mental link to the magic of the portals would certainly warn them when one is being opened,” Don said. “All they’d have to do then is chant the counter spell and we don’t go home.”

“Why?” Raph demanded. “Hebi’s dead so why waste their time if no one is paying them?”

“For the same reason the Jeshtare need to silence us,” Leo said. “If the shogun learns that the wizards were aiding Hebi, then he will issue a directive for either their capture or death. They
can’t afford to have us escape the Jeshtare, so they are helping them.”

“The wizards hired by Hebi were members of the Majutsu guild,” Usagi said. “I have heard that they are amongst the strongest of the guild because they had formed a magic triad. Demand for their services will not be high once word spreads that they have lost one of their own. The only hope they have of retaining their reputation is by destroying those who killed their fellow. They cannot allow us to remain alive.”

“So we can’t open the portal and go home and even if we could we’d still be looking behind us ‘cause now we got wizards on our ass,” Raph said, looking aggravated. “Damn, I hate that magic shit.”

“So what do we do about this?” Mikey asked. “Usagi, do you know any wizards who would work for practically nothing?”

Usagi shook his head, taking the question seriously even though Mikey had asked it in jest. “I do not associate with wizards,” he answered with distaste. “If we could reach the Daimyo we could petition for his assistance, but since we cannot open a portal, that is not an option.”

“If Master Splinter were here, he could probably locate the wizards through his meditation,” Don said.

“Yeah, then we could get rid of them the old fashioned way,” Raph said, driving a fist into the palm of one hand to emphasize his point.

Leo appeared to be deep in thought and one by one the others noticed. They grew quiet as they watched him, all of them wondering what was going through his mind.

After a couple of minutes Raph’s patience wore thin. “Leo? What’s going on in that tortuous mind of yours?” he asked as a way of prompting his brother to speak.

“Do you know why the American Indians’ campaign against the army was successful for so long?” Leo asked.

Raph snorted. “No. You’re the one who studies tactics and strategy. All I want is to be pointed at whatever I need to fight.”

“It was because they knew not to try and match the army might for might,” Leo said. “They used guerilla warfare tactics. Attack from hiding and retreat. Lure the enemy into ambush. They hadn’t the weapons or the manpower for a head on battle, so they whittled away at their enemy piece by piece.”

“The army eventually won,” Don pointed out.

“That took nearly forty years,” Leo said, “and a few good military commanders on the army’s side. The enemy who is pursuing us is of a finite size. We can’t turn and face them because they currently outnumber us. Putting distance between us so that we would reach friendly turf before they could catch us was our best option, but it’s not anymore. The scenario has changed.”

“Thanks for the quick history lesson,” Raph said sarcastically. “Ya’ wanna get to the point already?”

“There is no place safe as long as the wizards live,” Usagi clarified. “If it does not suit their purpose for you to return home, you will not be returning home.”
“It is no longer a question of avoidance,” Leo said. “We have to find those wizards and we can’t do that by running away. My guess is that the wizards are with the Jeshtare who are chasing us.”

“You’re saying the hunted need to become the hunters,” Mikey said, “again.”

Raph snorted. “Hey, that’s okay with me. I never have liked this running away crap.”

Leo once again glanced upwards, noting that the night guard continued to watch them. “I suggest we finish this discussion in the council house before we disturb the entire village.”

Don and Usagi remained behind for a few minutes in order to wipe the portal symbols off of the tree trunk, then they joined the others back inside the council house. As soon as Don entered the room he saw that Lavinia was seated on the floor with her back against one wall and her eyes shut.

Squatting next to her, he asked in a low voice, “Are you okay?”

Lav managed a small smile as she looked at him. “Still tired, but otherwise I’m fine. You know it always takes a little while for my energy to return.”

Lowering himself to the floor, Don scooted close to Lav and slid an arm around her. “Lean on me and rest while Leo figures out our next step.”

With a nod, Lav put her head on Don’s shoulder and with a grateful sigh, closed her eyes again.

Leo stood in the center of the room, his arms crossed. “Guerilla warfare relies on a small attacking force, one that is mobile, going up against a larger and less maneuverable force. The Jeshtare who are pursuing us have more men, more horses, and no doubt more supplies. There is a high probability that a second squadron of fighters were dispatched as soon as it was clear we weren’t going to be quickly caught.

“The second group would have brought the additional supplies and they would have brought the two wizards, which means they have wagons slowing them down. It’s why we haven’t seen visible signs of pursuit.”

“Wait,” Mikey said, stopping his brother. “Why would the wizards come with them? They can work their mojo from anywhere.”

“The Jeshtare owe them no allegiance now that their master is dead,” Usagi said. “It is unsafe for the wizards to remain in Perdred. There would be questions asked by the clan leader as to why the wizards were unable to keep Hebi safe. In order to save face and their reputation, they must aid our pursuers and to do that, they must travel with them.”

“Ya’ know how ya’ spell desperate?” Raph asked. “It’s when the shogun and the Jeshtare both have a reason to wipe ya’ off the map. That’s what happens to those wizards if they don’t get us first.”

“So Leo, what you’re wanting to do is to pluck the wizards away from the Jeshtare while they’re out there looking for us,” Don said. “Preferably without getting caught.”

“Actually, I would re-phrase that and say we’re going to dispatch the wizards while they are out in the open and vulnerable,” Leo said.
Don made a face but refrained from saying anything, though Leo knew what he was thinking. There had already been too much killing.

“We’ve gotta do it Donny,” Mikey said, having noticed his brother’s expression. “It’s them or us, just like with Hebi.”

“To get to them we’ll probably have to ‘dispatch’ some the Jeshtare too,” Don said. “You do realize that, right?”

“We can keep that to a minimum if we practice ninjitsu as it was taught to us by Master Splinter,” Leo said. “After all, ninjitsu is the strategy and tactics of unconventional warfare, of which guerilla warfare is a part. Their mobility and strength both rely on certain essential supplies. Cut off one such supply until they are in desperate need and we can direct them to a place where we have the advantage.”

“I think I recall reading something to do with supply line tactics developed by a general named Sun Tzu,” Don said with a smile.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, Leo couldn’t help but be amused at the inside joke. His brothers often told him they didn’t know why he bothered reading ‘The Art of War’ anymore since he certainly had the entire text memorized.

“How do we get rid of their supplies if we can’t approach them until after their supplies are gone?” Raph asked.

“What’s the one thing they need a lot of but can’t carry with them?” Leo asked.

There was a moment of silence as his brothers and Usagi looked at him. Without opening her eyes, Lav murmured, “Water.”

“Water,” Leo repeated. “Just like us they haven’t the ability to carry enough for themselves and their horses. They have to stop to allow the horses to drink and to refill the few barrels they can probably carry in their wagons.”

“If they are following the route that we took, they will come across the water our horses smelled this morning,” Usagi said. “I do not know how large a source of water it is, but it may be enough to destroy the advantage you speak of.”

“No if they can’t drink it,” Leo said. “We need to locate that water first and make it appear to be unpotable. If they think the water is poisonous, they won’t touch it.”

“But not actually poison it, right Leo?” Mikey asked. “’Cause I think the Titamari probably use that water when they’re taking sheep to be sold.”

“I don’t know that we could actually poison the water, but I wouldn’t want to do that anyway,” Leo said. “No doubt other travelers rely on it. All we need to do is sell the idea that the water is no good. The Jeshtare move on and are forced to use whatever water they are holding in reserve.”

Don cleared his throat. “I can use a few of the plants around here to mix up something that will leave an oily looking film on top of the water.”

“Good,” Leo said. “We need to consult with Haruto to learn of the terrain along the route where we were headed. It has to be done now.”
“I’ll wake him,” Lavinia volunteered, rising to her feet. “I know where he lives and no one will be alarmed if they see me. They’ll just think I’m tending to someone who’s sick.”

Don got up too. “We’ll both go. They’re used to seeing us together. Be right back.”

“It is a daring plan you are devising, Leonardo. If any of our adversaries become suspicious, they will know where we are,” Usagi said after Don and Lav left.

“They’ve already got a good sense of our location,” Leo said. “They won’t expect us to put on a counter-offensive. Surprise is our ally at this point.”

“It is interesting to observe the mind of a ninja at work,” Usagi said with a slight smile. “Though I fear my Master would have been greatly surprised at the company I keep.”

For a moment Leo feared that Raph might say something untoward with regards to Usagi’s jest. A quick glance at his brother showed him that Raph had meant it during their earlier conversation when he’d said he’d work on setting his animosity aside.

“Just because the water looks nasty doesn’t mean the Jeshtare won’t try drinking it,” Mikey said suddenly. “If we want the water to appear poisonous, we have to add to the illusion.”

“Do you have some idea of how to do that?” Leo asked curiously.

Mike made a sour face. “Yeah, but I don’t like it much.”

“They why’d ya’ bring it up?” Raph asked snidely. Apparently swallowing the comment he’d have liked to make to Usagi had left a sour taste in his mouth.

“We need this plan to work, don’t we?” Mikey shot back. “It’s this or a lot more people get hurt, like us for instance.”

“What’s your idea, Mikey?” Leo asked, stopping the pair from arguing further.

“There should be something dead next to the water,” Mikey said, curling his upper lip in distaste as he spoke. “Like animals, bro’. A couple of them at least. It should look like they drank the water and just dropped on the spot.”

Leo could understand his youngest brother’s qualms. Mikey cared for most living things and the idea of purposely destroying an animal hurt him.

“Perhaps I could assist with that,” Haruto said. He had just entered the room with Don and Lavinia. “Your companions explained to me what it is you plan to do. I must agree about the animals; dead ones near a water source are often the first indication that the water is tainted. It would be unnatural not to see animal carcasses near bad water.”

“I dislike continuing to impose on your hospitality,” Leo said.

Haruto waved his apology away. “You have done my people a great service today and we are in your debt. Might I suggest a few sheep and one of our horses? We have a mare that is quite old and in pain. We had planned to put her down anyway. The sheep can be eaten after they serve their purpose in furthering your plan.”

“They can’t show any signs that they died of anything other than poisoning,” Don warned.

“That will not be difficult to arrange,” Haruto said. “There are bloodless ways to put an
animal down that do not require us to poison our food."

“All of this must be done tonight,” Leo said. “Haruto, could you draw a map of the terrain around the area where we were headed when you first discovered us? I need to see the watering hole we were going towards and any that are beyond that.”

“While you do that, Lavinia and I will gather the plants I need and start concocting our fake poison,” Don said. “Mikey, could you stoke the fire in the pit outside and put a kettle of water on it? Bring it to boiling.”

“Will do,” Mikey said, jumping up from where he was sitting.

“Donatello,” Haruto called before Don could leave. “Would you rouse Sota and ask him to join me here? I must give him directions regarding the sheep and the horse.”

“Right away,” Don said.

“Come, we can use the meeting hall for the remainder of your planning,” Haruto said, leading the way.

The hall was in another section of the council house. A broad expanse of dirt floor had obviously been used before as a way to diagram plans. Haruto picked up a stick that sat propped against the trunk of the tree at the center of the house and began drawing a map of the surrounding area.

When Sota arrived, Haruto told him in a quick and concise manner what they planned to do. Sota left then to gather some sheep from the fields, saying he would take a couple of young lads to assist him. He would immediately begin driving them towards the intended watering hole, since they would need a head start in getting there on time.

Haruto’s map showed the location of the first watering hole, the one they intended to fake ‘poison’. Beyond that there was no water for several miles, with the next spot a small pool that oftentimes was empty. When there was water, it was in such a small amount that it would serve only two or three travelers.

The next sizeable watering hole was twelve miles beyond the small pool. Haruto outlined the terrain, which showed several hilly slopes and high grass nearby.

“By the time they reach this point, they’re going to be extremely thirsty,” Leo said. “They’ll unhitch the wagons and allow the spare horses along with the draft horses to drink and then feed in the grassy field. They’ll unload the water barrels in order to refill them and then remain long enough for a meal.”

“Ya’ hope,” Raph said.

“It’s what I would do if we’d been without water for over a day,” Leo said. “The soldiers might be able to push on, but their mounts won’t.”

“So I see all this,” Raph said, waving a finger over the map, “but I don’t see a good spot for an ambush. Those couple of slopes don’t offer much cover and neither does the grass.”

“We’re outnumbered so this won’t be an ambush in the traditional sense,” Leo told him. Pointing at the second large watering hole, he said, “We’ll all ride to this point. Once we reach the water, Usagi and Lavinia will take all of the horses and continue on. That will leave a trail that indicates we’ve come and gone from this spot. After they’ve ridden far enough out, they’ll circle
back, tie down our mounts, and hide on one of these slopes.”

“So what are we gonna do, sit in the mud and wait for the Jeshtare?” Raph asked.

“In a manner of speaking, yes,” Leo answered, grinning at his brother. “Actually, we’ll be under the water. We’ll wait until the soldiers are dozing and then as quietly as possible, locate the wagons that are transporting the wizards and dispatch the two of them.”

“It ain’t gonna take all four of us to do that,” Raph said.

Leo looked into his brother’s eyes, understanding his point. Assassination was a ninja’s weapon, but both Don and Mikey were loath to use it. Keeping his eyes locked with Raph’s, Leo said slowly, “I think you and I can handle that. Don and Mikey should destroy the soldiers’ ability to carry water by punching holes in their water barrels and disabling their supply wagons.”

“What of their horses?” Usagi asked. “If they have mounts they will still have the ability to give chase.”

“We’ll take a few of them in order to make our escape,” Leo said. “Lavinia can lay down a barrage of arrows to cover us. Once we start riding, we’ll try to spook their remaining horses. Usagi, after we’re mounted, grab our horses and make sure Lavinia doesn’t try to stay longer than is necessary. We’ll need the two of you to push any loose horses as far from the Jeshtare as possible.”

“I can provide you with extra bladders in which to carry water,” Haruto said. “It will save you from having to stop as frequently to search for more.”

“If we continue on from this watering hole,” Usagi said, indicating their ambush point, “a straight path will carry us across the border into Lord Noriyuki’s lands. Within a few miles of the border is one of the official brigade outposts you helped to form, Leonardo-san. Even if the Jeshtare regroup, they will not pursue us over the border.

Don, Mikey, and Lav came in at that point. “So once we’re at the outpost we could open a portal and go home,” Mikey said. “I mean, if we’ve gotten rid of the wizards.”

Usagi shook his head. “I would not recommend making the attempt. The Majutsu guild is strong. The two remaining triad wizards are using their magic to prevent their brethren from knowing they have lost one of their own, but as soon as all three are dead, it will immediately be known. Attempting to open a portal will notify them of our location. They may or may not choose to retaliate, but we should not take the chance.”

“How do we get an entire guild off our shells?” Raph asked.

“Won’t there still be assassins hired by Hebi looking for us?” Don asked almost at the same moment.

“Let’s not worry about those things until after we deal with the Jeshtare and the wizards,” Leo said, not wanting his team to get sidetracked. “Haruto, could you get us those bladders and meet us at the pens? We’re going to leave now. That is, assuming the fake poison is ready?”

“It’s cooling down,” Don said. “We can carry it in a couple of canteens, since it appears we’ll have extras.”

The group was soon on its way. Haruto had offered to accompany them, but Leo assured him that they remembered the path through the forest and that he did not need to leave his home.
In truth, Leo did not want to endanger the Titamari clansmen any further, already feeling guilt laden for the risk Sota was incurring.

Setting a fast pace, Leo led his team back the way they’d come, heading for the spot where they’d met the Titamari. Leo hoped that the Jeshtare’s wait for their supply line and the wizards would have delayed them enough to give his team time to set up their trap.

The sky was just beginning to lighten when the group left the forest. Riding the horses they’d traded the Titamari for had an advantage; the mounts knew their way to the watering hole.

When they reached it, they found that Sota and two younger boys had already put the old horse and three sheep down. Leo and Raph helped to position the carcasses so that it would look as if they’d drunk from the water and immediately died.

While they were setting the stage, the rest of the group allowed their horses to drink before pulling them back so that Don could pour his fake poison into the water. The mixture spread along the top of the pond, giving the water an oily sheen.

Leo cautioned Sota to wait several hours before coming back to retrieve the sheep and bury the horse. The Titamari clansmen said that he would observe first and if it looked as though the Jeshtare had already come through, he would take care of the dead animals.

After Sota and the boys left, the group rode their horses over any tracks they’d left and then moved on in the direction of the next watering hole.

As Haruto had said, this was little more than a low spot where water runoff pooled after a rainstorm. There wasn’t much water and the group allowed their horses to drink from it until it was dry.

The watering hole the turtles had chosen for their ambush was a couple of hours away. They pushed the horses in order to reach the location well ahead of the Jeshtare. It was late morning when they finally arrived and Leo was gratified to see that the pond was of a very good size.

After their horses had been well watered, the group transferred their packs evenly to three of the mounts in order to make it appear as if all five were still carrying the weight of six riders. Then the turtles stepped into the water so that Usagi and Lavinia could cover their footprints with the horses’ hoof prints.

As she and Usagi rode away, Lavinia looked back at the brothers, feeling a twist in her gut at separating from them. Leo seemed to understand because he smiled and nodded to reassure her. Don and Mikey waved to her while Raph offered her a sharp salute.

Usagi and Lavinia rode directly away from the watering hole, putting over three miles of distance between it and the spot where they chose to turn around. It was a good location; rocky terrain that would not show prints. If a scout chose to follow the tracks they’d left, he would not realize that they’d done an about face.

Their route back to a slope overlooking the watering hole was a wide one, intended to prevent anyone from accidentally happening upon their tracks. Finding a small stand of trees nearby, the pair tethered their mounts and then climbed the slope. After making certain that their position gave them a clear line of sight to both observe the action and to provide cover for when the turtles made their escape, the duo flattened themselves on the ground.
Following the departure of Usagi and Lav, the turtles swam out to the center of the pond. It was more than deep enough to conceal them and they used their natural buoyancy to keep their heads above water while they waited.

It didn’t take long for Michelangelo to grow bored with just floating in one spot.

“I’m cold,” Mikey complained. “This is boring. How long do we have to wait?”

“We wait as long as it takes Mikey,” Leo told him. “Being a ninja isn’t always about action, sometimes it’s about waiting.”

“Thank you for the lesson mister obvious,” Mikey said, his tone sarcastic.

“Quite complaining,” Raph said. “Ya’ don’t hear the rest of us griping.”

“But I’m cold,” Mikey said, exaggerating a shiver to prove his point.

Raph swam up to him and quickly grabbed Mikey, surprising a squeal out of him. Holding Mikey in a tight grip, Raph kissed him, thoroughly plundering his younger brother’s mouth. As soon as Mikey latched onto Raph’s shoulders so that he could return the passion in kind, Raph slid one hand down Mikey’s carapace and grasped his tail. Pushing a knee between Mikey’s legs, Raph began roughly stroking his brother’s tail, making Mikey gasp and thrust his hips against Raph’s thigh.

Releasing Mikey suddenly, Raph extricated himself from Mikey’s clutching fingers and floated backwards, away from his brother.

“Ya’ warm now?” Raph asked with a cocky grin.

“You’re evil,” Mikey said, pouting. “You totally owe me some water sex.”

“Mikey, try to focus,” Don admonished him. “Come here, we’ll play a word game.”

Mikey made a face but drifted near Don, happy to do anything other than float and stare out at the surroundings.

Once Mikey and Don were engrossed in their game, Leo swam farther away from them. He caught Raph’s eyes and tilted his head slightly, to indicate that Raph should follow him.

They couldn’t go far, but there was enough space between the pair and their brothers so that a conversation held in a low tone wouldn’t be overheard.

“What’s on your mind?” Raph asked.

“I need to be certain we’re on the same page about the two remaining wizards,” Leo said, staring into his brother’s eyes.

“I know what ‘dispatch’ means, Leo. That’s how ya’ say we’re gonna kill them in a way that doesn’t blow Donny’s sensibilities, but ya’ don’t need to sugar coat it for me,” Raph said.

“We have to be fast so they don’t have time to throw blinding powder in our faces or yell for help,” Leo said, pressing his point. “It’s not just killing, it’s execution.”

“Ya’ gotta do what ya’ gotta do,” Raph said philosophically. “If you’re wondering whether I’ll hesitate when the time comes, let me set your mind at ease. I won’t. All I’m gonna think about is how they tried to kill my family.”
“I wish we’d never been pushed to this point,” Leo said with a grimace of distaste.

“Those are the cards we got dealt,” Raph replied. “As long as we’ve got each other to keep us focused on what’s right and what’s wrong, then I guess we’re doing what Master Splinter wants and staying on the correct path.”

“Bushido,” Leo said. “Correct judgment or procedure for the resolution of righteousness. To strike when it is right to strike.”

“Exactly,” Raph said, nodding his agreement. “Those wizards could have chosen to serve the purpose of good, but they didn’t. Their evil greed has probably killed a lot of people. They got pay back coming to them.”

“I don’t quite want to think of it that way,” Leo said, frowning.

“Yeah, yeah, I know. Don’t get your shell in a bunch. I ain’t gonna start using that as some sort of justification to jump head long into a fight,” Raph said, grinning at his brother.

Leo couldn’t help but return Raph’s smile. In the past they might have been at odds over the concept of rationalized retribution, but their understanding of each other had improved. There were still times when their individual notions caused them to clash, but at least they’d gotten better at knowing when they shouldn’t argue about it.

On the slope overlooking the pond, Usagi and Lav kept their eyes open for signs that the Jeshtare were drawing near. Their position provided them with an advanced look at anyone who might be approaching the watering hole, allowing them a chance to signal the turtles whenever the Jeshtare did finally come into view.

Usagi had noticed when Leo and Raph swam a little ways from their brothers. After a few minutes he saw that Lavinia was watching them closely.

“Are you concerned about them?” Usagi asked.

Lavinia blinked and looked over at Usagi. “I can guess what they’re talking about. I wish they didn’t have to do this.”

“It is a sound plan,” Usagi said, “though distasteful.”

“Leo always plans well,” Lavinia said with a hint of pride. “I’ve never known anyone with his tactical abilities or his acumen.”

“I too have never met anyone who is his equal,” Usagi told her.

Lav thought she heard a wistful tone in his voice. She didn’t want to embarrass him by telling him she knew how he felt about Leo, though she could feel his longing coming off of him in waves. It didn’t take much to understand why Raph was still jealous whenever Usagi was near Leo.

“Leo would say the same of you. He admires you very much,” Lavinia said.

“We became friends from the moment we met,” Usagi said. “I hope never to lose that friendship.”

“You won’t,” Lavinia said. “Loyalty is another of Leo’s traits that I respect.”
“It is not merely respect, is it?” Usagi asked. “You love him.”

It surprised Lav a little to hear the normally unflappable samurai addressing such a personal subject. She realized that he probably had no one to talk to about his feelings and might have been carrying them with him like unnecessary baggage that he couldn’t get rid of.

“Yes, I do,” Lav said. “There’s a lot about him to love.”

“But not enough to share?” Usagi asked, his expression serious.

Lav smiled slightly. “There’s something I recently learned about myself, Usagi. I don’t share.”

“With his brothers . . . ?” Usagi began, his words trailing off as though he was unsure as to how he should finish the question.

“That’s not the same,” Lavinia answered. “We are all pieces of a greater whole.”

Usagi seemed to mull that over. “I think I begin to understand. Family holds great meaning for your clan. It is . . . sacred to Leonardo.”

“I feel blessed to have found them; to have found my brother again,” Lavinia said. “Now I can’t imagine my life without them. Everything we need, we have in each other.”

“Your world is a curious one,” Usagi said. “It is an interesting one to visit.”

Thinking she understood what he was saying, Lav replied, “But not one you’d choose to live in. Home is what you’ve grown accustomed to and New York is where we are most comfortable.”

“A friendship is not marred by distance,” Usagi said.

“Yours with Leo will never be broken,” Lavinia said warmly.

Usagi bowed his head. “I am greatly honored by that bond.” He grinned slyly and added, “Even if he is a ninja.”

As the group waited, they watched the sun climb until it was directly overhead and then start its slow decline. All four of the brothers had grown quiet and Mikey did not even mention food, though he knew he wasn’t the only one who was hungry.

Finally though, Mikey felt the need to give voice to something he also knew had to be plaguing his brothers’ thoughts. “What if they don’t come? What if they turned around and went back to Perdred?” he asked. “We’ll have to go right back there to find the wizards or we’ll never make it home. Suppose they thought of that and want us to come after them?”

“That might be a good strategy if they weren’t worried we’d spread the word that they’d been harboring Hebi,” Don said. “I don’t think they can afford . . . .”

His words were cut off by a shrill whistle, Usagi’s signal that someone was approaching. Moving together to the center of pond, the turtles listened and soon heard the sound of pounding hoofs and the rumble of wheels.

Inhaling deeply to fill their lungs with oxygen, the brothers ducked down below the water’s surface. They were careful not to churn the water for fear of dredging up mud from the bottom,
something that would alert their adversaries to their presence.

The water was murky enough as it was, so they remained near each other in order to be able to see Leo signing to them. What they planned to do would require split second timing and it was up to the turtle leader to give them their instructions.

Leo kept his eyes open and watched the surface of the water. Seconds ticked by, turning into minutes and with each passing one he grew more confident that they had not been detected. He knew his brothers were probably antsy even though they understood the need for patience. They needed both the Jeshtare and the wizards to feel relaxed enough to lower their guard.

In his mind, Leo pictured the activity that would be happening near the pond. Since the water was spring fed, it was almost always at a constant level, which explained the reeds and grasses that grew along the embankment. One area was clear of plant life, kept that way by travelers in order to make it easy to get to the water.

A few trees offered shade and that’s where the wagons would be. Any barrels that had been brought along to hold water would be placed there as well, to keep the water cool.

The long ride without sufficient water would have been draining to the horses and the Jeshtare would not risk pushing them until they had rested. After watering their mounts, the horses would be staked to patches of grass so they could feed. Unable to move on until the horses were ready, the Jeshtare soldiers would take to whatever shade they could find.

A few would stand watch on their perimeter, but the others would eat and then doze, tired from the hard riding and a certain amount of dehydration. Leo mentally calculated the amount of time it would take for all of that to occur, thankful for his turtle nature and his chi gung training.

When an hour had passed, Leo gestured to his brothers that they should remain where they were and then he slowly rose until his eyes were just above water level.

Three wagons were parked beneath the trees, one at a distance from the other two. Barrels sat near the water’s edge, their sides still wet from being dipped into the pond.

Jeshtare clansmen were sprawled on the grass, some sleeping, some eating dried meat or fruit. Careful not the cause a ripple in the water, Leo drifted nearer to get a head count and to locate any men who might have been assigned to guard duty. There were four of them, all looking drowsy and not at all alert.

The horses were in a field just beyond the trees. Though a few had their reins staked to ground posts, most were loose. Leo smiled; the Jeshtare were too confident in their position as pursuers, underestimating the abilities of the ninja they chased.

Turning has gaze back to the wagon that sat apart from the others, Leo watched it for some signs of life. The wizards were not visible amongst the clansmen taking their leisure and Leo doubted either group would have liked the others’ company. After a few minutes the wagon rocked from movement within and Leo saw the shadowed outline of a cloaked figure. A second silhouette appeared opposite the first, its hand motions indicating that a discussion was in progress.

Satisfied, Leo slowly sank beneath the water’s surface again and swam back to his brothers. He quickly signed to them all that he had seen and then gave them final directions for their attack.

Once each had indicated that he understood what to do, the group separated. Leo and Raph
swam towards the wizard’s wagon, while Don and Mikey made directly for the water barrels.

Sabotaging the water barrels and the other two wagons would require both ingenuity and stealth if Don and Mikey were to avoid rousing the clansmen. Leo pushed thoughts of them from his mind, confident that those two could manage their task successfully.

Returning his focus to his own job, Leo carefully slithered out of the water, with Raph by his side. They remained hidden by the reeds and tall grass until certain no one had spotted them, and then crept towards the wagon, staying low to the ground inside the shadows of the overhead tree limbs.

The advantage of using the water as a hiding spot was that the guards were facing outwards, expecting danger to come towards them from somewhere beyond their camp. It allowed Leo and Raph to reach the wagon unseen.

Crouching beneath the wagon, the pair listened for sounds coming from within. They heard a low murmur of voices, the sibilate tones recalling the speech pattern of the first wizard they had destroyed.

Leo signed to Raph that they should enter the wagon from opposite ends and each take the wizard closest to him, or the one nearest their right hand to avoid getting in each other’s way. Lifting his head, Leo pressed a finger against his throat and then looked to see that Raph understood. With a curt nod, Raph indicated that he did.

They separated, Leo moving to the back of the wagon and Raph to the front. Counting off seven seconds in his head, Leo sprang into the wagon.

At the exact moment that Leo entered the wagon, Raph barreled through from the opposite side. They moved fast, weapons in hand as they descended on the startled wizards who sat with their backs to the turtles.

Leo grasped his target around the waist as the wizard started to rise and then drew his blade across the fox’s throat, silencing him before he could make a sound. Lowering the dead wizard to the floor, Leo looked over to see that Raph had shoved his sai into his target’s throat, driving it up through the wizard’s skull.

The brothers swiftly wiped their weapons clean on the wizard’s robes and then looked around to see if there was anything of consequence inside the wagon. Other than a few scrolls and some pots containing powders of various colors, nothing stood out.

A jar sat on the floor to one side and Leo found that it held an oily substance. Dumping the scrolls on the floor, Leo poured the oil over them and then stepped back as Raph struck a match and started a fire.

Before the flames became noticeable, the brothers exited the wagon and dashed back into the reeds near the pond. A moment later they were joined by Don and Mikey, the latter giving them a thumbs up to show that they had also accomplished their mission.

Suddenly the wizard’s wagon exploded into a gigantic blaze, no doubt caused by something inside the pots. Shouting with surprise, the Jeshtare clansman jumped to their feet and ran towards the fire.

As the clansmen moved, so did the turtles. They sprang from hiding and ran for the horses, unnoticed for several seconds as the fire held the Jeshtare’s attention.
A startled exclamation told the brothers that they’d been discovered. Sprinting into the open, the turtles waved their arms, yelling and whistling at the horses. The ones who were loose whinnied in fright and took off, running into the distance to escape the melee.

The turtles kicked the ground posts free for the horses who had been staked, grabbing four to use for their getaway. In the time it had taken to liberate the horses, the Jeshtare had gained ground and were drawing near.

In that moment, Lavinia began to rain arrows down around the Jeshtare.

With frightened yelps, the clansmen skid to a stop and raced back towards the cover of the trees. The flames from the wizard’s wagon had set some limbs ablaze and the fire now threatened the remaining supply wagons.

Leaping into the saddles, the turtles slapped their stolen horses’ rumps and sent them into a run. None of the other horses were in sight and the brothers followed the path that Usagi and Lav had taken, meeting up with the pair a couple of miles farther along.

They finally slowed their horses to a walk once they had put a few more miles between themselves and the Jeshtare. By nightfall they would be crossing the border into Lord Noriyuki’s lands, where they knew they would find friends and shelter.

Though their ambush had been successful and all chances of pursuit defeated, the group did not feel any elation. Killing was not something to be celebrated, and they had all done far too much of it during their journey.

There was still the question of whether they would at some point be able to open a portal and return home or if they would first have to deal with the entire wizard’s guild.
The Last Hurdle

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 5,063
Chapter pairing: mild Leo/Lav
Chapter Rating: PG-13
Chapter Warnings/Kinks: Adult concepts and situations, language, tcest
Chapter Summary: After hobbling their enemies, the group rides hard to put distance between them and their pursuers. Knowing their enemies are desperate, they race to find allies who can help them warn young Lord Noriyuki of his neighboring clans' treachery.

If not for Usagi, the group would not have known when they finally crossed the border into Lord Noriyuki’s lands.

It was past midnight and they were all exhausted. They had taken their meals in the saddle, stopping only to water the horses and attend to certain physical needs.

There had been no signs of pursuit, but they could not afford to take chances. The enemies they had made were after more than retribution; if one word of the Jeshtare’s involvement with Hebi were to reach the Shogun, there would be fatal repercussions for that clan.

It was not only the Jeshtare that the small band had to keep alert for. There were bandits all along the roads, there were mercenaries who had been hired by Hebi to destroy them, and they had no idea if the Majutsu sorcerer’s guild would know that they had killed the triad.

Crossing into Lord Noriyuki’s lands did however bring with it a certain sense of relief. The plan that Leo had presented to Lord Noriyuki three years earlier had been implemented, and a brigade made up of part-time soldiers had been formed. Outposts housing these brigades had been built in a number of towns and villages near the border. The members of these brigades patrolled regularly, and raids across the border by Lord Noriyuki’s enemies had been all but eliminated.

The brigade had also done an excellent job of keeping thieves and outlaws in check. Bandits no longer operated without fear of reprisal. The few who tried were caught and imprisoned.

Usagi led the small band along a little used trail that would take them to one of the towns where they would find a brigade outpost. Once they reached that outpost, they would have added protection from the Jeshtare and any bandits who might still work the outlying areas.

What they could not depend on additional protection from were any assassins who Hebi might have set on their trail before his death. Until these assassins knew that Hebi was dead and could not pay them, they would still try to kill Usagi and the turtles.

Then there was the Majutsu wizard’s guild. It was a mysterious organization, one with unknown loyalties and a strange operating code. No one knew who the members were or how large an organization it was. It was anyone’s guess as to whether the killing of the triad would cause the guild to seek revenge or if they would consider those deaths to be a cost of doing
Leo had these things in his mind as they rode. Looking around at his family and Usagi, he saw how tired they all were. They needed to remain vigilant but he doubted any of them were awake enough to notice signs of danger and that included himself. Normally he could allow one part of his mind to study a situation while still maintaining his focus on what was going on around him. He found himself drifting into his thoughts so much that he could have traveled a mile without remembering any of it.

Pulling his mount alongside Raph’s, Leo said, “We need to rest.”

Raph blinked at him, his eyelids at half-mast. “Yeah. Power nap. Mikey’s about to fall off his horse.”

Overhearing them, Don said, “An adrenaline high lasts only so long and then leaves you drained.”

“Thank you Einstein,” Raph muttered.

Mikey was indeed listing to one side and Raph was getting cranky. Usagi’s shoulders sagged and Lav’s head was down. They couldn’t ride for much longer, town or no town.

Spotting a promising looking rise in the landscape to the right of the trail ahead of them, Leo pointed it out to Raph and said, “Let me ride ahead and scout that area. I’ll be right back.”

Raph perked up as Leo rode off. His eyes did not leave his brother until Leo had gone over the small hill, and then he counted off the seconds until Leo reappeared. Rather than riding back to his group, Leo signaled to Raph to join him.

Getting Mikey’s attention required Raph to snap a finger against his younger brother’s arm. The others had noticed when Leo left them and they now turned their mounts to follow Raph’s.

Leo had already dismounted and was waiting for them when the group reached his location. He was standing in a clearing with a view of the surrounding landscape that meant they couldn’t be approached unnoticed. Because of the rise in the ground, any travelers on the trail they’d just left wouldn’t be able to see them either.

“No fire,” Leo said as the others climbed down from their mounts. “Lay out your bedrolls and get some sleep. I’ll stand first watch with Don and we’ll trade off with Raph and Mikey in two hours. They’ll switch off with Usagi and Lav for the final two hours. That will take us to just before sunrise.”

“It is best to approach the town during daylight,” Usagi said. “The brigade has been trained to be wary of riders arriving under cover of darkness. If we are lucky, someone there will recognize me, as I assisted Hideo and Kai in organizing the brigades.”

There were no questions from the group as they set out their bedrolls and climbed into them. Mikey was even too tired to ask about food.

Standing watch in pairs was as much about keeping their partner awake as it was about ensuring their safety. Since Don was used to late hours, it didn’t require any effort to help him stay alert, though both Leo and Don were glad when their two hours were up.

The order not to build a fire didn’t prevent Lavinia from having a selection of dried meat and fruit set out for the group when they awoke. They made quick work of their repast and were
back on their horses just as the sun began to rise.

Feeling more comfortable and alert now that they’d gotten some rest and the sun was up, the travelers began to discuss their situation as they rode.

“So ya’ think the Jeshtare ain’t gonna take a chance on chasing us across the border and maybe getting seen by a patrol? What are they gonna do about the Shogun? They gotta be sweating him finding out they were helping Hebi,” Raph said.

“The Shogun will require proof that Hebi received aid and shelter from the Jeshtare clan,” Usagi said. “He will not act without evidence of their duplicity.”

“If it was me, I’d haul Hebi’s corpse somewhere over the border and make it look like bandits got him,” Mikey said. “Then I’d start spreading the word that Hebi was dead before we got the chance to tell our story. No reason to worry about what we might say.”

“No reason to come after Usagi or us,” Lav said. “They could lie low and profess innocence if anyone were to question them.”

“Does that mean we don’t tell anyone we offed that snake?” Raph asked. “Seems like knowing that would set Lord Noriyuki’s mind at ease.”

“We must tell him,” Usagi said. “He must know about Hebi and that the Jeshtare are never to be trusted. He must also know about the Majutsu guild and the assassins. Lord Noriyuki is favored by the Shogun. A word to the guild will carry great weight coming from the young Lord. The wizards are powerful, but as we discovered, they cannot avoid a sword.”

“That’s if we can get to Lord Noriyuki before the Majutsu find us,” Don said. “We shouldn’t try to open a portal again until we reach the castle. Doing so would probably alert the guild to our location.”

“If the Jeshtare announced Hebi’s death, word would get out to the assassins he hired, wouldn’t it?” Lav asked.

“It is a big if,” Usagi said. “Lord Noriyuki will assuredly begin to spread the word of Hebi’s death, so it is he who we must count upon to keep all assassins at bay.”

“The sooner we get to Lord Noriyuki, the better,” Leo said.

“Don’t look like we’re going home until we do,” Raph said.

They rode for another eight hours with hardly a stop so that it was mid-afternoon when a town came into view. There was activity in the fields around the town, though most of the workers paid the travelers no mind. That by itself told Leo that the brigades were working, since during his trip three years previously farmers tended to hide as soon as strangers arrived.

A watch tower stood at the edge of town, overlooking all roads leading in. A figure could be seen inside the tower, proof that they would not arrive unnoticed.

“The towers have proven to be our greatest weapon against marauders,” Usagi said. “Thieves and plunderers never choose to attack a town or village that has a system for alerting its citizens of impending danger. The guard inside the tower is well trained with a bow and arrow, and uses a horn to sound an alarm if necessary.”

“My original idea has been expanded upon and improved,” Leo said with approval.
“Commander Daisuke has been instrumental in the establishment of the brigade,” Usagi said. “His understanding of strategy has proven useful.”

There was a note of admiration in Usagi’s voice that drew Leo’s attention. Curious, he asked, “You have worked with him?”

“Often,” Usagi said. “Lord Noriyuki depends on Commander Daisuke. There are few as loyal and trustworthy.”

Riding into the town, Usagi located the building which housed the local brigade and rode towards it. Before they had reached the building, the door was flung open and a muscular kamoshika stepped down from the porch to survey the visitors.

“Usagi!” Daisuke called in greeting

“Daisuke!” Usagi said in surprise, stepping down from his horse and clasping the commander’s hand warmly. “I did not expect to encounter you here.”

“Nor did I expect to find you so far from the palace,” Daisuke responded. “Is that Leonardo-san?”

Leo dismounted and took Daisuke’s offered hand. “Greetings Commander Daisuke.”

“Forget the title,” Daisuke said with a grin. “There was a time when I followed your command. Who is this with you?”

Leo’s brothers and Lavinia approached. Pointing to each in turn, Leo said, “My brothers Raphael, Donatello, and Michelangelo and my mate Lavinia.”

At Lav’s introduction, Daisuke glanced at Usagi and then back to Leo again. The look was swift, but the curiosity it held was clear. Daisuke would keep his questions to himself.

“Please, come inside. How does it happen that you once more travel our lands?” Daisuke asked as he climbed the stairs up to the porch.

Tying their horses to the hitching post, the group followed Daisuke into the building. The room they entered was large; clearly a gathering place for meetings.

The flooring in the entryway was made of wide wooden planks, tightly fitted and polished with a black lacquer finish. Beyond that a step up took them onto tatami mats, laid down in an eye pleasing pattern.

Lavinia removed her boots and Usagi his sandals before walking on the mats. The turtles and Daisuke wiped their feet on a thicker mat near the step and then entered the room. To one side of the room was a low table and Daisuke tossed thin pillows onto the floor around the table, indicating that his guests should sit.

“Tell me, what brings you to Uchiko?” Daisuke asked once his guests were comfortable.

“Bad business,” Usagi answered. “Hebi attempted to hijack the turtles’ minds so that he could use their bodies to do his bidding against the young Lord. He employed members of the Majutsu guild to aid him in his devious plot.”

“He sent assassins into our home,” Leo said. “Usagi arrived in time to warn our Father of Hebi’s scheme and aided in our ultimate rescue.”
We knew that Hebi would not cease his evil plotting, so Leonardo and his family chose to come back here with me in order to stop him,” Usagi said.

“And have you? Or has your mission just begun?” Daisuke asked.

Between them, Usagi and Leo told the tale of their adventures, aided by the other three turtles and Lavinia. Partway through their conversation, an elderly townswoman entered with a tea service. All talk stopped as she placed the tray on the table and kneeled to pour out the tea and serve it to the guests. The tray included a stack of rice cakes and once the woman had left the room, Daisuke passed the cakes around the table.

Refreshed and with their story told, the travelers relaxed and awaited Daisuke’s reaction to their tale.

“So the snake is finally dead,” Daisuke said. “He has been a menace for far too long. I would suggest a celebration if not for the Jeshtare and the assassins who do not know that their employer is gone.”

“You can see our difficulty,” Usagi said. “We must return to the castle as quickly as possible to inform Lord Noriyuki of these developments. Moving with speed is difficult to do when one is continuously watching one’s back trail.”

“I was sent here to investigate reports of heightened activity across our border with the Jeshtare,” Daisuke said. “More travelers than usual have been on the roads. From what you have told me, it must have been mercenaries hired by Hebi to join his army.”

“Without a paymaster, they will disburse,” Usagi said.

“The brigades should be alerted to that,” Leo said. “Without employment, mercenaries prey on honest citizens as much as thieves do.”

“I will instruct one of our express riders to carry the warning to the other outposts along the border,” Daisuke said. “Then additional riders will spread the word from there. You see Leonardo-san, we have implemented all of your ideas into the building of the brigades.”

“You did all the work Daisuke,” Leo said. “The credit goes to you.”

“To Hideo, Kai and Usagi as well,” Daisuke said. “They did the majority of the work. You must see Hideo and Kai before you leave. They were at the castle a few days ago and are probably still there.”

“You should keep all information about Hebi’s death and our parts in it out of the dispatches you send to other brigade outposts,” Usagi said. “The situation is rife with political fallout and we are still in danger from the Majutsu guild. Until Lord Noriyuki has the information, it should be kept to as few people as possible.”

“It shall be done,” Daisuke said. “Let us talk about your return to the castle. I shall of course accompany you, along with a small contingent of the soldiers who I brought with me.”

“We don’t want to take you away from your duties here,” Leo said.

“What duties?” Daisuke asked with a laugh. “You have made my mission defunct by killing Hebi. I will leave a handful of good men here to support the local brigade until the border situation is settled.”
“We’ll gratefully accept your company,” Leo said. “The more of us there are, the less likely Hebi’s assassins will attempt something.”

“It is decided then,” Daisuke said as he stood up. “I will make the arrangements and send the express rider along with his instructions. Since this will take some time, I would suggest we delay our departure until morning. In the meantime, you are invited to enjoy some of the humble comforts of the brigade house. There are baths and sleeping chambers that you should avail yourselves of, and we will enjoy a good meal together this evening.”

As much as Leo would have liked to be on his way and knew his family was of the same mind, it made more sense for them to catch up on their rest while they could.

“We gladly accept your hospitality,” Leo said graciously.

“Excellent,” Daisuke said. “I will have someone see to the care of your horses and Chiyo will attend to your personal needs. Perhaps later you would enjoy a tour of the brigade itself.”

His eyes were on Usagi as he said that, but quickly swept around to include the others in his invitation.

“I have not seen the completed project and Leonardo has seen none of his brainchild,” Usagi said. “For myself, I would like a tour.”

“I will meet you back here before dinner then,” Daisuke said. “Any who would like to accompany us are welcome.”

He left the room through the door that the townswoman Chiyo had entered from earlier. Within minutes she appeared and indicated that the group should follow her.

For the sake of propriety, Lavinia bathed first and then the males shared the bath house. Since Leo introduced Lav as his mate and did not want to explain to Daisuke the complexity of their actual relationship, when they returned to the main house, he and Lavinia took a separate bedroom from the one that the other three turtles and Usagi would share.

With only a couple of hours until they were to meet with Daisuke again, Leo chose to meditate while the others rested. Reaching out with his mind, Leo sent a message to Master Splinter, telling their father that they were all well and hoped to be home soon. A sense of warmth and serenity swept over him, letting him know his father had received the message.

Leo took a deep, cleansing breath upon coming back to himself and then blew out the candles he’d borrowed from Chiyo. When he crawled onto the mat and lay down next to Lavinia, her eyes opened.

“You look less worried,” Lav said.

“Father knows we’re safe,” Leo told her.

“We’ll be home soon,” Lav replied. “The menace is gone.”

“Not quite,” Leo said, “but it soon will be. Lord Noriyuki is a fair ruler and a good soul. He’s favored by the Shogun. Between them they’ll put a stop to the wizard guild’s attempts at revenge.”

“As well as the assassins Hebi hired?” Lav asked.
“We won’t have to worry about them,” Leo said, kissing her forehead. “Rest. We’ve got an hour. Once we’ve had our dinner we’ll come straight back to bed so we can get an early start.”

Lavinia curled in closer to him. “It feels odd to be separated from Donny, Raph, and Mikey,” she said. “Disquieting.”

“That’s because we’re far from home. Don’t worry, they understand why our sleeping arrangements had to be this way,” Leo said.

For a moment Lav was quiet, and then she said, “I saw the look Daisuke gave Usagi when you introduced me as your mate. Does he know how Usagi feels . . . ?”

“I don’t know,” Leo answered. “I hope that’s in the past. Usagi has made no overtures; has resurrected none of what happened between us before.”

“I can feel his emotions Leo,” Lav reminded him. “He still longs for you. But I think he understands some things now that possibly he didn’t three years ago. Above all, he doesn’t want to lose your friendship.”

“I don’t want to lose his friendship either,” Leo said. “He was my first real friend outside of my brothers.”

“Akin and Casey?” Lav asked.

Leo smiled. “I’m very close to them, but April is closest with Donny, while Casey and Raph share things that the rest of us couldn’t even fathom. I’m not sure we’d want to.” He chuckled. “Usagi and I share an understanding of each other that we felt as soon as we met.”

“A kinship,” Lavinia murmured.

“Exactly,” Leo said. “I’ve . . . missed him these past three years. As bad and distasteful as this mission has been, I’m glad for the chance to repair that friendship. I don’t know that we would’ve gotten the chance otherwise.”

“Because of how strongly Raph felt,” Lav said.

“His grudges are long lasting,” Leo said, “but that’s because his emotions are so strong. What he felt when I left to travel with Usagi; that fear of losing me, isn’t something he’ll ever forget. Even though he knows that I’d never leave you guys, he still holds onto the resentment at me for making that trip and at Usagi for trying to get me to stay with him.”

“He was hurt and confused,” Lav said. “You all were.”

“Coming here to deal with Hebi might have been a blessing in disguise for both of us,” Leo said. “It helped me mend my friendship with Usagi and allowed Raph to begin to do the same.”

Lavinia sighed. “I’m glad that there are silver linings to what’s been a very challenging few days.”

“As long as we’re all together, nothing will ever be too challenging,” Leo said.

At the appointed time, the group of travelers met Daisuke and he took them on a guided tour of the brigade facilities. Leonardo’s suggestions had been incorporated into the design and Daisuke informed them that each brigade outpost was similar.
“We’ve had no difficulties in finding volunteers to serve in the brigades,” Daisuke told them. “Having part-time soldiers defending their own homes was enlightened thinking, Leonardo-san. They fight with a motivation that is often lacking amongst the regular army ranks.”

“Having something to fight for, especially if it’s family, is the best incentive there is,” Leo replied.

“Come, let us enjoy a meal together,” Daisuke said. “Your horses are being cared for and there are no other duties for any of us to attend to. We will have a relaxing evening together.”

True to his word, dinner was a delightful interlude for all of them. It did not escape Lavinia’s notice that Daisuke seemed to favor Usagi with most of his attention, without seeming rude to the remainder of his guests. Michelangelo noticed her watching the pair and winked at her, as though he too was seeing something of note in their interactions.

As dinner ended, the group set a time to meet in the morning and separated, though Daisuke held Usagi back in order to discuss business of the realm. The others met in Leo and Lav’s room for a few minutes.

“Ya think Daisuke’s got some news he doesn’t want us to know about?” Raph asked.

Mikey and Lav shared a glance. “There’s nothing going on with those two that we need to worry about, Raphie,” Mikey said.

Giving him a suspicious look, Raph asked, “Ya’ know something that we don’t?”

“Call it a hunch,” Mikey answered cheerfully.

Turning to Leo, Raph asked, “Why’d ya’ agree to stopping overnight? Ain’t we pressed for time in getting our information to Lord Noriyuki?”

“We are,” Leo acknowledged, “but we can’t be watchful when we’re overly tired. I couldn’t push Daisuke into leaving before he finished what he needed to do here. Besides, if the Jeshtare have decided to pursue us across the border, I’d rather find that out while we’re in town rather than out in the open.”

“This way we get a protection detail,” Mikey said. “Cause we’re just that important.”

“I don’t know about the rest of you, but overly tired is exactly what I am,” Don said with a yawn. “I’ll be glad to get home where I can count on coffee in the morning.”

After bidding each other a good-night the group turned in. With the brigade standing night watch, it wasn’t necessary for any of the travelers to remain alert and they all fell asleep quickly. Don woke briefly when Usagi returned to their room, but was out again before the samurai had even closed the door.

Soon enough they were all in the saddle again. After a quick hot breakfast, the group began their journey before dawn, though this time they had an armed escort. With Daisuke and four of his soldiers riding along, the chance of an attack by bandits or assassins was lessened to near nonexistence.

It didn’t escape Mikey’s notice that Daisuke chose to ride alongside Usagi. Raph appeared less tense than he had for most of their journey, making sure to claim the spot right next to Leo.

The trip took two days and was for the most part uneventful. A small faction of bandits
was spotted attempting an approach, but at the sight of drawn weapons, they fled back into the woods where they’d been hiding. At the next town along their route, Daisuke informed the head of the brigade there of the bandits’ location, and he sent troops out to deal with them.

It was late day when the group of travelers crested a hill and saw Lord Noriyuki’s castle before them. There was a collective sigh of relief as they rode into the stable yard and stepped down from their mounts for what they hoped was the last time.

“Lord Noriyuki will want to see you immediately,” Daisuke said as he led the way in through a back entrance to the castle. The guards stationed there straightened when they saw him, but did not challenge the group.

Lavinia shied back against Raph as they walked through the halls of the castle behind Daisuke, Usagi, and Leo.

“What’s wrong?” Raph asked in an undertone.

“Remember what the Titamari clan thought when they saw me?” Lavinia asked.

“Daisuke didn’t have the same reaction,” Don said, overhearing her. “And other than some odd looks, none of the inhabitants of the towns we’ve been in seemed concerned about your appearance.”

“Yeah, don’t worry,” Raph said. “I’ve never met him, but from what Leo’s said, Lord Noriyuki sounds like a good egg. If you’re with Leo and Usagi, he won’t think twice about the way ya’ look.”

After stopping to confer with a guard posted in one of the hallways, Daisuke turned and led the way towards a set of double doors. Leo recognized them as leading into the room where Lord Noriyuki attended to his affairs. Before Daisuke pushed open the doors, the travelers dropped their packs in the hall.

The room was just as Leo remembered it from years earlier. It was an enormous space with a long table dominating one end of it. Lord Noriyuki sat at the head of the table, holding council with his advisors. It felt like déjà vu, except that the young Lord had grown into a tall, confident teenager.

Lord Noriyuki looked up as his visitors entered, his gaze falling first on Daisuke. “You are back early, Daisuke. Is the news that bad?”

“On the contrary, the news is good,” Daisuke said, standing aside so that Lord Noriyuki could see who he’d brought with him.

“Usagi! Leonardo-san!” Lord Noriyuki cried out with obvious pleasure. Rising from his seat, he quickly approached the group. “I am most pleased to see you both. Leonardo-san, is this your family? Have you decided to accept the offer I made to you years ago and move here with them?”

“I’m afraid not, Lordy Noriyuki,” Leo said as he bowed politely. “Our presence has been more of a mission than a visit.”

“We have news that would be best delivered in private, my lord,” Usagi said, eyeing his advisors.

“Of course.” Lord Noriyuki could tell from Usagi’s expression that the news was urgent.
As he stepped away from them to go to his advisors, Raph leaned close to Leo and whispered, “He invited ya’ to move here with us? Ya’ never told me that.”

“It wasn’t important,” Leo whispered back. “I never even considered the offer.”

Lord Noriyuki quickly and firmly dismissed his advisors. Once they were gone, he resumed his seat and waved his guests into chairs. “Please introduce me to your family, Leonardo-san.”

Leonardo did so, though this time he introduced Lavinia as ‘our mate’, not wanting to spend another night separated from his brothers. Daisuke was too focused on the business at hand to care about the change in status.

Lord Noriyuki tilted his head to study Lavinia. “Your kind is not known to me. You are a species found only on Leonardo-san’s world?”

“Hers is the predominate species on our planet,” Leo said. “They are called Humans.”

“Interesting,” Lord Noriyuki said. “We must speak of this sometime. Now, tell me this news of yours.”

Once more, Leo and Usagi launched into the tale of what had caused them to need a meeting with Lord Noriyuki. Throughout the story, Lord Noriyuki exhibited various emotions, but none more expressive than when he learned that Hebi was dead.

“I must get word to the Shogun in Edo,” Lord Noriyuki said when Leo stopped speaking. “He has decreed that the removal of Lord Hebi be a top priority.”

“There are . . . difficulties,” Leo said. “We crossed into Jeshtare land in pursuit of Hebi without your sanction. If it becomes known that we slayed him there, the fact that you knew nothing about it will not matter. Too many here know that we are associated with you.”

“The Jeshtare must know that we have reached you by now, my Lord,” Usagi said. “As Michelangelo suggested to us days ago, it is in their best interest to dispose of Lord Hebi’s body across the border and disavow all ties to him.”

“That way they can claim they don’t have any knowledge of what happened to him and didn’t know where he was,” Mikey added. “Lord Noriyuki, if he’s on your side of the border, then you could say we took him out on your orders.”

Lord Noriyuki frowned. “The Shogun should be made aware of the treachery of the Jeshtare clan as well. There must be some proof of this. Without it, they will continue their devious plots and none will be justified in speaking out against them.”

“They were gathering a small army for Hebi,” Raph said. “Ain’t that fact enough proof?”

“Our knowledge of it does not make for solid evidence,” Usagi said.

“The Jeshtare are prominently placed,” Lord Noriyuki said. “It would be my word against there’s, and that is not enough.”

The room grew quiet as the each contemplated the situation with obvious frustration.

Suddenly Donatello snapped his fingers, startling the gathered group and drawing their attention. “Why didn’t I think of this before?” he asked rhetorically, jumping up from his seat. “I’m such an idiot!”
To the surprise of everyone, the purple banded ninja darted out of the room and the doors slammed shut behind him.

TBC….

================================

Daisuke is a Kamoshika aka Serow - google it.
Celebration

Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 6,877
Chapter pairing: Fivesome, Raph/Don
Chapter Rating: NC-17
Chapter Warnings/Kinks: Adult concepts and situations, language, tcest, het sex, group sex
Chapter Summary: Within the safety of Lord Noriyuki's castle, the group earns his undying gratitude. Committed to showing his appreciation for their sacrifices, he throws a gala in their honor.

“What the hell?” Raph asked of no one in particular.

A moment later Don bounded back into the room carrying his duffel bag.

“Think of what, Donny?” Leo asked, watching as his brother tossed the bag onto a chair and began rifling around inside.

“This,” Don said triumphantly, pulling a scroll out of the bag. “It’s the Jeshtare’s pledge to Lord Hebi stating they have four legions of fighters waiting for the snake to lead them against Lord Noriyuki. I’d completely forgotten that I saved the scroll when we burned everything else.”

“Damn Donny, to hell with what ya’ just said. Ya’ ain’t an idiot, you’re a damn genius!” Raph exclaimed as Don passed the scroll over to Lord Noriyuki.

Unrolling the scroll, Lord Noriyuki read the words for himself and then said, “This is excellent proof! The Jeshtare have destroyed themselves with their own pledge. I have long doubted their assurances that they were not responsible for the raids across the border onto my lands. Their pledges of loyalty to the Shogun have been false as well. The Shogun will strip them of their holdings for their treachery.”

“Won’t that make them come after ya’?…” Raph asked. “’Cause ya’ exposed them?”

“The Shogun’s punishments are harsh and fitting,” Usagi said. “He will have the heads of the Jeshtare clans’ leadership. Those he allows to live will pledge their fealty to him through servitude. Fighters known to have sworn loyalty to Lord Hebi will be stripped of their possessions. Some may choose to join the Shogun’s army but they will never hold positions of trust.”

“It is in this way all future attempts at insurrection will be thwarted,” Lord Noriyuki said. “You six have done both the Shogun and myself a great service and I am in your debt. That is twice you have saved me, Leonardo-san. It is not much, but I would like to repay your efforts with a gala in your honor.”

Leo exchanged glances with his family before saying, “You honor us greatly with that offer, Lord Noriyuki. We are simple ninja and need no honorariums. Besides, my family and I would like to return home. We’ve been gone far too long.”
“Still, you must ease the burden of this debt I carry,” Lord Noriyuki said, his eyes sparkling. “I can easily bring together a gathering of noble families and other notables from within my holdings for tomorrow evening. It would allow you one night and day of rest. There will be time enough after the celebration for you to bid us farewell. Who knows, it may be another three years before we see you again.”

Usagi and Daisuke were looking at Leo expectantly. He knew his family wanted to go home, but he did not want to dishonor Lord Noriyuki with a refusal.

Leo’s brothers seemed to understand, because Raph and Don nodded at him and Mikey said, “We should never turn down a chance to party bro’.”

From Lavinia’s expression, she was leaving it up to him. Leo smiled politely at Lord Noriyuki and said, “Your offer is most gracious. We accept.”

Lord Noriyuki clapped his hands. “Wonderful! I will have servants show you to rooms. Ask of them anything and they will provide it to you. Daisuke, please arrange for a contingent of your best men to travel to Edo to deliver the message of Lord Hebi’s death for me, and to give him this scroll as proof of the Jeshtare’s involvement with him.”

Daisuke bowed. “It shall be done, my Lord.”

“Do not go yourself,” Lord Noriyuki said. “I wish for you to attend the gala tomorrow night as well.”

Once more Daisuke bowed and left the room. A moment later, several servants entered and escorted the travelers to a section of the castle where they had their pick of rooms and a private bath.

The evening was spent in a leisurely and enjoyable manner. Tomoe Ame was present and Lord Noriyuki introduced her to those who hadn’t met her before. At dinner, which they shared with Lord Noriyuki, they talked of Earth and its human inhabitants. There was also discussion on other topics and they found Lord Noriyuki to be educated and well versed. It was clear he had been trained into his role as head of the Geishu clan.

Lord Noriyuki also spoke with animation of his plans for the celebration to be held the next evening. The more he talked of the festivities, the more distressed Lavinia appeared.

Tomoe Ame, who sat near her, leaned over to whisper, “Something bothers you?”

Keeping her voice down, Lavinia said, “I’m afraid this affair may be more formal than I was prepared for. I hope that my attire will be fitting to the occasion.”

With a smile, Tomoe Ame told her, “Do not worry, you will be provided with suitable clothing as will the rest of the Kame clan. It is Lord Noriyuki’s small gift to all of you.”

Relieved, Lavinia said, “Thank you.”

After dinner, the group moved outside to enjoy the evening air and the formal gardens. It wasn’t long though until fatigue urged them to call it a night.

Usagi had a room to himself, one where he usually stayed when visiting the castle. Bidding his friends a good-night, Usagi separated from them and went to his room. The turtles and Lavinia retired for the evening to a room they’d chosen to share.
Pushing their sleeping mats close together, the five family members lay down close to each other. Too tired to do more than sleep, they still enjoyed the unfettered intimacy of being able to touch one another.

The following day was spent primarily in the gardens, where a large open area provided an excellent space for martial arts practice. It had been years since Leo and Usagi had sparred against one another. Their bout captured everyone’s attention, even that of Lord Noriyuki who had come out for a few minutes of fresh air.

It was clear that while their skills had grown, they were still evenly matched. When they were finally forced to call the match a draw, the pair were more than delighted with the outcome.

Soon it was time to prepare for the festivities. Servant women lead Lavinia away from the turtles and assisted her in bathing. From their whispered conversations, it was clear that they were fascinated by her unusual appearance.

In a separate room the servants helped her into formal dress, the uwagi a bright red while the robes which covered her shoulders were of a beautifully pattered green. The mo which trailed down along the back was white, with intricately colored birds painted onto the material.

They also dressed her hair, taking turns touching it and giggling. Through it all Lavinia remained quiet, leaving it to them to ensure that she was turned out properly.

Once she was clothed, Lavinia went back to the room she was sharing with the turtles. She found them waiting for her, each attired in the ceremonial robes of a high ranking warrior.

“They wanted to put some sort of trousers on us,” Raph said before Lav had a chance to comment. “I put my foot down. This part is itchy enough.”

“At least you can move,” Lavinia said. “Do you have any idea of how many layers there are to this outfit? It weighs a ton.”

“It does look good on you,” Don said. “Very regal.”

“Why thank you kind sir,” Lav said with a curtsy. “It took nearly an hour to put this on and there were three women helping me.”

“Bet I can get it off of you in less time than that,” Mikey said suggestively.

There was a knock on the door and when Leo opened it, he found Tomoe Ame standing outside. “If you are all ready, I will escort you to the festivities.”

The celebration was held in the same room where Lord Noriyuki had conducted his business the day before. A group of musicians sat in one corner, providing entertainment to those in attendance.

Servants moved about the floor, carrying food and drink to the celebrants. There were representatives from many different clans, all talking and laughing together.

Upon seeing them, Lord Noriyuki came over. “You all look amazing. Come, let me introduce you to some of these clansmen. I have told them of some of your exploits, and they are excited to meet you.”

The group followed him dutifully, enduring the introductions with a politeness that would have made Master Splinter proud. Lord Noriyuki was soon pulled from his duties as their host to
attend to new arrivals and the Hamato clan moved to one side of the room.

They were soon joined by Usagi and Gennosuke, to whom Lavinia was introduced.

“It is good to see you ninja again,” Gen said. “Your presence often increases the size of my purse.”

“You’ve lost money just as often,” Usagi said. “Perhaps you should stop gambling.”

Gen laughed. “Never. How long are you staying?”

“We leave for home tomorrow,” Leo said. “We’ve already been away far too long.”

“Lord Noriyuki talked you into staying for this party, didn’t he?” Gen asked. “He is hard to turn down. The food here more than makes up for it.”

“You have eaten enough to prove the truth of that,” Usagi said. Looking towards the entrance, he added, “Ah, Daisuke has arrived. It appears he has brought along some old friends of yours, Leonardo.”

Turning, Leo spotted Daisuke walking in his direction. With him were Hideo and Kai, two warriors whom he and Usagi had trained years earlier.

“Leonardo-san!” they cried out in unison upon seeing him. Clapping him warmly on the shoulder, they both began talking at once.

“Stop,” Daisuke said with a laugh. “He cannot understand with you both chattering away like old women.”

Laughing as well, they took turns informing Leo of their current stations as trusted leaders over the many units of the brigade forces. It was clear they held Leo in high esteem and that he felt the same about them.

Stepping away from the group, Raph eyed an approaching servant and quickly snatched two glasses from a tray she carried. Holding the ornately colored glassware gingerly, he took a sip from one and pursed his lips in approval.

“Here babe, try this,” Raph said, holding the second glass out towards Lavinia.

“Not just now, thank you,” Lav said. “I’m afraid to eat or drink anything while wearing this outfit.”

“I’ll try it,” Mikey said, taking the glass from Raph before his brother could protest. After swallowing a sip, he asked, “Tastes good. What is it?”

“It is a spiced rice wine,” Usagi said. “You should eat something as well; the wine seems mild but that is its deception.”

“Come on Mikey, let’s go snag some food,” Raph said. “Ya’ sure ya’ don’t want something to eat, Lav?”

“I’ll find something to nibble on later,” Lav said, watching as Raph and Mikey worked their way through the crowd.

Don came to stand next to her, a glass of his own in one hand. “Want to share this with me?”
“Donny, this outfit has so many layers I have no idea how I’d manage it if I had to go to the bathroom,” Lavinia told him.

“You can’t go the whole night without eating or drinking anything,” Don said.

“When it gets nearer the end of this party, I’ll indulge,” Lav said. “Until then, I’m content to stand here and watch the inhabitants of this world mingle. I doubt I’ll ever have another opportunity like this one.”

“Leo’s the only one of us to ever have that chance,” Don said. “He lived and traveled here with Usagi for many weeks. Here comes Raph.”

It was more of a warning to drop that subject than an announcement of his brothers’ return. Both Raph and Mikey came back together, each carrying their own platters of food.

“Swiped these from a couple of servers,” Raph said with a wide grin. “Better than following them around and trying to grab these little whatever they are one at a time.”

“They’re hors d’oeuvres and they aren’t meant to be a whole meal,” Don said. “There is an entire table of food over on the other side of the room.”

“We saw it,” Mikey said before dropping a tidbit into his mouth. Talking around the bite, he added, “The plates over there are too small. We’re gonna use these platters once we clean them off.”

Don shook his head and Raph said, “Don’t judge. Here, have some. They’re good.”

Helping himself to something from the offered tray, Don took a bite, chewed and swallowed. “That is good. You should try one Lav, before these two eat them all.”

“Just one,” Lavinia said, taking a tidbit from Mikey’s tray.

Once she’d eaten it, Don held out his glass. “Want to wash it down?”

“I’m good,” Lav said quickly. “Maybe a little water later.”

“So what else do ya’ do at one of these fancy parties?” Raph asked. “Leo’s over there yammering away with his pals and that’s all anyone else seems to be doing.”

“When I attend these type of things at home, it’s usually meant to be an opportunity to network with like-minded people, or a way to solicit funds for some project. Or a thank you to benefactors,” Lavinia said.

“I always wondered what ya’ did at those things,” Raph said. “Why does everyone get so dolled up?”

“To indicate status,” Don said. “It’s the same here. You know everyone’s station in life by the clothes they’re wearing. It’s an indication of their position and helps to identify those with the true power.”

“He’s right,” Lav said in agreement. “The more expensive the clothes, the wealthier the wearer. But it’s more than that; it’s also in how they move and how they wear the clothes and accoutrements.”

Raph held up a hand to stop them. “That definitely ain’t my kind of world. First off, clothes
are damn uncomfortable. Ya’ can’t fight in them; hell, ya’ can’t hardly breathe in them. Second, it sounds too damn fake. Ya’ gotta suck up to people who probably ain’t worth your time just to get their attention for some reason. Forget it. Life in the sewers may not be a bowl of roses, but at least it’s real.”

“Yet another reason I chose life with you guys rather than the one I led before,” Lavinia said, smiling fondly at him.

Mikey had wandered off to stroll amongst the guests. After numerous attempts to engage them in conversation, he finally walked back to his family.

“These guys are about as entertaining as a floor rug,” Mikey said with disgust. “Hey Lav, wanna dance?”

“I don’t think anyone dances here Mikey,” Lav said.

“Then let’s go out on the patio where they won’t see us,” Mikey urged, shoving his empty food platter at a startled servant. “All this standing around is boring.”

Smiling at him indulgently, Lav took Mikey’s offered hand and went outside with him. Having nothing better to do, Raph and Don trailed after them.

Choosing a section of patio that was out of the view of party guests, Mikey and Lav came together to dance. Lav found it difficult to move properly in the layered outfit she was wearing and Mikey had to take care not to step on the many trailing folds, but they managed to find a rhythm.

Leo accepted a glass of wine from Usagi and then noticed his family had gone outside.

“I should probably keep an eye on them,” Leo said. “Celebrations of this sort are not something my brothers are used to.”

“The fresh air would not be unwelcome,” Usagi said.

Other military officers had arrived and Daisuke, Kai, and Hideo went over to greet them. Gen walked up carrying a platter heaped high with food just as Leo and Usagi turned towards the outer door.

“Where are we going?” Gen asked them.

“Just to the patio,” Usagi said. “It seems that we are not actually necessary at the celebration in our honor.”

“As long as we are near the food,” Gen said.

Usagi quirked an eyebrow at him. “I was not aware that you had left anything.”

“They’re refilling the table now,” Gen replied, not at all put off by Usagi’s sarcasm.

Raph turned his head when he sensed someone had joined them on the patio. Glancing at the glass in Leo’s hand, he smirked.

“Living it up tonight, Fearless?” Raph asked.

“It’s just a glass of wine,” Leo said.

“Make sure ya’ don’t have too many of them, ya’ might start swinging from the
chandeliers,” Raph said.

“You don’t have to worry about that,” Leo told him.

“Oh yeah, why not?” Raph asked.

“Because there aren’t any chandeliers,” Leo replied with a straight face.

Raph snorted and Don chuckled, amused at the byplay between his brothers.

“This is where you have all gone,” Daisuke said, rejoining the group. Noticing Mikey and Lav, he asked, “What are they doing?”

“They’re dancing,” Leo answered. “It’s something that the inhabitants of my world do together when there is music.”

They were quiet for a time as they watched the pair. Then Usagi said, “They move well together. Are these steps that one must memorize and practice, like a kata?”

“No,” Leo said, trying to think how to explain. “Dancing comes more from feeling the music and allowing your body to get in sync with it. There are dances that must be performed in a certain way, but simple dancing for pure enjoyment is more an emotional thing.”

“Interesting,” Usagi murmured.

Mikey and Lav knew they had an audience but since it was friends and family they continued to dance.

“Daisuke just joined them,” Mikey said, keeping his voice low.

“He’s standing next to Usagi again,” Lav said, knowing Mikey would understand the significance of that.

“Yeah, he’s standing close to Usagi,” Mikey murmured. “They look good together.”

“I’m pretty sure Daisuke would agree with you,” Lav said. “Do you think Usagi’s noticed?”

“Not with Leo around,” Mikey said.

“That doesn’t seem fair to either of them,” Lav said. “Usagi knows he’ll never be more than a friend to Leo. He shouldn’t have a lonely life just because Leo couldn’t give him what he wants. He needs to open his eyes to other opportunities. Ones better suited to him.”

“Maybe someone should put a bug in his ear urging him towards Daisuke,” Mikey said, grinning mischievously.

“Maybe someone should,” Lavinia said, looking at Mikey meaningfully. “But only if they can manage to be subtle about it.”

“Consider ‘Operation Love Connection’ to be underway,” Mikey said, spinning away from Lavinia and then bowing to her.

“Remember I said subtle,” Lav whispered before he walked away.

“Hey Usagi,” Mikey called, walking up to the samurai. “Introduce me to some of the folks who showed up to honor us. You can tell them I’m the Battle Nexus champion.”
Raph groaned. “Do me a favor and don’t feed his ego. It’s big enough already.”

Unable to resist Mikey’s urging, Usagi allowed himself to be led away by the vibrant young turtle. Leo, Don, Daisuke, and Gen trailed after them, reentering the large room but Raph waited for Lav to join him.

“Wanna tell me what that was all about?” Raph asked as they walked back inside together.

“What makes you think it had to be about anything?” Lav countered, trying to look virtuous.

“Right. Don’t come to me whenever this blows up in Mikey’s face,” Raph said. “I ain’t having nothing to do with it.”

Lavinia patted his arm. “You have nothing to fear,” she said. “I wouldn’t mind a little food now. Why don’t we see what’s on the table?”

“Before Gen or Mikey go back for refills,” Raph said, escorting Lav to the food table.

The next hour passed pleasantly enough. Raph remained at Lav’s side and watched his brothers mingle. Lord Noriyuki circulated, stopping to speak to them and introduce them to a few of the other guests. Tomoe Ame spent some time in their company as well, telling them how she’d come to meet Leonardo.

Many of the military members who were present seemed to know Leo and he was at the center of one group or another almost constantly. Don stayed with him, enjoying the technical details of how Lord Noriyuki’s army functioned and how the brigades had been formed.

Mikey somehow managed to pull Daisuke away from them to mingle amongst the other guests with him and Usagi. Raph’s eyes narrowed when he saw his youngest brother’s maneuver. His suspicions were heightened when the questioning look he shot at Lav was met by an expression of pure innocence.

During the entire evening Lavinia continued to decline offers of drink, though she did eat something. Raph knew she had to be thirsty, but each time a servant came around, Lavinia looked away from the tray of glasses.

Finally he’d had enough of her odd behavior. When another servant came around, Raph grabbed a glass, but once more Lav shook her head, refusing a drink.

Raph eyed her. “What’s the deal babe, ya’ don’t drink alcohol?”

Lavinia shrugged. “What would be the point?”

“So ya’ don’t drink ‘cause ya’ can’t get drunk?” Raph asked just to be clear.

Lav surveyed the crowd, avoiding his eyes as she answered. “I don’t like the taste.”

Raph noticed she didn’t answer the question, so he asked again. “Ya’ don’t drink ‘cause it has no effect on ya’, right?”

Lav wriggled under his gaze. “Why all this concern over my drinking habits?”

A tiny slip, but the gleam in Raph’s gold eyes told Lav he’d caught it.

Lavinia didn’t drink alcohol and not just because she didn’t like the taste, which was her standard reply when asked. The two times in her entire life that she had tried it, she’d liked the
taste just fine. The problem was that Lav had a reaction to it, which shouldn’t have happened considering how her mutant power worked.

She got tipsy.

The first time was at a celebration for Master Yoshi’s promotion in the Utrom ranks. It was early in his career, before Mashimi had grown overly jealous, and Mashimi had brought the sake they used as a toast.

Master Yoshi had allowed her a small cup of the rice wine. After only a few sips however, Lav had started to feel strange; light headed and slightly uninhibited. She’d managed a few words after that, but was so noticeably affected that Tang Shen quickly led her away and tucked her into bed.

Lavinia remembered the odd look on Master Yoshi’s and Mashimi’s faces as she left. It had taken a few hours for the alcohol to wear off and Tang Shen had stayed with her, allowing none of the men near.

The second time was after she’d been on her own for a while and had begun cultivating rich clients. Lav had been invited to one of her first dinner parties. The event was large so no one noticed when she ducked out without saying anything and quickly left. A glass of champagne had been the culprit that time; she’d thought the sake was nothing more than an isolated incident and had taken a chance. It had not gone well.

Now Lav considered alcohol to be an allergen and avoided it completely. Getting tipsy on one drink wouldn’t have been that big a deal, but that wasn’t the only thing that happened.

She’d never had a problem avoiding drink after the second occasion. But now Raph’s eyes were on her, his curiosity piqued, and she knew she wasn’t getting out of this one all that easily.

Raph could tell that Lav was keeping something from him. Damn, they’d been together more than a year and he knew her. She was doing that thing where she avoided a question because she didn’t want to answer it and she didn’t actually want to lie.

Raphael wasn’t having any of that. He wanted to know what she was hiding and he was going to push until she told him. Sometimes, a guy just had to be firm with her.

So he took his glass and put it to her lips.

“Take a sip,” Raph told her, tilting the glass so she didn’t really have a choice.

“Raph . . .” Lav started to protest, but then the liquid was there and it was either drink or get wet.

So she drank. Lav swallowed about a thimbleful of the slightly sweet, somewhat spicy mixture and hoped that would satisfy Raph.

It didn’t. He made her take a mouthful of the drink before he pulled the glass away, and then watched her smugly as she swallowed all of it.

The effect was almost instantaneous. A strange feeling behind her eyes, a tickle across the bridge of her nose, and a strange caressing warmth that oozed down her spine.

“I can tell by the look on your face ya’ liked it,” Raph said complacently.
Lav licked her lips and tried to appear unaffected. “It . . . it was okay,” she managed to carefully say before shutting her mouth.

“. . . okay, kay, kay . . . .” Was what Raph heard and his head jerked up. His eyes narrowed, but Lav appeared normal so he looked back at his glass. Shit, maybe he’d had enough of the stuff.

That didn’t mean he couldn’t get Lav to live a little. She looked way too uptight and this was supposed to be a farewell party for them. Raph lifted his empty glass and got the servant’s attention in order to trade the glass for a full one.

“Here babe.” Raph pushed the glass into her hand. He was on a mission now. Raph intended to find out why she’d gone from dancing happily to tense and wary because of a simple question about a glass of wine.

Lavinia tried not to take the glass. She was actively pushing it back at him, and Raph was now completely suspicious and damned determined.

Stepping close to her, Raph said, “Take this and drink it, or tell me why ya’ won’t.”

Lav cleared her throat, looking up at Raph. He was so near she could smell his musky, masculine odor even in the crowded room. She wanted to lick his plastron.

“Hell,” Lav thought, “control this.”

“No.” It was the only word Lavinia felt safe in saying, and was happy to note Raph didn’t react to it.

Other than to take her fingers in his, wrap them around the glass, and raise it to her lips.

His eyes were still narrowed and a corner of his mouth was up. Saying no to Raphael had always been a bad idea.

Lav slowly drank the offered wine, letting it trickle down her throat and set off the strange burn throughout her system. Her head felt lighter, while the rest of her body began to sing.

“Maybe I can keep my mouth shut,” Lav thought as she emptied the glass.

Her eyes closed, then opened as the last of the liquid drained away.

“Good job, babe. See now, that wasn’t so bad, was it?” Raph laughed, reaching for the glass as her eyes reopened.

His hand faltered when Lav looked at him. Her head wasn’t raised to his, but her eyes came up regardless, and the look in them was provocative. She met his hand partway, placing the glass in his fingers, caressing them as she pulled her hand away.

Raph swallowed. She had to be messing with him for making her drink, ‘cause Lav wouldn’t openly seduce him in a public setting. Okay, that was fine, he could play too.

“Stay right here, wildcat. I’ll go get ya’ another glass.” Raph grinned, pleased with himself.

The alcohol was eating away Lav’s inhibitions quickly. She wouldn’t be able to fight the effects with another glass. She couldn’t fight this one.
The demur Lavinia inside her was screaming at her to stay quiet, to just keep her mouth closed. But this one, controlled by the alcohol and her allergy to it, was not disposed to listen.

Her body was sending her signals fueled by intense physical desire. Lav wanted her men, and she wanted them right now.

And she didn’t want gentle, either. She wanted to be pillaged and burned by them, all of them.

Looking around the room, she found them, one by one. Raphael, cornering a servant, Mikey near the refreshment table with Usagi and Daisuke, Donny and Leo in deep conversation with Hideo and Gen.

One last time she tried to tell herself to stay silent and then her needs took over.

“Ra~ph~ael,” Lavinia called, her sirens song reaching for him. The alcohol triggered some latent power over her vocal cords, making her voice change and echo.

The effect was as mesmerizing as the voice. Raph turned and moved to her as though pulled on an invisible string, his eyes glazing over with sudden and intense lust.

All Raph could hear was his name. It kept echoing in his head and suddenly his whole body was on fire, every primal urge triggered by the strange resonance. He had no thought for where they were, or who was around them.

Lav’s head tilted back and she watched with satisfaction as he crossed to her. The room around her grew still, every male within hearing distance of that voice abruptly frozen.

Turning her body towards Mikey, Lav called to him, “Mic~hel~an~gel~o!”

Mikey’s plate dropped and he blinked. He spun on his heel and found her, saw Raph going to her, and then his feet were moving.

More silence in the room, more men frozen while their female companions looked at them in complete confusion. The commotion finally caught Leo’s attention and he glanced around.

“What is happening?” Usagi asked, also noticing the change in the room.

Don and Gen stopped talking, becoming instantly wary. That’s when they saw Lav standing near the center of the room, her eyes on them as Raph kissed the back of her neck and Mikey worked his mouth upwards on her inner arm.

She was glowing, her presence intoxicating to look upon.

Once more she called to one of her mates, “Don~a~tello!”

Don started walking, his mind swimming in the echo of his name. Leo, who had been watching Lav, did a double take as Donny passed him, his face flushed with desire.

Leo could hear the echo trying to pull him into a vortex of need; the skin on his body tingling with the intensity. Apparently, it had a like effect on any male who heard it; Gen, Daisuke, and Usagi all froze.

Daisuke’s eyes were on Usagi but Usagi was staring at Leo, his longing nakedly obvious. But then Leo was pulled away as Lavinia sang out for her last lover.
“Le-o-nar-do!”

Leo could hear Usagi trying to tell him something, but the echo blocked out everything. He approached his family, his eyes locked on Lavinia’s as she waited for him to join them.

As soon as he was close enough he bent slightly, curved his arms beneath her rear and lifted her, tossing her over one shoulder.

“Ohhh!” Lav’s voice chimed and filled the room. Leo turned to the exit and his brothers followed.

Lav lifted her head and saw Usagi watching them. He looked very sad and Lavinia felt sorry that she was taking Leo away from him for the night.

“Good-night Usa-gi. Good-night Daisuke. Good-night Gen,” Lav called to them, the echo of her voice sending quivers down their spines.

After the five of them were gone, Daisuke shook himself and turned to Usagi. “A most remarkable woman.”

“Yes, my friend,” Usagi acknowledged reluctantly. “I am afraid that she is.”

As Leo carried her through the castle halls towards their shared bedroom, Lav removed the ribbons from her hair, letting them fall to the floor. Shaking her hair loose, Lav watched with satisfaction as they entered the bedroom and Mikey locked the door.

Raph pulled her off of Leo’s shoulder and spun her around, quickly covering her mouth with his while his hands roamed her body. She could feel Leo behind her, his hands trying to find her hips and thighs through the layers of her gown, his plastron pressed firmly against her backside.

Raph husked in his deepest voice, “How do I take this off?” The gown’s attachments were beyond his fingers abilities.

“Mmm. Don’t care. Rip it.” Lavinia whispered urgently, recapturing his mouth as she flung her arms around his neck to pull him down to her.

With a wild grunt, Raph grabbed a double handful of her gown and tore it savagely.

Suddenly, all four of them were on her, ripping, tearing at her clothes until she was bare. Eight hands touched her, stroked her body, exploring her completely. Lavinia in turn pulled the robes off of her lovers so that they too would be naked.

Groaning, Lav slipped her hands down Raph’s plastron, eagerly grabbing his cock, which was fully extended. Squeezing and pumping him, Lav pulled her mouth away from his to urge, “On your back, down Raph, now. I need you to fill me.”

He was moving before she stopped speaking, dropping to his knees, then onto his carapace, pulling Lav along with him.

Lav swarmed over his body, panting and biting at the skin above his plastron. His dick was a hard mast against her stomach and she moved down and over it, her hand grabbing him to guide his cock into her wet opening.

Sliding over him, Lav closed her eyes and moaned.
“Good, oh good!” Her head fell forward as she ground herself onto his cock.

Leo had moved down with the pair, his mouth on her back, kissing and biting her flesh. His hands swept over her ass, pulling at the cheeks as she began riding Raphael.

“Leo, yes, yes. In me, please.” Lav purred, urging him with her mesmerizing voice.

When she turned her head to watch him, Mikey fell to his knees next to her, wrapped a hand around the back of her head, and caught her lips with his mouth.

Leo used his precum as lube, his brain barely functioning enough to remind him to do this.

There was very little control left in Leo as he pressed his thickly aroused cock to her small, tight anus and pushed his way in. Going slow when all he wanted to do was thrust wildly into her satiny warmth was mental torture; but he endured.

“Shift,” Leo ordered with a growl.

It was the only warning he gave them as he pulled Lav backwards off of Raph. With his cock still buried in her ass, Leo lay down on his carapace with his legs spread, his knees bent. Reaching around Lav, Leo pushed her legs apart so that they were against his outer thighs.

This left Lav spread wide as Leo flattened his feet on the mat and began to thrust up into her. Raph quickly moved forward between Lavinia’s legs and once more buried his cock in her pussy.

Mikey straddled Leo’s shoulders, facing away from Raph, and squatted over Lav’s face. She needed no more encouragement than seeing his dripping cock above her to open her mouth and accept his length. When she began performing fellatio, Mikey leaned forward to plant his hands on either side of Leo’s head, giving himself leverage to pump his cock into her mouth.

Standing next to them, Don waited for his brothers to take their positions, and then he slung a leg over the group, lowering himself so that he was nearly sitting on Lav’s midriff. Seeing his intentions, Raph grabbed onto Leo’s thighs for added stability and came up onto his knees to continue driving his cock into Lavinia’s pussy. With his shell to Raph and facing Mikey’s rear, Don gripped Lav’s tits, jammed his hard cock between them, and began to thrust.

Sounds of their passion filled the room. Groans, churrs, and moans echoed salaciously, as did the wet squelching produced by four very rigid cocks sliding into a willing body.

Wanting more, Lavinia reached up and pushed one of her fingers into Mikey’s ass, sending a pulse of her mutant energy into him in order to titillate his prostate.

“Oh shell!” Mikey exclaimed. “Do that again!”

Grabbing onto the base of Don’s cock, Lavinia once more sent a pulse into Mikey’s rectum which simultaneously sending one straight into Don’s penis.

“Ahh!” Don shouted, throwing his head back as the energy wave swept along his shaft.

The power of that electrical pulse lit up Lavinia’s own core and from there sped up through Leo and Raph’s cocks.

“Shit!” Raph yelped. “I’m . . . I’m . . . there!”
With a grunt and one final hard lunge, Raph climaxed. At almost the same exact moment, Leo came up on the balls of his feet in order to bury himself as deeply as possible in Lav’s ass and then shot his load into her.

The feeling of their plentiful cum flowing into her set off Lavinia’s own orgasm. Her vagina snapped around Raph’s thick cock as she came, shaking and whimpering at the strength of her climax.

Those vibrations stimulated the head of Mikey’s cock and he pushed himself deep into her throat, releasing his cum in waves down her gullet. Pressing hard against Lav’s breasts, Don’s cock throbbed and expanded just before his cum shot out to coat her chest with his sticky, milky essence.

Muscles quivering from their exertions, the group broke apart and collapsed onto the sleeping mats. Breathing hard, the turtles prepared themselves as Lav’s mutant energy coursed through their systems, bringing their cocks back to life.

Lavinia had fallen to Leo’s side and he quickly rolled her back on top of him, her chest against his plastron. Gripping her hair, he plundered her mouth with his, grasping her ass to guide her pussy onto his once more swollen cock.

Raph found himself facing Don as his dick expanded and he latched onto the back of his brother’s head, pulling him into a deep kiss. Once more needy, Mikey grasped his throbbing shaft and quickly crawled around behind Lavinia in order to plunge his length into her ass.

Pulling Don up from the mat, Raph kissed along his jawline before nipping at his neck.

“Lav’s mouth is free,” Raph whispered suggestively. “I’m doing your fine ass, Donny boy.”

Don’s gulp was audible as he allowed Raph to move him into position just above Leo. When Lavinia saw Don’s cock bobbing directly in front of her she lifted her head to accept his length into her mouth.

“Brace him for me Leo,” Raph urged as he swiped a hand over his cock which was still wet with Lav’s juices. “Lav can fuck your dick on her own.”

Taking his hands from Lav’s hips, Leo wrapped them around Don’s as Raph pushed a finger into Don’s rectum to prep him. Mikey continued to fuck Lav’s ass, using his momentum to propel her pussy onto Leo’s cock.

The little breathy gasps that Don made were nearly drowned out by the wet slurping sounds of Lavinia sucking him off. Then Don inhaled sharply as Raph penetrated him.

Raph grunted his appreciation at the tight heat surrounding his cock and then began to move. His drives were hard and rutting, forcing Leo to lock his elbows to keep Don in place.

Leaning forward, Mikey wrapped his arms around Lav’s body as he continued to thrust into her. Don reached out to hold onto Mikey’s shoulders, feeling the heat begin to pool in his groin as Lav pulled him towards his second climax.

Then Raph hit Don’s prostate with a hard thrust and Don cried out as his orgasm ripped through his system. The delicious sound of his brother’s pleasure pushed Mikey over as well, his climax triggering Leo’s.
“Damn Donny,” Raph said through gritted teeth. “Fuck that’s . . . good!”

His last word ended in a sharp yelp as he came, flooding Don’s ass with his jizz. Trembling from his exertions, Raph managed to hold on until the final pulses of cum left his cock and then he pulled out of his brother and flopped over backwards.

Releasing Mikey’s shoulders, Don scooted back and then slowly crumpled next to Raph, exhaustion overtaking him. Tossing an arm across Don’s chest, Raph fell into a deep sleep.

Kissing his way down Lav’s back, Mikey pulled out of her and flipped over so that he was lying next to Leo. Lav moaned at the loss of contact and then sighed deeply when Leo’s spent cock slipped out of her.

Sliding down against Leo, Lavinia nuzzled into his neck as he wrapped her in his arms. Soon her even breathing told him she was asleep.

Drifting on a completely relaxed euphoric cloud, Leo glanced over at his brothers, who were all peacefully asleep. With a smile of satisfaction, his eyes slowly closed.

“Almost home,” Leo whispered before slumber fully took him.

TBC…..
Chapter Summary

Chapter Word Count: 8,325
Chapter pairing: Raph/Lav, Leo/Don (intimated)
Chapter Rating: R Chapter Warnings/Kinks: Adult concepts and situations, language, tcest, het sex, action, battle sequence, intrigue
Chapter Summary: The victors return home, only to discover that things there are not as quiet and serene as they would have hoped.

Chapter Notes

~~It has been 2 1/2 years since I last updated this story. I hadn't really thought about the hiatus because it didn't seem to have many readers. Lately though I have had a number of people asking about it, enough to make me feel guilty for ignoring it this long. So, here you go!

Chapter 35 – Homeward Bound

The next morning Lavinia sat naked amongst the tattered remains of her gown, looking through the pieces to see if anything remained intact.

“I’m glad this was a gift,” Lav finally said, tossing aside the remnants in defeat. “I’d hate to have to explain how this had gotten ruined.”

Lounging on the sleeping mats, the turtles watched her unsuccessful efforts with amusement.

“You’re the one who told us to rip it off of ya’ babe,” Raph said.

Lavinia scowled at him. “You’re the one who insisted I drink.”

Unfazed, a corner of Raph’s mouth lifted. “Hey, it ain’t my fault that ya’ didn’t want to tell me what alcohol would do to ya’.”

“I don’t know what you two are complaining about,” Mikey said with a grin. “I think we all had a great time.”

Raph laughed when Lavinia began to blush furiously. “Yuck it up,” she told him. “How do I explain to Lord Noriyuki and everyone else what happened to me? It’s completely embarrassing, not to mention rude.”

“They don’t know anything about humans. We’ll just tell them the truth, that the wine on their world had an adverse effect on you,” Don said reassuringly.
Lav crawled over to Don and gave him a grateful hug. Leo stood up and stretched before eyeing the group.

“The only people in attendance last night that we care about are our friends, and they already expect us to behave oddly,” Leo said. “I’m ready to go home. How about we pack our things, say our good-byes, and open a portal?”

Mikey jumped to his feet. “Now you’re talking my language. I miss my bed, my video games, and most of all I miss pizza!”

“I think we’ve been away from Master Splinter long enough,” Leo said.

Since they hadn’t brought much with them, it took very little time to throw things into their backpacks and tidy up the room. They took a few minutes to rinse off in their private bath, even though the water was cold. When they stepped out into the hall, they found that a servant had been posted nearby with instructions to direct them to the great room once they had risen.

Upon arrival they discovered Lord Noriyuki, Usagi, Gennosuke, and Daisuke having their breakfast. Lord Noriyuki signaled to them, so they dropped their packs near the door and took seats at the table.

The color was high on Lavinia’s cheeks and she glanced at Leo, who quickly understood.

“Please forgive our abrupt departure last night,” Leo said, addressing Lord Noriyuki but including the others in a glance. “I am afraid the combination of our adventures along with the food and wine to which we are not fully accustomed took their toll on us.”

“Upon me in particular,” Lavinia added. “I am extremely embarrassed.”

Lord Noriyuki waved a hand in the air, as though dismissing the episode. “There is nothing for which to apologize.” His eyes twinkled as he added, “I hope someday to find someone who will make me just as anxious to leave one of those tedious parties.”

“You are going home?” Daisuke asked, as servants placed platters of food on the table.

“Our Father will be missing us,” Leo said. “He worries if we are gone for too long.”

“You are needed on your world,” Usagi said. “The good you have done on ours is beyond measure.”

“We took care of that problem as much for ourselves as for this world,” Raph said. “Guess Hebi didn’t have the sense to know when to quit.”

“What is the next thing on your agenda, Usagi?” Don asked.

The samurai exchanged glances with Daisuke before responding. “Daisuke and I will be leaving here in the company of a dozen men to track down and destroy a few small groups of Hebi’s rebels. There have been reports that some of them have turned to banditry.”

Mikey was seated next to Lav and under the table he nudged her leg with his foot. It was clear what he was trying to convey, so Lav avoided looking at him lest anyone else notice them. She was happy that Usagi and Daisuke would be spending time together, even if it was on a mission.

“You might discover that some of them had no real loyalty to Hebi or the Jeshtare,” Leo
said. “It is possible that peer pressure or fear has turned them to banditry. Perhaps offering them a stable existence will make them contributing members of society again.”

Lord Noriyuki leaned forward, appearing curious. “You are speaking of rehabilitation, correct?”

“A great military leader from my world once said, ‘Tao is what causes the people to have the same purpose as their superior. Thus they can die with him, live with him and not deceive him.’,” Leo quoted. “Tao in that instance referred to a path, the way something works and equally a course of action, the way something should be done. It speaks to the way a leader and those being led become a single mind. This can be true as well of those who begin as our enemies.”

“If my cause becomes theirs, if they can be shown that under my rule they will prosper as I prosper, then rather than my enemy, they would become loyal subjects,” Lord Noriyuki said, his tone thoughtful.

“Those to be offered the choice must be selected wisely,” Usagi said. “The ones who held high positions within the armies of our enemies will not be trustworthy.”

“The ones who were conscripted into the service of Hebi or the Jeshtare, those of lower rank, would do better by swearing their fealty to Lord Noriyuki,” Daisuke said. “It is a sound plan.”

“You’ll probably find that there are many of these men and women who would embrace a chance to set down roots and make an honest living,” Don said. “Especially in a realm that is so well-protected.”

“If ya’ spread the word that coming forward to ask for help don’t mean instant death or jail time, ya’ probably won’t even have to hunt down a majority of them,” Raph said. “The way Hebi operated, I’ll bet most of his so-called army didn’t have a choice in serving him.”

“Having the decent ones come you would certainly cut down on the effort your brigade would have to make in tracking them,” Lavinia said.

“Yeah, and it wouldn’t be hard to figure out which of them are innocent and which are just trying to hide in a crowd,” Mikey said. “Make it a condition of becoming a citizen or whatever you call it, that they tell you how their old chain of command worked.”

“You have given us all much to think about,” Lord Noriyuki said. “As you always do, Leonardo-san. You and your family are much too formidable. I am pleased to call all of you ‘friend’.”

“A sentiment the five of us share as well,” Leo said politely.

They lingered over breakfast, engaging in small talk or tossing around ideas for dealing with the aftermath of Hebi’s destruction. It didn’t escape Mikey’s sharp notice that where once Usagi’s attention was almost entirely on Leo, his eyes now rarely left Daisuke’s face.

When Lord Noriyuki signaled for the servants to begin clearing the table and rose from his seat, his guests rose as well. Everyone moved away from the table to gather in a small group around the young Lord.

Taking Leo’s hand in his, Lord Noriyuki shook it warmly. “I know this is goodbye and that your world is far from here, but you are always welcome. I only hope that it won’t be so many years before you all visit me again.”
“Duty has a way of making time fly by too quickly,” Leo said. “We will try to do a better job of ignoring it occasionally so that we may spend time with friends.”

Lord Noriyuki bid farewell to each of his visitors in turn before leaving the room. Daisuke and Gen said their goodbye’s as well, before going to the stables to check on the soldiers.

“Another adventure is behind us, my friends,” Usagi said. “There are no words to express how indebted we are to you. I am especially grateful to have had your assistance in ridding our world of the likes of Lord Hebi.”

“All in a day’s work,” Raph said. He caught hold of both Mikey’s and Don’s elbows. “Come on, guys, let’s go grab our bags.”

They took the hint and with Lavinia, left Leo and Usagi alone.

“Spending time in your company was a double benefit to me, Leonardo-san,” Usagi said. “It was good to see you again, and to repair our friendship.”

“It was never broken,” Leo assured him. “A little dented by circumstances, but it will never be broken.”

“For that, I am eternally thankful,” Usagi said.

Leo gestured in the direction his family had gone. “That is my clan. My family. My world. It would ease my mind to know that you have accepted that. I hope that you will look forward, not back, and find the companionship you deserve.”

Glancing towards the stables where Daisuke was, Usagi nodded. “You are right, my friend. I have lived far too long in memories and dreams. Perhaps it is time to open my heart to someone here, someone who shares my view and my loyalties.”

“My greatest wish for you is that you are happy,” Leo said.

“Mine for you as well,” Usagi said. “Let us draw the symbols to open the portal back to your world.”

The group walked out to the gardens, where they would have privacy. There Usagi and Leo drew the portal symbols on a large boulder.

“Moment of truth,” Mikey said, crossing his fingers.

“Yeah, it’d be embarrassing if the portal doesn’t open after all those fancy goodbyes,” Raph said.

Stepping back from the boulder, both Usagi and Leo began chanting. As the symbols began to glow, water from a nearby pond swept up onto the boulder and a swirling portal opened.

“Home, here we come!” Mikey exclaimed.

He and Raph stepped through first, followed by Don and Lavinia. Leo turned to Usagi and they clasped hands.

“Farewell, my brother,” Usagi said.

“Until we meet again,” Leo replied, and then followed his family.
When Leo entered the lair, the portal closed behind him. He felt an immediate sense of loss at leaving Usagi, as he always did when he was separated from his friend. At least this mission, as dangerous as it was, had given them the opportunity to once again solidify their friendship.

“Damn, it’s good to be home,” Raph said, dropping his pack on the ground and stretching.

“The first thing I want to do is take a real shower,” Lav said, “and then change into clean clothes.”

Leo glanced around the lair. “It doesn’t appear that anyone tried to invade during our absence. With the wizards gone, that threat has disappeared too. I’m going to call April and ask if she or Casey can bring Master Splinter home.”

“And Klunk,” Mikey said.

While Leo was placing his call, Mikey made a beeline for the kitchen and straight to the cabinet where he’d hidden a couple of bags of potato chips. Don went directly to his computers to check that all of his security systems were still online.

Raph followed Lav to her room and joined her in a shower, explaining that they could share the hot water. It took them a bit longer than normal because they shared more than the water.

When they came out, Lav went to the kitchen to do a stock check and Raph headed for his room to put on fresh gear. Returning to the main level, Raph spotted Mikey on the couch, munching chips and watching television. His pack was exactly where he’d dropped it when they’d gotten home.

“Some reason ya’ can’t put your shit away?” Raph asked, standing in front of Mikey to block his view.

“Next commercial,” Mikey said, unfazed by Raph’s glare. “You know what I missed most while we were gone?”

“Junk food,” Raph said.

“No, this.” Mikey lifted a hand and swept it around the room. “Just chillin’ at home.”

Raph rolled his eyes. “Where’s Leo?”

“In Don’s lab, checking security camera recordings from the time we were gone,” Mikey answered. “You know, Leo picked up Don’s pack for him.”

“That’s ‘cause Don’s actually working,” Raph said.

Mikey turned his head to look directly at his brother. “Just what were you and Lav doing?”

Grinning, Raph said, “Getting cleaned up. Ya’ should think about doing that too, bro’. I can smell ya’ all the way over here.”

Whatever retort Mikey would have made died on his lips when Lavinia joined them. Holding a small pad of paper in one hand, she said, “A lot of stuff has spoiled. I’ll have to make a run to the grocers later if we want to eat.”

“Don’t worry about Mikey, he’s getting filled up on chips,” Raph told her. “We can order pizza for dinner and then I’ll run ya’ to the store later.”
Leo and Don came out of the latter’s lab in time to hear that part of the conversation. “Don and I are going to get cleaned up. April has to wait for her part-time clerk to arrive before she can bring Master Splinter home. Casey is on a job in Jersey.”

Mikey closed his bag of chips as Leo and Don left them. “Guess I’ll hop in the shower too,” he said, standing up. “Wanna wash my shell?” he asked Lavinia, waggling his eye ridges suggestively.

Before she could respond, Raph gave his brother’s shell a shove. “Get Don or Leo to wash it.”

The younger turtle bounced off, leaving the bag of chips on the couch. He ran past his pack and then came to a stop to go back and get it, before disappearing in the direction of the main bathroom.

Raph sat down in the spot Mikey had vacated, tossing the chips onto the coffee table and then patting the seat next to him. Still jotting things down on her list, Lav sank onto the couch and he turned the sound down on the TV array.

“Glad to be home?” Raph asked.

Lavinia sighed. “Very. That was the trip of a lifetime. I probably would have enjoyed the experience more if the mission hadn’t been so dire.”

“We can always go back to visit,” Raph said. “Lord Noriyuki would welcome us anytime.”

“Not worried about Usagi anymore?” Lav studied his expression. “Is that resentment behind you now?”

Raph slung an arm across the back of the couch. “Yeah, I guess so. Pretty much. Gotta be honest that there’s always gonna be some small part of me that can’t forget he tried to take Leo away from us.”

“He wasn’t actually trying to take Leo away, you know,” Lav said. “He didn’t even see that part of it. Usagi was in love. He saw that Leo was unhappy at home and wanted to offer him an alternative.”

“You seem to know a lot about it,” Raph said, looking at her suspiciously.

“I can sense things, remember,” Lav said. “I’ve talked a little to all of you about that time. Enough to put together a decent picture.”

“Yeah, well, I got the right to feel how I feel,” Raph said gruffly.

“Of course, you do,” Lav responded, her tone soothing. “No one would tell you otherwise. You should also be able to express those feelings without guilt. You do know that your brothers, including Leo, understand, don’t you?”

“Sure. Sometimes I feel like I gotta remind Leo. Especially when he gets over-chummy with Usagi. I don’t want him giving that rabbit any ideas about starting up his campaign again,” Raph said.

“I’m fairly confident that Usagi has finally found someone else to turn his attentions to,” Lav said. “He and Daisuke are very suited to each other.”
“I noticed,” Raph said with a grin. “Could be that’s why the thought of going back for a visit doesn’t bother me so much.”

“Then let me give you something else to think about,” Lav said. “If Leo hadn’t gone on that pilgrimage with Usagi, he might not have ever come to terms with the way he felt for you guys. He would have agonized over those feelings and the disconnect between the four of you might have gotten to the point where it was irreparable.”

“So, what you’re trying to say is that I should be thanking Usagi instead of grousing about him, is that it?” Raph asked.

Lavinia smiled at him rather than answering. Just then Mikey reappeared, sans his gear, and came towards them.

Before he reached the pair, Raph leaned close to Lavinia and said, “You’re sneaky, ya’ know that?”

She patted his knee. “You can vent to me anytime.”

“My babies!” Mikey swooped in to snatch the bag of chips off the table.

“That has to go on the record as the shortest shower ya’ ever took,” Raph said. “Don and Leo kick ya’ out?”

“I suddenly realized I’d left these on the couch,” Mikey said. “I was sure that you sat on them.”

“Why would I want a bag of chips digging into my ass?” Raph asked. “Did ya’ at least use soap?”

“I’ll have you know I used that good smelling soap from the bottle Lav bought for us,” Mikey said. “I rinsed too.”

“Good for you,” Raph said. “Don’t put that dirty gear of yours back on.”

Taking his chips with him, Mikey headed for his room. For the next few hours, the family settled in, each of them taking on a chore to put things in order for Master Splinter’s return.

Leonardo had just finished dusting his father’s room while Lav put clean sheets on the bed when Mikey popped in to let them know April had arrived with Master Splinter.

The creases between Splinter’s brow disappeared as soon as he saw his sons and Lavinia coming towards him. “My family, it is so good to have you back!”

There were hugs all around and then Splinter extricated himself to smile at each of them in turn.

“I brought pizza,” April said, holding a large cardboard box out to Michelangelo. “It’s the kind made fresh and you bake it in your own oven. I thought you guys might not feel like preparing a big meal.”

Mikey accepted the box with enthusiasm. “Thanks, April! You read our minds.”

“In your case, it was a short read,” Raph quipped.

“I would love to hear about your adventures, but I’ve got to be back in time to close up the
shop and you’re probably all tired,” April said. “Maybe later we can catch up. I just have one
question; did you deal with the danger?”

His brothers glanced at Leo, leaving it up to him to answer. “We did. There will be no
more threats from that direction.”

“Good,” April said, sounding relieved. “Call me if you need anything.”

Master Splinter had brought in Klunk’s carrier and Mikey handed the pizza to Raph before
bending down to release his cat. Balanced atop the carrier was a small bag of cat food.

“April remembered your kibble,” Mikey said, scratching behind Klunk’s ears and under his
chin. His cat’s purrs were clearly audible. “How was your stay at April’s, Master Splinter?”

“I am most happy to be able to return to my own home,” Master Splinter answered. “Miss
O’Neil is very hospitable, but her apartment is small. I often longed for my room, especially when
Casey Jones came for a visit.”

His family laughed at that and then Raph said, “Yeah, he ain’t exactly the quietest guy
around.”

Master Splinter looked at Leo then. “It is time for us to talk, my son. Please, come into my
room.”

Leo bowed. “Of course, Father.”

“Is something wrong?” Lavinia asked, watching with concern as Leo followed Master
Splinter into the latter’s room.

“It’s time for Leo’s report,” Raph answered. “Whenever we get back from a mission, it’s
up to our fearless leader to tell Master Splinter the whole story, from start to finish. Leo has always
had to explain everything, even the stupid shit that I do. He doesn’t say so, but I know he gets
reprimanded for it too.”

“Splinter knew what we might have to do, what Leo might have to do. They touched on it
before we ever left,” Lavinia said, worried. “Leo mustn’t be made to feel guilty for his decisions.”

Raph pulled her to him, one arm around her waist. With the other one he brushed strands of
hair from her eyes and then cupped her cheek. “Ya’ worry about us a lot, don’t ya’?”

“Of course, I do.” Lavinia gave him a small smile. “You guys are my everything.”

“Well, don’t worry about Leo. This is his show now. He confers with Master Splinter
’cause it helps him review decisions and seek knowledge, or some junk like that. More power to
him. Somebody has to do it and I’m glad it ain’t me. All that checking and double checking your
actions, thinking things through forty-seven times before moving, is crap I ain’t built for. Leo can
run through every possible maneuver and outcome in about ten seconds flat, and I can’t,” Raph
said, inhaling a gulp of air after what for him was a long speech.

“Have you ever told him that?” Lavinia asked.

Raph grinned. “Yeah, a couple of years ago. Before that I’d always just tell him that he
was a pompous ass.”

“And a few other equally colorful terms,” Don said.
“Let’s get that store run over with,” Raph suggested. “Leo might be a while.”

Master Splinter kept his eyes closed as Leonardo relayed to him the entirety of the adventures that he, his siblings, and their mate had shared in Usagi’s world. Leo had much practice in reporting his actions and those of his family, even having the ability to repeat conversations verbatim.

Periodically, the ninja Master would open his eyes slightly in order to look upon his son’s face, and then would close them again. When it came to maintaining a detached countenance, Leonardo excelled at it, expertly hiding his feelings behind an expressionless mask.

It was his voice, however, that sometimes gave away what he was feeling. The nuance in his intonation and delivery was subtle, but Master Splinter knew his son well. Each time Leo reached a part of his tale where someone in the family had to use deadly force, there was a tiny shift in Leo’s speech pattern.

Whether this was from guilt over the action itself, or from the feeling of shame at having to report to his father what had been done, Master Splinter was not sure. Perhaps a bit of both.

This was one of the reasons that Master Splinter still insisted on receiving reports of his sons’ activities. It was as much about Leonardo learning from their actions as it was in helping the leader come to grips with his own emotional responses to said actions.

When Leonardo completed his dissertation, silence fell. Master Splinter waited, giving his son time to adjust to whatever emotions he was experiencing.

After a few moments, the aged rat asked, “How do you feel, Leonardo?”

Frowning, Leo responded, “Feel, Sensei? About what?”

“All of it. Everything you did during your journey. Every action your team took with regards to Hebi and his legions.” Master Splinter gazed intently at his son.

Leo took a moment to think about the question before answering. “My personal feeling is that we did the right thing for the right reasons. I believe that my team shares that sentiment. All of us reached the conclusion that the course of action we took was the appropriate one. We took the time to discuss what would need to be done, and though it was distasteful to us all, we knew that we had no choice.”

“Then you should feel no remorse over your actions,” Master Splinter said. “Yet I sense regret in your words. I want to know why.”

“Taking a life . . . is hard,” Leo said.

“It should be hard,” Master Splinter said. “One goes into a fight with the knowledge that death might be the outcome, for your enemy or for yourself. That is a fact that you accept as a warrior. Feeling shame for doing your duty will only lead to indecision when you can least afford to hesitate.”

“I understand that part of it, Sensei,” Leo said. “I just don’t want to become desensitized either. I’m afraid that . . . that if I feel nothing at all, I could turn into . . . .”

He stopped, a pained expression on his face. Master Splinter immediately knew what was going through his head.
“You will never turn into someone like the Shredder, my son. You love and are loved in return and that is the difference. As long as you hold life in high regard, then you will never become numb to the taking of it,” Master Splinter assured him. “Bushido teaches us ‘to strike when to strike is right’. I have always trusted that you are balanced in how you think, Leonardo. You have always had the courage to do the right thing, to show mercy and sympathy at the right time.”

“Hebi and his wizards killed and caused untold destruction in search of nothing more than power,” Leo said. “They waged war on the innocent; their machinations resulted in upheavals that brought about pain and suffering to thousands. They put a price on our heads and upon Usagi’s merely because we thwarted their plans to kill Lord Noriyuki years ago.”

“They deserved no mercy,” Master Splinter said. “You selected a course of conduct with regards to Hebi and followed through without wavering. Was this the wrong decision?”

“No, Sensei, it was not,” Leo said firmly.

“Then release the need for self-reproach,” Master Splinter said. “It is not necessary. Your brothers and Lavinia must never see a hint of indecision on your part when it comes to these things. You are their leader. They put all of their trust in you and you have always earned it. I am most proud of you, Leonardo.”

Leo bowed low. “Thank you, Sensei.”

The touch of relief in Leo’s voice did not go unnoticed by his father, who realized his son simply needed to be with him a while longer. “Meditate with me.”

“I would like that,” Leo replied, his tone lighter than it had been when he’d entered the room.

During the next few hours, the small family focused on taking care of chores and projects that had been neglected during their absence. When Leonardo had finally exited his father’s room, he saw that Lav was vacuuming and immediately went to help with moving furniture.

She didn’t ask him any questions because she perceived right away that a weight had lifted from his shoulders. A sense of peace settled over the lair, one that hadn’t been there for quite some time.

Dinner was informal, with the family gathered around the television array with their pizza. After watching a movie, the channel was switched to the news at Master Splinter’s suggestion.

“I am afraid there has been an upswing in crime,” Master Splinter said. “I have watched with some trepidation, as I fear this is the doing of some of our enemies.”

“Purple Dragons?” Mikey asked.

“Foot Clan?” Raph queried. “Leo’s girlfriend could be trying to draw us out.”

Leo made a face at him. “Or maybe it’s big Ethel hoping to make an impression on you.”

“I never want to encounter that woman again,” Lav said with a delicate shiver.

Donatello, who had been listening to the reporter, spoke up. “It seems like all of the crimes are being perpetrated by random street thugs. The images that have been caught on security cameras show different sets of gang colors.”
“Maybe it’s a contest,” Mikey said. “Gangs competing to see who can pull off the best crimes.”

“They are all getting bold because we aren’t out there to stop them,” Leo said with conviction. “We haven’t patrolled, really patrolled, in months.”

Raph cracked his knuckles. “The roaches are coming out of hiding. I say it’s time to do some exterminating.”

Mikey snorted a laugh. “I know you got that line from a commercial.”

“Raph has got the right idea,” Leo said. “It is time for us to make our presence known to this city’s lowest element again. Just the realization that we might be around has been enough to keep a lot of crime at bay.”

“We’re going out?” Raph asked.

Leo glanced around and saw the same eagerness on all of their faces. “We are. You too, Lav. I think though, that we’ll need to modify what you normally wear.”

“Modify how?” Lavinia asked.

“By adding a mask,” Leo told her. “I don’t want anyone getting a good look at your face.”

Mikey jumped to his feet and then reached out to pull Lav onto hers. “I’ll help you make one. I’ve got some green fabric we can use. Come on.”

Since Mikey was a bit of a hoarder, it took a few minutes for him to find the box containing fabric. The material he and Lav chose was darker green in color and together they crafted a well-fitting eye mask for her.

Later, when it was time to go on patrol, Lavinia changed into her usual all-black garb and donned the new mask. When she stepped out into the lair, Don whistled appreciatively and Mikey clapped.


Leo walked over to her and checked the masks fit, tugging to make certain it was tight enough not to fall off if things during the evening became physical.

“Perfect,” he finally said, and then held out her bow and a quiver of arrows. “If we do encounter heavy odds, I want you to do your fighting from a distance. Some of these arrows have blunt tips. If you hit someone with them, the person will think twice before trying to get up again. Now we’re ready to go.”

“Be careful, all of you,” Master Splinter called out as his family headed for the garage. “I sense an undercurrent in the gang activity that is about more than simple theft.”

As they climbed into the van, Don asked, “Do you think Master Splinter meant that he believes someone might be orchestrating the thefts?”

“I think he means that we should be ready for anything,” Leo said. “Including an attempt to draw us out into the open.”

“Where are we going?” Mikey asked.
It was Don who answered as he drove out of the garage. “I mapped out the locations of all of the thefts, muggings, and vandalisms, along with the dates they occurred. There is a faint but discernible pattern, something that looks similar to a wave. It starts at around 118th Street and tapers off near 134th, with activity spreading out a few blocks in either direction from Liberty Avenue.”

“It’s possible that what we’re seeing are groups of smaller gangs working in unison to form a sort of conglomerate,” Leo said. “They retain their individuality within their own unit, but have joined forces to keep larger gangs like the Purple Dragons or the Foot from entering their territories.”

“Somebody has to be leading that charge though, right? They gotta have some kind of head honcho coordinating the whole thing, someone they’d all listen to. Maybe a guy like that Jencko thug we took out a few years ago,” Raph said.

“We should try to grab up a couple of gang members and get the full story out of them,” Leo said. “If they have designated someone to call the shots, then we take them out. The whole thing should fall apart.”

“And the little roaches will all scuttle back into the crevices where they belong,” Raph said, grinning.

“Last night’s report put the gang activity in the area between 124th and 125th,” Don said. “The wave is headed up towards 126th.”

“Then so are we,” Leo said. “We’ll park far from the target area and proceed on foot.”

It took them about forty minutes to reach the location that was the center of the crime spree. Donatello drove along Liberty Avenue for a few blocks without seeing anyone before turning off to find a parking spot two miles away.

They climbed to the rooftops first thing and paused at Leo’s signal. “We stay high until we see something. Keep your eyes open for lookouts. There aren’t many tall buildings in this area. If we spot gang activity, we move on my order.”

“Got it, boss,” Don said.

“Yes, Master,” Lav replied.

“Can we go now?” Raph asked, his body practically quivering with energy.

With a curt nod, Leo led the way. The buildings were all close together, so it was no challenge for Lavinia to keep up with the turtles. Together they did a full circuit of an eight-block radius on the North side of Liberty Avenue before dropping to street level to cross over to the South side.

They had only gone two blocks when the tinkling noise of shattering glass reached them. Following the sound, they discovered a group of about a dozen youths rampaging along the street, breaking out storefront windows and overturning garbage cans.

“What is the point of that?” Mikey asked of no one in particular. “They aren’t even taking anything.”

“Kids in need of a spanking,” Leo said grimly. “Let’s give them one.”
He jumped down to a lower rooftop, followed by his brothers and Lavinia. Leo indicated that Lav should leave her bow kit there. From atop a single-story beauty salon the group waited as the gang drew near and then the five of them leaped into their midst.

The fact that the gang members didn’t act at all surprised at suddenly being attacked by giant, mutated turtles immediately sent off warning signals in Leo’s brain. For a couple of minutes, the youths swarmed them and were rewarded for their efforts by getting knocked down. Mikey even caught one guy and tossed him over a knee to give him a spanking.

Raphael was laughing loudly, clearly enjoying himself as his fists and feet sent gang members flying. Don contented himself with sweeping the legs out from under any who charged at him, and Lavinia practiced hip throwing the ones who came within reach.

Suddenly a shrill whistle echoed all around them and the gang members scattered, running in several different directions.

“What the fuck . . . ?” Raph began.

“Lav, the roof,” Leo said as he pulled his swords.

She didn’t hesitate to follow his command, racing for a nearby drainpipe and scurrying up to the roof. Snatching up her bow kit, she ran back to the roof’s edge to see what was happening.

At street level more than a dozen black garbed, helmeted figures were swarming from every opening to surround the turtles. From her vantage point, Lavinia could see at least a dozen more running towards them.

These were not inexperienced street thugs; they were fighters; soldiers. Many of them carried stun batons, clearly intent on capturing the turtles rather than killing them.

Lav’s heart was racing as she fought an intense urge to leap back into the fray. Leo had ordered her to the roof for a reason and she took a breath to calm herself, remembering why he’d needed her to bring her bow.

Her quiver held twenty-four arrows, but only about half of those were blunt tipped. Lav would have to choose her targets carefully if she was going to help create an opening for the guys to escape through without having to resort to deadly force.

“Don’t let them separate us!” Leo shouted, dodging aside as a baton came at him and then slicing it in half. “Avoid the stun batons!”

“Thanks, Captain Obvious!” Raph yelled.

From the corner of his eye he saw three attackers push in between him and Mikey, forcing the youngest turtle to back away from his brothers. Cursing under his breath, Raph caught a stun baton between the prongs of his sai and pulled it down. His attacker tried to wrench it free, but Raph grabbed the baton and yanked it out of the man’s hands.

Shoving back against the baton, he clouted his enemy hard in the gut, bending the man in half with the force of the blow. As the man sank to the ground, Raph flipped the baton over and used the stun end to incapacitate a man who was behind him.

Raph could see Mikey’s nunchucks spinning as he batted aside the stun batons being thrust at him. Men were honing in on him, splitting him off from his brothers, and moving towards Mikey in a tight formation.
A glance in the direction of his other two brothers showed Raph that they were managing to hold their attackers at bay. Leo and Don were close together, their longer reaching weapons giving them some advantage against the hoard.

Turning his back to them, Raph plowed into the two men nearest him, just feeling the brush of electricity from a stun baton against his arm. The charge was enough to send an unpleasant tingling sensation along that arm, weakening it so he could barely hold his sai.

Though he didn’t see them, Raph could sense that other attackers had moved to fill in the gap behind him, cutting him off from Leo and Don. Mikey was even farther away now and Raph ground his teeth together, determined to reach his brother before their enemies could take him down.

Using his sai, Raph caught a baton aimed at his face, but as he struggled with that man, two more dove at his unprotected side. Electricity danced in the air, prickling Raph’s skin when the batons were just inches away.

An arrow suddenly whistled past Raph, striking the arm of one of the men, and pushing his baton at his cohort. The second man cried out as electricity shot through his system and his hand jerked up, the baton in it touching the first man’s chest.

Both were shaking and jerking as they hit the ground. With a fierce grin, Raph twisted the baton out of his attacker’s hand and caught it as it flew into the air. Savagely pressing it into his enemy’s rib cage, Raph chortled his satisfaction when the man fell over.

Spinning back towards his younger brother, Raph saw two more arrows strike in rapid succession, felling a pair of troopers who were almost on top of Mikey. That cleared enough space for Mikey to bunch his legs under him and spring skyward, flipping once to crack a pair of helmets with his nunchaku.

Mikey landed next to Raph, still swinging his weapons at oncoming attackers. “Gotta get back to Don and Leo!”

Raph growled as he kicked an attacker in his face plate. “What do ya’ think I’m trying to do? How about ya’ stay close this time?”

“Not my fault, Raphie,” Mikey said, slamming his nunchucks against the arms reaching towards him. “Those stun thingies tickle.”

“Yeah, I’m just now getting the feeling back in my arm,” Raph said. “Stop calling me Raphie.”

On a building two blocks away, a lone man dressed all in black, including a full head mask and cape, watched the fight taking place in the middle of the street. He had no idea who the helmeted figures were or with whom they were affiliated, but he recognized the four green guys they were attacking. It was the turtles, close friends and allies of the Justice Force and of him personally.

The vigilante known as Nobody began running towards the fight, jumping from building to building as he raced to aid his friends. His focus was on the street, but movement atop a building just above where the fight was taking place drew his attention.

An archer was taking aim at someone below her position. She was dressed in black, which led Nobody to believe she was part of the enemy forces. He changed direction so that he could
deal with her first.

From above him Nobody heard the rotors of a helicopter just before it flew past overhead. There were no markings on the ‘copter, no numbers or call letters of any kind. It was solid black, the windows darkened, with weapons mounted on the undercarriage.

Nobody was aware of no machine that silent other than government prototypes. A bad feeling made him double his pace as the helicopter took up a position just over the combatants.

He was only two buildings away when he saw the women let loose another arrow into the crowd. This time Nobody was close enough to see it hit one of the helmeted men, dropping him before he could bring a club down on the back of Donatello’s head.

It was then he noticed that she wore a green mask, its design similar to the ones the turtles wore. As she shot an arrow into a man trying to climb up after her, Nobody realized she was an ally, not an enemy.

After Lavinia took down the man behind Don, there was a shout and several of the attackers pointed in her direction. Two men split off, one of them leaping for the drainpipe she herself had used earlier to scale the building.

Leaning far over the roof’s edge, Lavinia targeted the man with a sharp-tipped arrow. Her goal was the muscle on his upper thigh and her aim was infallible. He screamed in pain when the arrow hit and then fell from his perch, almost landing on the second man.

That caused the second attacker to hesitate, which is exactly what Lavinia had hoped for. She loaded her bow and turned her attention back to the turtles. With unerring accuracy, she dropped an attacker right in front of several others who were charging towards Raphael. This cleared the area between the turtles so that the four of them were once more near each other.

Right at that moment Lav heard the helicopter’s approach. She saw its tip drop towards the turtles and quickly nocked an arrow, shooting it at the glass bubble protecting the pilot.

The arrow bounced off the glass without leaving a mark. Lav hadn’t expected to do any damage, just to pull the pilot’s attention away from the turtles. Her ruse did the trick, the helicopter’s nose pulled up, but then it turned towards Lav.

Clearly Leo had seen it change direction too. “Get down, Lav! Down!”

Lav bolted for the large air conditioner unit that sat in the center of the roof, hoping to duck out of sight before the helicopter could locate her. She was only halfway there when searchlights hit the roof, outlining her in their brightness.

Nobody watched the woman drop to one knee and fire a second arrow at the helicopter. It shattered one of the searchlights, but she was still completely illuminated. She quickly shot off two more arrows, one striking the motor housing, the other piercing the fuel tank.

She’d risen and had started to move again when something shot out of one of the weapons on the helicopter’s undercarriage. The woman dove and rolled away as it hit the roof, but as she came to her feet, a second shot caught her in midstride.

It was a weighted net, which wrapped around her body and knocked her down.

Nobody ran at full speed across the ledge of the one building still separating them. A glance down proved that the turtles were ignoring an escape route that had opened up in favor of
trying to reach their rooftop ally.

“I’ve got her!” Nobody shouted down at them. “Get out of here!”

“It’s Nobody!” Mikey yelled.

“Retreat, now!” Leo ordered. “Let’s pull the rest of these men away from here!”

Liquid was spraying out of the fuel tank and the helicopter began to weave as though the pilot was fighting for control. It suddenly veered away from the roof and began flying off from the skirmish, but not before dropping a handful of men onto the building next to Lavinia’s.

Lavinia saw a man in a black cape coming towards her and she began to frantically struggle against the net that was holding her. She could feel barbs digging into her skin but the fear of capture was more overwhelming than the pain.

Without a word he reached down to scoop her into his arms, unceremoniously throwing her over one shoulder. The next thing Lavinia knew, she was flying through the air, the cape flapping against her face.

“Hang on,” Nobody told her a brusque tone. “We need to put some distance between us and the people who are after you.”

Lav wanted to snap at him that she couldn’t ‘hang on’ as he’d suggested because her arms were caught at her sides. She decided against it as that would have required breath, and each time she inhaled the barbs from the net dug into her.

For what seemed like an eternity the pair swung from building to building, until they were far from the fight and even the neighborhood they’d started in. Finally, the masked man stopped, taking her from his shoulder and placing her on the roof beneath a water tower.

“I’m not a sack of potatoes,” Lav protested, trying to squirm away from him.

Nobody kneeled next to her, pulling from his belt a multipurpose tool. Flicking it open and spinning it with practiced ease, Nobody displayed to the thrashing woman a pair of wire snips.

“Please don’t struggle,” he said. “The barbs are tearing your skin and the more they dig into you, the harder it’s going to be to get the net off quickly.”

Lavinia stopped moving when she saw that he intended to free her.

“Who are you?” she asked in a low voice as he began cutting the net.

“I’m a friend of the turtles,” he told her. “I thought you were one of their enemies but then I saw you shooting at their attackers.”

They heard the sound of cars in the street below, all stopping at the building they were on.

“Damn,” Nobody muttered. “Unless I miss my guess, that’s your would-be captors. I can’t get the net off; the barbs are too fully embedded in your skin. I’ll have to carry you like this because we really need to go now.”

“Just pull,” Lav said. “Pull the net off of one of my arms.” Lavinia was wriggling around trying to get one arm loose.

“Did you hear me?” Nobody hissed. “You’re going to rip open your skin.”
“Please!” Lav pleaded. “I’m a doctor and I know what I’m doing.”

Despite her assurances, Nobody refused to pull at the net, instead cutting it from around one of her arms as quickly as he could.

As soon as she was able to pull her arm loose, she grabbed the tonfa in her holster and yanked it free. Nobody watched in astonishment as blades snicked out of both ends of the tonfa.

With quick, precise movements, the woman sliced the remainder of the netting off of her body. Where her clothing was torn, blood flowed from ragged tears in her skin, but she seemed not to notice. Once she was loose, she made as if to get up and he offered her a hand, pulling her to her feet.

“Unwanted company is coming.” Nobody stomped on a tiny red light that was flashing within the remnants of the netting. “Ready to move, this time without the tracking device?”

“Are we flying again?” Lavinia asked, the corners of her mouth lifting in amusement.

“Fastest way that I know of to get around this city,” Nobody said.

Lav watched as a projectile shot from the back of his glove and hooked onto the water tower two buildings away. Attached to it was a thin, metal cable, which he grasped tightly before holding his arm out to her.

Wrapping her arms around his neck, Lav felt his strong grip on her waist and then he ran forward, leaping into space and swinging away just as a group of men swarmed the building they’d just left.

The last thing Lavinia saw was the helmeted men move aside as a tall man in a black suit strode into their midst.

Movement against the skyline caught Agent John Bishop’s eyes and he looked up in time to see a costumed figure swing out of view. It was only a glimpse, but he recognized the outfit and knew it belonged to a member of the Justice Force. Why the man had interfered in his operation to rescue the person his people had caught in the net was puzzling.

One of his men kneeled next to the net and lifted it to examine the barbs. “Sir, whoever was in this net must be badly wounded. They can’t have gone far.”

“Hmm – I wonder.” Bishop’s eyes narrowed in thought. The net was designed with tiny barbs which opened out as the net tightened around its prey. Movement caused them to painfully bury themselves into skin. In his experience, no one ever struggled against the net without inflicting a great deal of damage to themselves.

There was blood on the barbs of the shredded net. Not a lot, surprisingly, but enough. It made him start to think.

Spinning with sudden speed, he ordered. “Place that in a protective bag and take it back to Phillips at the lab. I want that blood analyzed immediately.”

“Yes sir.”
These lovely art certificates were created by (in order): ramskulls (tumblr) and nicollini (tumblr)
Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!