Summary

London and Maddie, as well as the rest of the gang climb aboard the S.S. Tipton for a cruise filled with adventure. Join our favourite heiress and candy-counter girl and their friends, as they sail on a cruise around the world, where anything can and will happen! (Vol. I New York City - Loch Ness)

Notes

As you might know already, this is the sequel to my story “Love Conquers All”. Most of you already have a good idea of what this story is about, but for those who don’t, I’ll explain it. This story will follow the adventures of Zack, Cody and the rest of the gang, and of course, London and Maddie, as they embark on a cruise around the world… I know, I know, you’re probably saying, this looks just like “The Suite Life on Deck”, well I’ll admit it, I had the idea for this sequel while thinking about how I would have written it. Since this is a cruise, the gang will visit various cities around the world, where they will live some of the craziest and most wonderful adventures ever.
Just so you guys know, I don’t plan to use Bailey on this story, because I couldn’t find a way to put her in it, without ruining the chemistry between the characters. Still, there will be new OC’s of mine and some special guests who will guide you and the Tipton gang on this wild adventure. So, get your tickets climb aboard and I hope you all like it.
Blondie's Surprise

Summer… probably the most beautiful season of them all, especially to students, who anxiously wait for it to begin, and wish it never ends. And why is that? Because summer is the Promised Land to those who labor and study for almost a whole year. It’s the time of the year where one can do as he pleases, without having to think about tests, exams, homework or any other stuff regarding studying or work. It’s time to go to the beach, to spend time with the family and friends, to go to barbecues, and do all kinds of cool stuff.

And that was exactly what Zack and Cody Martin, the Martin twins who lived in the Boston Tipton Hotel and were known by the entire hotel’s staff, as being two troublemakers who managed to get into the most amazing and crazy situations one could ever think. On that hot July afternoon, they were just coming back from their date with Barbara and Max, complaining about how hot it was. The girls had wanted to go to the movies, so they both took them to see the latest summer blockbuster movie. Zack as always had loved it, but Cody had decidedly thought that it could have been way better… even when it came to cinematographic tastes the twins were almost complete opposites.

“Awesome movie! Loved the explosions and of course, those special effects were awesome!” –Zack exclaimed, as they entered through the hotel’s rotating door.

“I on the other hand thought that the movie’s plot was overrated, and was in need of a major rewriting.” –Cody told his brother, obviously disagreeing with him.

“Who cares about the plot, when you have bodacious explosions and massive special effects to cover it up?” –Zack asked Cody, obviously taunting him.


“Well, I don’t. Why do you think I rather watch a movie where you don’t have to think about what’s right and what’s wrong about it? It’s so much funnier than the movies that we have to watch in school, regarding some useless book.”

“Books aren’t useless, and you should know that.”

“You’re right; they can be used for something… I can use a pile of them to build myself a place to sit.” –Zack sarcastically joked about it.

“Why do I even bother to talk to you?!” –Cody sighed, furious about his brother not taking things seriously like he did.

While Zack and Cody did this, back in New Orleans, Mark Stevenson, son of the famous American writer, Stephen Stevenson, was having a blast with his sweet and loving girlfriend, Anastasia Fontaine.

They had surprised each other when they found out that they were going to be on the same town. Mark was accompanying his father in his annual digression through the country to advertise one of his latest novels, while Anastasia had travelled with her mom back to New Orleans to visit her father’s grave. Since they knew that they would probably see each other again until the end of August, they were both enjoying each other’s company.
On that day Mark was wearing a navy-blue t-shirt with the drawing of the vampire bar Fangtasia from the series True Blood, a pair of black shorts and red tennis shoes. As for Anastasia, curiously she had also decided to wear something would match his vampire disposition, so she was wearing a dark-crimson tank top with a pair of vampire fangs stamped on it, a black mini-skirt and dark-crimson army boots. She had her hair done in a low ponytail and was wearing very little make-up. To Mark’s eyes, even if she wanted to, she could not look better than she did. Her French ancestry gave her that glamour that only the French women had, something Mark loved in her.

Being a native of New Orleans, Anastasia took him to visit the city’s most important landmark like the Pontchartrain Hotel on St. Charles Avenue, as well as the wide variety of 19th century mansions that are located on that part of town, without forgetting Bourbon Street and the French Quarter, famous for its nightlife. Right then, they were just passing by Jackson Square, where they took a seat on a nearby park bench.

“Okay, okay, let’s see if you know this one… what would you get if you crossed a comedian and an Edgar Allan Poe story?” –Anastasia asked Mark. She just loved to tell that of jokes. Most of them were quite cheesy, but she managed to make them sound funny when she told them.

“Hmmm... tough one… I don’t know… what?” –Mark asked her, curious to know the answer.

“Simple, The Wit and the Pendulum.” –she answered, laughing about it. –“I know, I know, this one was cheesy…” –Anastasia kept giggling about it.

“Well then, it’s my turn now… did you really think you’re the only one who knows jokes about books? Then, riddle me this one… what is a flea’s favourite book?”

“What is a flea’s favourite book?! Don’t know…”

“The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy!” –Mark laughed about it. –“Come on, this one was easy. Everyone knows it.”

“Everyone, except me, you big meanie!” –Anastasia stated, as she playfully punched him on the ribs. –“For that, I’m going to give you another one, and you better know it, or else I’m going to tickle you so hard that you’ll beg for mercy.”

“Bring it on!” –Mark told her accepting the challenge.

“What did they call Tom Sawyer’s friend after he lost a lot of weight?”

“What did they call… that’s easy, Huckleberry Thin!” –he answered, as he began to laugh really hard, having got it right. –And you know what the penalty is…” –he told her with a naughty voice.

“Don’t! Mark Stevenson, don’t you dare!” –she scolded him playfully.

“Tickle, tickle, tickle, hahahahaha…” –he exclaimed, as he began to tickle Anastasia all over her body. –“You should know by now that you’ll never be able to beat me in my own game!”

“Stop it!... (laugh)... Stop that!... (laugh)... I give up, I give up!” –Anastasia screamed, as she begged Mark to stop tickling her. When he finally stopped, she was breathing really hard, trying to regain her breath. A few tears were rolling down her face; she always hated when she laughed so hard that she ended up shedding a few tears. –“You’re so mean… don’t you know you shouldn’t tickle a lady!
“Is there a lady here? If it is, I don’t see her…” –he teased her.

“Why you little!” –she punched him on the shoulder. –“Why do I even put up with you?” –she asked him, giggling.

“Because you love me, that’s why.” –Mark answered her, as he planted a kiss on her lips.

“You’re so strange and so crazy…” – she told him.

“I know I am, but what about you? You have to be as strange and crazy as I am to love someone as me.” –he joked about it.

“If you weren’t so cute and handsome, I would dump you right now!” –she teased him about.

After that little moment they had, the two just got up and continued their walk. On that moment, both of them could not be happier; and even though they knew they would not see each other for at least another month and a half, they tried not to think about it, and just enjoyed the present.

Meanwhile, in Yellowstone, the Fitzpatricks were happily enjoying their time camping on one of the most beautiful national parks in the United States. Located on the state of Wyoming, extending itself to the states of Idaho and Montana, founded in 1872, it was famous for its incredible landscapes, amazing fauna and flora, with some of the most beautiful animals and flowers in the world, and of course of its geysers, especially the biggest one of them all, the Old Faithful, known as the most predictable geographical feature on Earth erupting almost every 91minutes, discovered in 1870 during the Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition. It had been this geographical landmark that the Fitzpatricks travelled thousands and thousands of miles to see, while camping.

The view of the enormous geyser was amazing, but for Maddie, not all the wonders of nature and wild life combined were as pretty and as exciting as the one wonder she considered to be the most perfect ever created… her best-friend/girlfriend London Tipton, heiress of the Tipton empire. While the rest of her family was having fun, Maddie sulked, spending most of her time, thinking about the Asian-beauty and on what she was probably doing. When her mom called her, she had to call her name three times, because her head was clearly in the clouds.

“Maddie! Maddie! Sweetie, get here so I can take a photo of you with your brother and sister.” – Miranda exclaimed to her, signaling Maddie to come faster.

Miranda wanted to get a photo of Maddie, Liam and Genevieve together, with the Old Faithful when this one exploded, and it was nearly time for the next explosion. She told them how she wanted them in the photo. So following their mother’s instructions, every last one of the Fitzpatrick kids did as they were told to. Still, Maddie was not the only who was thinking about the person she loved the most in the world. Genevieve was also thinking about her boyfriend, whom she had left in Boston. It did not matter just how many times they fought over the most trivial of things, and that they were always ending up their relationship, just to get back a few days later, their love was true, and Gennie really missed him, just as Maddie missed London.

After the photo was taken, they all went back doing what they had previously been doing. Their dog, Scampy, who was as happy as any dog could be, decided that he needed a well-deserved rest, so, he approached Maddie, who immediately saw him. Grabbing him, and placing him on her lap, she
began to pet him behind the ears. Scampy barked happily, as his mistress kept petting him. This made Maddie smile, but only for a second.

Seeing Maddie so absent minded, Miranda approached her and asked her what was going on.

“Madeline, is something wrong, sweetie?” –she asked, as she sat on the grass, right next to Maddie.

“You don’t look like you’re enjoying yourself.”

“Oh, it’s nothing mom, I’m just tired.” –Maddie lied to her, trying to make her not to worry about it, as she petted Scampy.

“Just tired, huh? You must be tired alright, tired of not being able to be with London, am I right?” –she asked Maddie, always smiling. Ever since she accepted the girls’ relationship, Miranda had become much closer to her younger daughter.

“How did you guess?” –Maddie asked her, sighing.

“Well, you have been looking at the clouds most of the day with that look you only have when you miss someone, plus, your sister told me that last night you were speaking London’s name in your sleep.” –she chuckled, placing her hand on Maddie’s shoulder. –“Do you miss her?”

“More than anyone can possibly imagine, mom. I mean, I talk to her almost every day by the phone, but it’s not the same… it never is. I would gladly give one of my pinky toes just to see her right now.” –she sighed with a low voice.

“Oh, come on, Maddie, I know how hard this is for you, but you need to remember that sometimes in life, we must endure regardless of how hard things get. Look at Our Good Jesus Christ… when things got too rough, did he ever give up?”

“Mom, you’re not helping…” –Maddie told her, even though she knew Miranda was trying to cheer her up a little. –“… I guess I’ll just have to accept the fact that I’ll only see London when we get back home, and until then, I’ll keep talking with her through the phone… Still, she could just get in a helicopter and come visit me.” –Maddie thought the last part, as Scampy barked, bring her back to reality.

“Where is she anyway?”

“She’s in Switzerland… in Zurich to be more precise. She’s visiting her mother.” –Maddie answered. –“She told me she wanted to spend some time with her, and get to know her better.”

“I see. Well, I bet she’s having a good time. You know, at first I thought her mother was probably the worst mother there is, but once you get to know her better, you see that she’s a terrific woman, and a very good mother. –Miranda told her daughter. For Maddie herself it was still hard to believe that her own mother was saying that from London’s mom, who she once considered to be the worst mother in the world, for never caring about her own daughter. –“Anyway, I’ll leave you with your thoughts. I’ve to go and check if your father needs something. But remember, if you need anything, you know where you can find me.” –Miranda told her, as she walked away, heading in her husband’s direction, leaving Maddie to pet Scampy.

“Oh, London… I miss you so much, Princess…” –Maddie thought to herself.

Letting Scampy go, who quickly started to yap, as he chased Liam, Maddie decided to lie back on
the grass, feeling the warm Sun on her face. The warmness of the majestic Sun made her remember about London’s warm body. Closing her eyes, she imagined the heiress right there with her, enjoying that sunbath.


When she finally decided to get up a few minutes later, she realized she was wet between her legs. Thinking that hard about London made her wet. Now, more than ever, Maddie wished the heiress was there with her, so she could put out the fire that was burning inside her.

“Maddie! Come on, let’s go! We still need to get back to camp!” –her sister Gennie called her out. As she walked towards her family’s direction, she kept telling herself that she was going to need to change her soaking panties when she got back to their camp.

While all this happened, back in Switzerland it was already 10’clock in the morning, and London was still on the phone. She had not stopped all day, talking with people and making sure that everything was going according to her plan. Right then, she was talking with Marion Moseby, the Boston Tipton’s general manager.

“Moseby, I know you’re happy with your work in Boston, but listen, you’re the only person I trust for the job.” –London told him over the phone.

“But London, you know that I have a lot of responsibilities here… I just can’t leave everything behind for another job.” –Moseby tried to reason with the heiress.

“I already told you. Think about this as if it was a promotion or a temporary transfer with the advantage of receiving a very big bonus for the job you’re going to do. When this is over you’ll go back to your old…” –London told him with a slightly cheerful voice; still, Moseby was as stubborn as one can be, and kept saying that he opposed the whole idea. –“… Moseby, listen, we’ll discuss this later; just tell me one last thing. Did you go to my school and took care of everything I told you about?”

“Yes I have. It took me two whole days, but everything has been taken care of.”

“Every last person on the list I sent you?”

“Yes, every last person. Believe me; I checked it five times, so there’s no kind of inconvenience.” –Moseby answered her. –“But I still can’t believe you managed to talk everyone’s parents into this.”

“Well, I was thinking about all the crazy and funny things that I’m going to do with Maddie, when I told them that this was going to be a once in a lifetime opportunity, and I wasn’t lying, this really is going to be something which everyone will tell their children and their grandchildren.” –London told him, trying not to yawn –“Well, I’ll talk to you later, Moseby. I still have lots of phone calls to make.”

Once she put down the phone, London gave a huge sigh of relief. She was incredibly exhausted. All day making and receiving calls had really done a number on her. But, she could not stop. She knew that if she wanted her surprise for Maddie to be done, she needed to get things into motion. But she was so tired, and her warm bed was calling her. It was then her mother, Akita Tipton, showed up dressed in a bath robe and saw her daughter still up, next to the desk, completely exhausted. She had
heard noises coming from her office and came to check out, when she saw her daughter.

“London, sweetheart, don’t tell me you’re still up?!” – Akita said, as she closed in on her. – “It’s already pass 1 o’clock in the morning.”

“I know mom, but I still have so much work to do.” – London told her, now sounding more like a zombie. – “Sorry if I woke you.” – she apologized to her mother.

“It’s okay, sweetie, but you should be in bed. I know you’re trying your best to make everything work, but if you stay on the phone whole day, without even taking a break to eat properly, you’ll get sick.” – Akita warned her daughter. – “Now, let’s go to bed. Come on, I’ll tuck you in.”

Following her mother into her room, London quickly changed into her nightgown, while Akita went to the kitchen to make her a cup of hot chocolate. London loved her mom’s hot chocolate because she was one of the few people who made it just like the Asian-beauty loved it. She added three marshmallows, then poured whipped-cream and chocolate shaving on top, and finally, she placed a cinnamon biscuit on the side. It was one of those good memories that London kept of her mother. When she came back, London already in her bed, and she had turned on the television and was watching one of her favourite Disney cartoons, Polar Trappers with Mickey, Donald and Goofy as its stars. One thing was for sure, London sure loved cartoons, and she had good taste when choosing which to watch.

“Here you go, London, just like you like it.” – Akita said, as she handled the hot chocolate. Taking a small sip, she immediately felt warmer inside. There was really nothing better than her mom’s hot chocolate to keep her warm. Well, maybe except for Maddie’s gorgeous and warm body.

“Thanks, mom.” – she sighed, just before drinking another sip of the delicious and creamy hot chocolate. – “I really needed it.”

It was then that London’s pooch Ivanna showed up. The white Pomeranian yapped, as she jumped onto her mistress’s bed, snuggling right next to her.

“I think we must have awakened Ivanna.” – London told her mom. – “Did we wake you up, my pretty little furball?” – the heiress said, as she picked up Ivanna and kissed her on the nose, making her yap. – “Yes, we did, yes we did…”

Ivanna always made London feel a lot better, when she was either feeling down or tired. Before Maddie became her girlfriend, it was Ivanna who was her most trusted confident. London would tell her things that she did not tell anyone, not even Maddie, who was her best-friend. Things had changed since that happened, but even now, Ivanna was more than just a pet for London, she was her friend. Sometimes, the Asian-beauty would even ask herself how Ivanna would look like if she was human.

“Well, while you drink your hot chocolate and pet Ivanna, maybe you can tell me how is your “secret” project coming along?” – Akita asked her, as she sat next to her.

“Sure thing, mom… well, it’s going okay, so far. Still, I have a ton of things yet to do. I never thought that planning this would be so demanding.” – London complained.

“Are you having second doubts regarding this decision of yours, sweetie?” – Akita asked her, looking her in the eyes.
“No, I’m not.” –she immediately answered. –“This project will be one of the most exciting and
funniest things I’ve ever did. It will also be the first time I’ll show the world that I’m not just a
spoiled rich girl, who depends on her father’s money, and that I don’t just want to spend my whole
day shopping; I want to show them that I also care about other things. Plus, it will be the most
amazing gift I’ve ever gave to Maddie and my closest friends. I want them to remember this as a part
of their lives they will never forget.” –London declared, her words showing just how proud of
herself she was right then, as she placed the hot chocolate mug on top of her bedside table.

“I see… Sweetie, you know that I will always be there to support you in all of your decisions, but
you don’t have to do this all by yourself, you know? You could ask for help. Planning something as
big as this all by yourself, it’s only natural that eventually you’re going to need a little help for
somebody. I could help you with it, and so could your father… I mean, I know you want to do
things all by yourself and prove that you’re much more than what people see you for, but sometimes
you need to put your pride aside and ask for help, because there isn’t anyone in this world who can
do everything without asking for a little bit of help, once in a while.” –Akita explained London,
trying to make her understand that everyone needs help. –“So, what do you say? Can I help you with
this, starting tomorrow?”

It only took her a second to think that over, and London’s answer was:

“Yes. Yes, you can help me, mom, and I’ll be glad to have you on board!” –London exclaimed, as
she hugged her mother.

After she finished her hot chocolate, she handled the empty mug to Akita, then turned off the
television, kissed her mother goodnight, as well as Ivanna and quickly got under the sheets, resting
her head on the fluffy pillow.

“Thanks mom.”

“For the hot chocolate, or for the talk?” –Akita asked her.

“For both, actually. You made me realize that I might be rich, but that doesn’t make me inhuman and
all-powerful.” –London smiled.

Smiling back to her, Akita kissed her goodnight, then grabbed Ivanna and turn off the lights, just
before closing the door behind her, leaving London surrounded by darkness. But to her, the darkness
that surrounded was not scary, nor spooky nor terrifying. Instead, the darkness was like a cloak that
protected her from everything bad there was out there. Plus, in the darkness her senses became more
alert, especially her hearing. She could hear what was going on, on any part of the house. She could
hear her mother’s footsteps in the kitchen, as well as Ivanna’s footsteps, as she jumped up and down,
begging Akita for a treat.

In darkness, she could pretend anything was happening to her. She could pretend that she was in
another world, or in another place. Darkness was her friend, not her enemy, and she knew it, because
she felt good, just like when she was with Maddie.

Shortly after that thought about Maddie, London began to imagine where her best-friend/girlfriend
might be, and what was she doing. When she called her earlier, she was having lunch, and told her
just how much she missed her. The heiress remembered every word they exchanged over the phone.

“Hey, Maddie, how is my favourite girl going? Are you still enjoying Yellowstone? Have you seen
any bears with green ties and green hats?”
“Slow it down, London. As for the bears, no, I haven’t seen one that looks like Yogi Bear. As for how I’m doing, I’ve got one word for it, bored… I mean, I’m having a good time, but I’m bored. I don’t have you around here to keep me company and tell me jokes.” –Maddie sighed over the phone.

“Just to keep you company and tell you jokes? Don’t tell me if I was there with you, you wouldn’t like me to do naughty things with you?” –London teased her.

“Okay, those too…” –Maddie giggled. –“… still, I’m always thinking about you. I thought it would be easier for us to spend these months separated.” –she sighed. –“My mom says that it’s not healthy for me to always be thinking about you. But I just can’t help it.”

“Same thing goes for me.” –London told her, in order to cheer her up, feeling that Maddie was frustrated. They had been apart many times before, but this was the first time they would be separated for so long, after they started dating. –“But look, we aren’t the only ones who are separated by an ocean. There are hundreds if not thousands of couples who are having the same problem as we are.”

“I know, but… it still is hard for me to apart from you.” –Maddie pouted, now sounding just like London, when she used to beg to have something. Still, trying to change the subject, she told the heiress. –“You know, last night I dreamt about you.”

“You did? I bet it was a really wet and kinky dream.” –London teased her.

“Well, it was a little kinky indeed… you want me to tell it to you?”

“If you do that, then it won’t come true.” –London said innocently. Like always, she believed that if someone told a dram they had, it would not come true, just like in the Cinderella fairy tale.

“Oh, don’t worry, I can tell you that this dream will come true, even if I tell it to you.” –Maddie teased her this time. –“We were both at the beach, wearing nothing but bikinis and drink piña coladas, and then you ask me if you can rub a little suntan lotion on my back, to which I say yes. You unclasp my bikini and then start to rub the lotion on my back, massaging me. Then, of course, I turn around, pull you to me, and start to kiss you. One thing leads to another, and then, we’re completely nude having sex on the beach for the rest of the day, screaming each other’s names, as we reach countless orgasms.” –the blonde whispered the last phrase.

“Oh, you naughty, naughty girl, Maddie. Well, then let me tell you that I also had a kinky dream with you last night, and this one, I’m not afraid to tell you, because it will be one of the first things I’ll do with you, when we’re together again.” –London told her. –“It all starts with us at a party with all our friends. Then, I tell you to follow me to my room, and there I cover you with whipped cream and cherries and strawberries, and I start to eat them out of you, tickling you with my tongue and my lips, while you moan nonstop, begging me to go on.” –she said with a low and sensual voice, always giggling, just from thinking about the whole scene.

“And then I’m the naughty one in our relationship.” –Maddie laughed hard over the phone, making the heiress also laugh. They laughed for almost a minute without interruptions, before they resumed conversation, muffling their last laughs. –“… I say, you are unbelievable, Princess. I’m not even going to ask you what kind of porn you’ve been watching to have those dreams.”

“If you won’t, then I won’t ask you the same either, Blondie.” –London shot back, teasing her girlfriend once again. It felt so good to laugh with Maddie, even if it was by the phone. She knew
she would have the opportunity to share many more of those moments with the sweet blonde.

—“Well, I have to go now… talk more with you tomorrow?”

“Of course… but do you really have to go just now? We were just starting to have fun.” —Maddie pouted.

“Unfortunately, yes. But don’t worry, I’ll be thinking about you the whole time, ma bijoux.” —London told her.

“Yay me…” —Maddie sighed, using London’s famous catchphrase. Still, unlike London, who used it when she was happy, Maddie was sad when she used it, and you could clearly get that by the tone of her voice.

“Come on, Maddie, don’t be sad. If you stay sad, then I’ll get sad too, and you know that I hate being sad…” —London pretended that she had started to cry.

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry, baby. You’re right, I’m being selfish… sorry.” —Maddie apologized to her.

“It’s okay, Maddie… oh, and one more thing, if you want to use my catchphrase, you’ll have to pay me for the copyrights.” —London joked with her.

“Oh, don’t tell me I can’t use it?” —Maddie also joked about it. —“Can I pay the copyrights to you in smooches?”

“I don’t know… but, since you’re my best friend and girlfriend and I happen to know a few people who work on the copyright department, I guess I can accept it.” —London told her, blowing her a kiss over the phone.

“I knew you would. You’re awesome… in fact; you’re the most awesome girl on Earth.”

“Yay me…” —she answered back with a low and sexy voice, teasing Maddie.

With that conversation echoing inside her head, and the fact of her starting to get hotter by the minute, London decided she could not resist playing herself, while thinking about Maddie. Throwing the sheets to the opposite side of her bed, she quickly took off her nightgown and pulled down her panties, becoming absolutely naked. Thinking about Maddie, just made the adrenaline rush quicker through her veins. Biting her upper lip, London’s hands found their way to her body’s most erogenous areas. As her right hand found its way to London’s pussy, her left hand began fondling her breasts, making her nipples rock hard. Her own touch to the sensitive folds of her clitoris made her gasp and moan with desire.

At first, she kept her touch light but continued to stroke her clit, making her hotter and more aroused by the minute. Her whole mind… whole of her thoughts focused only on Maddie’s beautiful and gorgeous body, wishing she was there with her, making her go wild. She began to imagine Maddie’s delicious lips kissing hers, her soft boobs squeezing against the blonde’s, making her wetter as she continued to pleasure herself. All her nerve endings were on high alert and she was more swollen and wet by the minute. Touching herself, was like having Maddie touching her with her soft and delicate fingers.

“Maddie… mon amour… kiss me…” London murmured aloud.

Occasionally she opened her eyes, and at one time she really thought she was seeing Maddie on top of her, looking at her with a beautiful and impish smile on her face, her eyes burning with desire.
“Maddie… fuck me, Blondie…” –she thought to herself.

Each touch with her fingers drew another moan as her left hand pinched and played with her breasts, the nipples hardening and increasing her feeling of urgency and pleasure. She began to pinch them harder and harder. She did not mind if in the end of all that her nipples hurt her; the pain felt good to her right then, and that was all that mattered. As her excitement rose, she threw her head back and arched her spine. Her fingers began to move more rapidly, the tension drawing tighter and tighter as she reached for the orgasm.

Finally, an orgasm struck her like a bolt of lightning. Her toes curled, her spine arched and her heart kept beating like a crazy ticker, as the amazing orgasm shot through her body, and she bit her lower lip, trying not to yell Maddie’s name on top of her lungs; she did not want her mother to think something was wrong with her. The power of it left her dazed and warm. It was as if she had just had sex with Maddie. She just loved that amazing feeling, and wished she could keep feeling it not for just a few more minutes, but for endless hours, non-stop.

“Oh, Maddie…” –she whispered, as she tasted her own love juices, savouring them as if they were ambrosia. –“No matter how many times I play with myself, it’s never the same without you to make me cum.”

Not having Maddie around made her feel as if she had a hole where her heart was supposed to be, and that just made her feel a little gloomy. Of course, London knew that crying would not solve anything, so she told herself that she was not going to pout over the matter, and that she had to remain strong; after all, she was planning something huge just to prove the world that she was really more than meets the eye, and all that was because Maddie had believed in her, and had told her that she was smarter than people gave her credit for. And now, she was going to prove that Maddie was right about her by doing a thing that would be remembered forever in the History of Mankind, but most importantly, it would be remembered by them both and by those who were close to the girls.

“Maddie, just you wait… when you find out what I’m really coming up with, you’re going to be so proud of me.” –she thought to herself, with a genuine smile on her face, as she pulled one of the sheets over her naked body and closed her eyes, waiting for the Sandman to pay her a visit, transporting her to Dreamland.
Days went by, and soon, it was the end of August and it was time to go back home for Maddie. Even though it had been rough not being with London, she did her best to have fun with her family. By the end of their vacation, she actually felt sorry she did not hang out with her sister Genevieve and her brother Liam more often. Spending so much time at the Tipton, working shifts at the candy-counter, she had found amazing friends like the Martin twins, Mark and his girlfriend Anastasia, the twins’ girlfriends Barbara and Max, Arwin, Esteban, Carey and even Marion Moseby, the hotel’s manager who became like a second father to her, especially since she started dating London.

As they grabbed their camping gear and got in their van, Maddie made a mental note, on trying to hang out with her brother and sister more often. She took one last look at the amazing natural park, as she got into the van. The last one to climb onto the van was the family dog, Scampy, who jumped to Maddie’s lap, making himself comfortable and ready to take a little nap. Maddie petted him, trying to make him fall asleep faster. It really had been an amazing vacation, and now it was another week for them to get to Boston.

As the sun set on the horizon and night began to engulf the world around them. As they approached a little town, Maddie asked herself if that road trip back to the East coast was going to be anything but boring, with the whole family playing I Spy, or the Alphabet Game or Twenty Questions, while her father drove all the way back home. Irving Fitzpatrick was known for many things, and being extremely stubborn when it came to let anyone else do the driving but him was one of them. Maddie’s mom Miranda, her sister Genevieve and herself also had a driver’s license, and could change places with Irving from time to time, but he would not just let them. He always said that it was his job, and nobody else’s. He was already driving for more than 6 hours, and Maddie felt that someone else should take the wheel for a little while, giving her dad the chance to rest for a bit.

“Dad, come on, let me take the wheel for an hour!” –Maddie begged Irving. –“I got my driver’s license with flying colours. If I don’t practice from time to time, I’ll get rusty.”

Maddie, I told you that I like to be the one driving on long trips.” –Irving told her.

“Dad, it’s like you don’t trust me or Gennie or mom to do the driving.” –Maddie shot back at him, clearly upset because of her father’s stubbornness.

“It’s not that I don’t trust any of you, but it’s one those things that we’ve been doing since we can remember, and well, I like to keep the tradition.”

“Face it, Maddie, dad’s not letting go of that wheel.” –Liam whispered to her.

“We’ll be stopping for dinner in a couple of minutes, kids. Do you have any suggestions on where should we eat tonight??” –Miranda asked her children, trying to change the subject.

“McDonald’s!” –Liam exclaimed. If it was up to him, they would always be eating in a fast-food restaurant. With the amount of greasy fast-food he ate, everyone in the family asked themselves how was he able to not gain a single pound.

“In your dreams, pipsqueak!” –Gennie shot back at him. –“Why don’t we try and find a place where they serve vegetarian?”
“You and your vegetarianism...” –Miranda told her daughter. Like every year, Genevieve had started to eat nothing but fruits and vegetables since the beginning of the summer, and that meant that wherever they went out to lunch or dinner, they she would always eat something different from the others. It was already a tradition, because she did not want to gain weight before heading back to college, where she would start to eat normally again. –“... it has to be somewhere where we can all have a nice meal, and it isn’t too crowded.”

“Hey, what about that place over there?” –Maddie pointed out through the car window. The place the blonde was pointing out was an old Italian restaurant called Pizza di Roma. You could see that it had seen better days; the neon sign was always blinking, and the outside could use a paintjob. Still, the inside looked like one of those restaurants from the early 20’s that you see in the movies, although just like the outside, it had seen better days. Still, it looked like a place where you could have a good meal and spend a nice evening.

“Oh, an Italian restaurant, now that’s an excellent idea, Maddie. Irving, pull over.” –Miranda said, as her husband signaled the car that was behind them that he was going to pull over.

Once inside, a beautiful waitress from Genevieve’s age accompanied them to a table and as soon as they were all seated, she showed them the menu, even though it was not necessary, because they knew what they wanted to eat... pizza. All of them were in the mood for a delicious pizza cooked in a wood-fired oven, except Genevieve, who asked for a salad. Liam and Irving both ordered a Four Cheese pizza, while Maddie and Miranda ordered a Neapolitan pizza. Genevieve on the other hand, asked for a tomato, cucumber and onion salad. Maddie even made fun of her a little about the fact that she was going to eat salad and they were all going to eat pizza.

As they waited for the food to arrive, they all talked about where they were going to spend the night, since they had not seen a motel in almost 80 miles. Then, Maddie’s cellphone started to ring. Taking it out of her purse, she immediately saw that it was London calling her. She smiled as she answered the call.

“Hey, Princess. I wasn’t expecting to hear you again today.”

“Hey, Blondie, let’s just say that I wanted to hear your voice once again.” –London said, making Maddie giggle. –“Tell me, are you alone? Just say yes or no.”

“Well... no.”

“Can you go to somewhere where you’re alone?”

“Yes, I think so.” –Maddie answered, as she got up from the table and got ready to come up with an excuse to go outside. –“I’m breaking up! I’m going outside, I’ll be right back.” –the blonde excused herself, as she headed to the exit.

Already outside, she told London that she was alone and that there was no one else listening.

“Sorry about that, Maddie, but I needed to talk to you.” –London apologized herself.

“That’s okay... but tell me, is everything alright? Did something bad happen?” –Maddie asked her, worried that something had happened to London and she did not know about it.

“No, no, everything is just fine. I called you, because I have a little favour to ask you... well, not just
“A favour? What kind of favour?” –Maddie asked her, a little confused and hesitant to say yes. Usually, when she asked Maddie for a favour it was either because she needed help, or because she was up to something.

“Well, I was wondering since you’re on your way back home… if you could ask your family if they could drive you to the Tipton? And I don’t mean the Boston Tipton, I mean the New York City Tipton in Manhattan… I’ve got something I want to show you. Something I’ve been working on.”

“New York City? But, London, my grandmother is waiting for us back in Boston. We can’t just go to New York and leave her with my aunt Francine for another week or so.”

“Oh, don’t worry about your grandmother, she’s here with me.”

“What?! My grandmother is in the Tipton with you?”

“Yap, she is, right here in New York. I went to pick her up this afternoon on my private helicopter, and she’s having the time of her life. She has been telling me all these amazing stories of you when you’re just a little girl, and she showed me the albums she brought with her… the ones with your baby pictures, and let me just say that you were a really cute baby, baby.” –London laughed, trying not to burst.

“I’m so going to kill grandma for this!” –Maddie thought to herself. Everyone knew that she hated people to see her baby pictures. –“She’s in New York, huh? With you? Well, I guess knowing that, my dad won’t have any other option but to go there in order to get her.” –she said sarcastically.

“I know, it’s a real bummer, isn’t it?” –London said, imitating Maddie’s sarcastic tone of voice, just to tease her a little. –“Come on, it’ll be fun… and we can hang out together.”

“You really are a minx, you know that? –Maddie asked her deadpanned.

“Yeah, I do, you always say that when I kiss your beautiful neck, making you moan.” –London kept teasing her.

“Yes I do.” –Maddie stated. –“Well, I’ll see you in three days, then.”

“Your grandma and I will be waiting for you. Lots of kisses!” –London said as she hung up. –“Maddie, Maddie, Maddie, you don’t even have the slightest idea of what I’m cooking up… and believe me, you’re going to love it.” –she thought to herself.

Going back inside, Maddie joined the rest of the Fitzpatricks and quickly told them what London told her on the phone. The first reaction to them was that that had to be a joke that Maddie and the heiress had been planning, but quickly saw that it was no joke or prank. Why would London take old grandmother Fitzpatrick with her to New York City? That was the one million dollar question right then. They all knew that something smelled fishy in that story… grandma was not the kind of person who would help a person with a crazy plan of sorts. Still, they had to go and pick her up.

“So, I guess it’s safe to assume that we’re going to the Big Apple?” –Maddie asked her dad.

“I guess so, baby-girl. I don’t know what London is up to by going to pick your grandmother like that and take her to New York, but we’re going to find out.” –Irving told her.
On that night, just knowing she was going to be able to see London a little bit earlier than she thought, was enough to make Maddie not being able to sleep a wink. She kept thinking about what kind of surprise London was telling her about.

“Knowing London, it could be just about anything… she could have decided to ask me to marry her… or she could have bought me a pair of crystal slippers and a matching dress, and wants to re-enact the ball scene from Cinderella… or she could have bought me a deserted island where we could go on vacation whenever we want to… I mean, she could have done any of those things, she’s got the money and the imagination to do them.” –Maddie thought to herself. –“Whatever it is you came up with London, I know that will be something that’ll surprise me as always.”

Just like she had thought, it took them four days to get to the East coast, but they got there. It had been years since Irving drove to New York City, but there was one thing that it had not change, and that was traffic. The horns and the swearing could be heard from a mile away… people had a tendency to say that the worst drivers in the world were from L.A. and New York, and they were probably right, because it seemed there was not a single driver on the streets who was not being told to get a new driver’s license.

As they crossed the George Washington Bridge and prepared to enter the island of Manhattan, Maddie’s mind began to think about all kinds of stuff that were related to that island, which was for many people the heart and core not only of New York City but of America itself. The island which according to American History had been bought to the Native Americans for 24 dollars, which would be equivalent to 1000 dollars these days, had been part of Dutch colony called New Amsterdam, later being renamed New York when it was conquered by the British in 1664. It had been the birthplace of the Sons of Liberty following the Stamp Act, as well as the place which experienced the arrival of thousands of African-Americans during the Great Migration from the southern United States. Not only that, it had been the place where some of the largest buildings built during the early 20th century like the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building and the GE Building. And of course, Maddie could not forget about the event that took place on the centre of New York’s financial district on 9/11 and that had changed the world forever… the destruction of the World Trade Center towers by the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, who hijacked two Boeing 767 and crashed them into the towers. No doubt that when they stepped on Manhattan, people were not just stepping the surface of one the greatest cities in the world; they were stepping on the surface of a place that had seen so much History, and it was without doubt part of History itself.

The busy streets proved to be a real challenge for a skilled driver such as Irving, and although many would have lost their patience while driving through them, he remained calm and tried to do everything by the book. Forty-five minutes after exiting the George Washington Bridge, they finally arrived at the Tipton Hotel. Located on the magnificent 5th Avenue on Central Park South, with a unique view over New York City’s largest and most beautiful urban park, Central Park; stood the New York City’s Tipton. The French Renaissance chateau style building itself had been acquired by Wilfred Tipton two years after London’s birth, and ever since then had been the only real rival the Boston Tipton ever had, when it came to luxury. Truth be told, both hotels offered the same kind of services, but there had always been a bitter rivalry between them.

As soon as their van pulled up to the entrance, a valet jumped forward to take the keys. Irving handed the keys over, the valet handed him a card to retrieve their vehicle later, and as they made to head for the doors, Miranda tipped the valet ten dollars. Not wanting to let Scampy alone in the car, Maddie told Genevieve to grab him, which she did and put him on a leach.

Entering through the doors the doorman held open for them. He immediately recognized Maddie but
did not utter a single word, with the exception of wishing her and the rest of the Fitzpatricks a nice stay. They walked across the enormous grand lobby dripping with wealth toward the massive reception desk. As they walked, they all admired the lobby and its decoration. It looked almost like a real-life palace, the kind you only see in movies or fairy-tales. The white floor was carpeted with an ostensive emerald green carpet. And the logo of the Tipton Hotels could be seen almost everywhere. It had nothing to do with the Boston Tipton, which had a very different decoration, although some of the motifs were identical.

When they got to the reception desk, the desk clerk gave them a smile.

“Welcome to the Tipton, how may I help you?”

“Good afternoon, I’m Madeline Fitzpatrick and I’m here to see London Tipton, please.”

“Oh, yes, Miss Fitzpatrick, we were expecting you.” –she said, a little embarrassed for not having recognized Maddie right from the first moment. –“Miss Tipton is upstairs in the Victorian suite on the last floor, waiting for you.”

“The penthouse suite, I should have known.” –Maddie giggled to herself, finding a little funny that her girlfriend always stayed on the penthouse suite in every hotel she visited.

After thanking for the information, all the Fitzpatricks took one of the elevators to the last floor. Unlike the Boston Tipton, where the whole last floor had been converted into London’s private suite, this one had six different suites, the biggest being the Victorian suite where London was staying, which also happened to be the most expensive suite of the entire hotel. When the elevator’s doors opened, Maddie was the first to exit. Looking around for the Victorian suite, she immediately found it. The double-doors with a huge “V” gave it away immediately. Knocking on the door, they waited for anyone to open it, which did not take long. A few moments later, the doors opened and they saw London, smiling at them. She was wearing a blue tank top, black gym shorts, black wrist bands on both wrists, and white sneakers. As for her hair, she was wearing it on a loose ponytail. In her left hand she was holding a bottle of icy Gatorade. Maddie noticed that it was Fierce Strawberry, London’s favourite flavour.

“Maddie!” –London launched herself into the arms of her love, as soon as she saw it was her. –“You all arrived earlier than I expected.” –the heiress said. Her voice revealed that she was extremely happy to have them all there.

“Well, if you want us we can come back later.” –Maddie joked with her.

“Nonsense, Blondie… but where are my manners? Come on in, everyone.” –she let them all enter. –“You were all lucky in catching me, because I was on my way to the gym for a light training.”

The magnificent Victorian suite was as beautiful as one could imagine. It had 5 different rooms, three bathrooms and a giant living room. The walls and the ceiling were painted in a beautiful shade of vanilla-white giving away a sense of peace. The wooden floor was remarkably polished that you could see one’s reflection on it. The furniture looked like 19th century and it was most likely from that period. The only thing that did not match the rest of the decoration was the huge plasma-screen television.

“Whoa, this place sure is pretty.” –Genevieve said, as she petted Scampy, who was now being held in her arms.
“Yeah, but it isn’t my style.” –London told Maddie’s sister. –“Don’t get me wrong, I like all these beautiful old things like the sofas, the tables and the huge statues… heck even that stuffed tiger over there looks very beautiful.” –she said, pointing out to the huge stuffed Siberian tiger that adorned the living room. –“But, I like stuff that look brand new. All this, should be in a museum, not a hotel suite.”

“Only you would say something like that…” –Maddie giggled, as she wrapped her left arm, around London’s waist, pulling her closer to her. –“… but tell me, where’s my grandma?”

“Oh, she’s in the Imperial Suite, down the hall. She’s sleeping, so you don’t have to worry.” –London answered her. –“I know that you must have all kinds of questions, but don’t worry, I’ll explain everything at dinner, where I will also reveal the reason why I asked you to come to New York. As long as you are here, you’re all my guests. Which reminds me, here’s the Imperial Suite’s key card, and I better call the reception desk and tell them to get your luggage up here.” –she said, as she gave the key card to Miranda.

“London, honey… this is all very nice, but, we can’t accept this. I mean, Maddie’s one thing, but the rest of us… we don’t want to impose ourselves on you.” –Miranda told her.

“Nonsense, if Maddie is able to enjoy all kinds of wonderful things when she’s with me, why shouldn’t you also? I said it once, and I’ll say it again, as long as me and Blondie are together, which will be forever, you’re my family also.” –London said innocently, though she meant every last word. –“Here are the keys to the Imperial Suite. Feel free to call room service and order anything, and later, we’re all going shopping downstairs in the Tipton Galleries with my mom, so we look dazzling at dinner.” –London said.

“Awesome!” –Liam exclaimed. –“Oops, sorry, it just came out…” –he said, a little embarrassed.

“Liam will never learn…” –Genevieve thought to herself.

“By the way, where’s your mom?” –Maddie asked her, not seeing Akita anywhere.

“Oh, she went out for a walk with Ivanna, and she should be back in an hour or so… Ivanna is going to be thrilled when she sees that her boyfriend came to see her.” –the heiress said, as she petted Scampy who yapped happily, clearly recognizing Ivanna’s name.

“Well… if you don’t mind, I guess we should go and check if our things arrive, and see if grandma is still sleeping. You’re coming, baby-girl?” –Irving asked Maddie.

“No, you go on ahead, dad. I’m staying a bit more with London.” –Maddie answered. She wanted to stay a little bit longer with the Asian-beauty. They had been separated for almost two whole months, and now they needed at least an hour to make up for the time they were apart.

“Alright, see you later then.” –Irving said, as he left, along with the rest of Maddie’s family.

When they heard the click form the door closing, both London and Maddie immediately jumped on each other’s arms and started to kiss. It felt so long, since their last kiss. As their tongues played with each other, they each thought on what they were going to say after they finished kissing. As soon as they broke the kiss, they kept staring into each other’s eyes for a couple of more seconds.

“I missed you so much, Maddie.”
“I missed you do much too, London… but let me get a look at you.” –Maddie giggled. –“You got a little taller since the last time I saw you.”

“Yeah, but you also got a little bit taller and I’m still shorter than you.” –London pouted.

“Don’t worry, Princess. You may be shorter than me, but it’s just a little bit. And is it me, or are your boobs a little bigger?” –Maddie asked her, as she gently grabbed London’s breasts and squeezed them gently.

“You noticed it!” –London exclaimed. –“I admit it, during my stay in Switzerland I ate a few more chocolates that I should, and as a side effect, my boobs got slightly bigger.” –she giggled. –Plus, I’ve been doing a little fitness during my free time, and as you can see, I’m a little more athletic.”

“I can see that.” –Maddie said, as she noticed London’s slightly muscled legs. –“You’ve also doing yoga, I bet.”

“Yeah… you know me so well, Blondie. But enough about me, let me take a look at you.” –London said, as she looked Maddie closer, looking for any big change in her. –“You’re a bit taller, but you already know that… you’re suntanned… you put on a little weight, but just a pound or two.”

“How do you know that?”

“Your butt… your butt looks a little rounder the last time I got the opportunity to slap it.” –London giggled, as she playfully slapped Maddie’s ass. –“And let me just say that I don’t mind you putting on a little weight, if it goes to the right places like your ass, or your boobs…”

“In sum, the places you love to kiss, slap, bite, caress and touch, isn’t that right?” –Maddie commented, as she kissed the Asian-beauty, leaving her breathless.

“You betcha…” –London kissed her back, not even giving her time to catch her breath. –“What do you say if we go to my room and cuddle for a little? My mom won’t be back for another hour.” –she suggested.

“I would like that… but, what about your training?” –Maddie reminded her.

“Oh, yeah, I completely forgot… but if I go, I won’t be able to spend time with you… I know! Why don’t you come with me? You can wear some of my clothes. You and I dress the same size, remember?”

“Alright, give me five minutes to change clothes, and then we’ll go together. I need to work a little too.”

In just five minutes, Maddie changed her clothes. She was now mimicking London by wearing a black tank top, black gym shorts and red sneakers. Fixing her hair also in a ponytail and grabbing a towel, she was ready for some work out, though something told her that they were going to do so much more.

As always, London had a little surprise for Maddie. The blonde thought they were going downstairs to the hotel’s gymnasium, but then, the brunette showed her a little secret only known by the hotel’s staff and the people who had stayed in that particular suite. The Asian-beauty led her across the room to the hallway. The first door they came to turned out to be an elevator. She pressed a button and the doors opened. They entered and London pressed the up button. The ascension only took a few
seconds, and when the doors opened, they saw themselves inside one of that hotel’s most secretive secrets. Turns out the Victorian suite had a private gym, equipped with everything a person would need. There were two treadmills and two rowing machines, as well as two exercise bikes, dumbbells, weight benches, and so much more.

The gym itself was an indoor gym and it looked like so many of its kind. The walls were panelled with mirrors, reflecting one’s image countless times, as for the floor, it was absolutely spotless and polished, just like the floor of the suite.

“So, what do you think?” –London asked, as she placed down her towel and her Gatorade on top of a small counter near her.

“I think that when we get back to Boston, we’re going to need to do a little remodelling on your penthouse suite, because I want one of these.” –Maddie joked.

“Sure…” –she giggled. –“Are you ready to work out?”

“In a little… but first, I want to try something out with you… It’s a little fantasy of mine.” –Maddie said, with an impish smile on her face. Getting closer to London, she placed a peck on her lips, and then gently pulled the brunette’s tank top over her head. Then, unclasping her bra, she let her topless, and did the same with her.

With both of them topless, Maddie pulled London to her, and when their bodies touched, and she felt the Asian-beauty’s nipples touching hers, she started to kiss her, as her hands caressed London’s most erogenous zones on her upper torso. London followed her lead, and also started doing the same. An explosion of passion and raw desire erupted in both of them, as their nude breasts touched. It did not take long for London to realise what Maddie’s fantasy was… she wanted to make out topless, just wearing their gym shorts, or at least, that is what she thought.

“Mmm… that’s it, London… kiss me, baby!” –Maddie moaned louder and louder, as London’s tongue touched her skin, sending shivers up her spine.

“You go it, mon bijoux…” –London said with naughty voice, as she kissed Maddie’s delicate chin, moving down to her neck.

The floor was as cold as ice, but the girls did not mind. The heat their bodies were generating right then could easily melt a block of ice. In fact, they enjoyed having their warm skin against something icy. It made them feel even more alive than they were. Then, Maddie forced London to roll over, as if she was fighting her. Still not understanding what she was trying to do, London just followed Maddie’s lead, as her lips magnetically drawn to the blonde’s nipples, nibbling them.

“Oh, fuck! London, don’t stop, please.” –Maddie yelled, as she tried to catch her breath. It seemed to her that London was insatiable.

“Who says I was going to?” –London told her with an incredibly sexy voice, as she began to gently bite Maddie’s neck, making her moan even harder.

“Oh, baby, make me cum!” –Maddie yelled.

Soon after, the girls both reached climax; first Maddie, and then London. They just stood there for a moment, regaining their breath and looking at each other, before cracking up in laughter.
“This was freaky… (laugh)…” –London laughed. –“What kind of a fantasy was this one?”

“Oh, it’s just that… (laugh)… my sister and I, we liked to play wrestling after watching American Gladiators when we were little, and I’ve always had this fantasy to make love to someone while pretending that I’m wrestling with that person.” –Maddie explained her. –“I know, I know, it was a stupid thing to do…”

“No, I kinda liked it… it involved us pleasing each other by just touching and kissing, while making a couple of sudden movements. It’s kinda funny, because so far we never reached an orgasm like that…” –London said. –“… Maddie, I think we reached to another level on our relationship. We reached a point that we don’t need to touch our clits to cum.” –she said, before giggling maliciously. –“Just kissing each other is enough to make us reach climax.”

“Does that mean we’re going to stop fucking like we’ve done until now?” –Maddie asked her with an impish smile on her face.

“Hell no… where would be the fun in that?” –London said, as she pecked her on the lips, and then helped her getting up. –“Besides, I love to lick that pussy of yours.”

“Ditto on that…” –Maddie laughed, as she dressed back, mimicking London. –“So, are you ready for a little work out now?”

“Sure, but after having my heart beating like the heart of a hummingbird for nearly five minutes, I think I would call it a day.” –London said, being a little lazy about it.

“Come on, I’ll help you out.”

And so she did. Besides making the same exercises as London, Maddie took up the place of personal trainer during that session, trying to encourage her. She knew that if a person had someone encouraging her, everything became a lot easier.

“Alright, just a few more push-ups, London.

“I can’t…” –London said, exhausted. Her whole body ached.–“… please, Maddie, let’s call it a day.” –the brunette begged her.

“No can do, London. After this, we still have a 2 mile jog on the treadmill… come on, do more five push-ups and I’ll give you five big kisses, one for each push-up.” –Maddie told her, trying to get her to complete the exercise.

“No… make that ten big kisses and I’ll do it.” –London told her, trying to negotiate the terms.

Hearing that counter-offer, Maddie kneeled down and gave her one big kiss. When their lips broke apart, she whispered:

“This one is on the house; you’ve got to earn the other nine kisses.”

Doing just as Maddie had told her, London searched inside herself looking for the strength needed to finish that exercise. Every time she did one, she felt like her body was giving up on her. Still, she managed to do all the push-ups and won the kisses the blonde had promised her.

“With such a good looking and persuasive personal trainer such as you, Maddie, I think I could do this all day.” –she declared, even though she was bushed. Usually, her training was never that hard.
“I’m flattered, but that won’t make me let you skip that jog you still have.” –Maddie told her.
–“Come on, we’ll do this one together.”

Doing what she told her, the girls programmed the treadmills to start at the same time. In order to make that easier, Maddie decided to talk with London while they were running. Without even noticing it, they both finished the exercise and were ready to call it a day. They were tired, sweaty and smelly, but they were both satisfied.

“That’s it. From now on, I’m sticking to yoga, and nothing else.” –London said, as she wiped the sweat of her face with the towel, and finished the last of her Gatorade.

“Well, I’m prepared to do this every day after school, especially since I won’t be spending so much time working at the candy-counter.” –Maddie declared. Since their relationship had been made known to everyone, London and herself had decided that she would keep having her job, but would have a much more flexible schedule, giving her the time to be with her and do other things.

Going back to the suite, they both took a shower and London borrowed a few clothes to Maddie. As they were just finishing combing their hair, London’s mom, Akita entered the suite, having returned from her walk with Ivanna. The white Pomeranian yapped when she sensed Maddie’s presence, and quickly ran looking for her and for her mistress. When she found them, she jumped to her mistress’s lap and looked at her with her puppy eyes.

“Hey, Ivanna, how are you?” –Maddie petted her. -“That means your mom’s back too.”

“Mom, we’re in my room!” –London shouted at her mother, telling her where they were.

A few seconds later, Akita entered and saw that Maddie had already arrived. Smiling at her, she gave her a big hug and kissed her on her right cheek. She was happy to see her, just as much as her daughter was. Just like Miranda, who had considered London as her third daughter, Akita now considered Maddie as her second daughter.

“Maddie, it’s so good to see you again.” –Akita told her.

“It’s good to see you again too, Mrs. Tipton.”

“So, mom, did you have fun?”

“A little… I had almost forgotten that Ivanna loved to run when she’s taken for a walk.” –Akita told her, clearly a little exhausted from running after London’s dog.

“She likes to do that. Next time, you should let me take her for her usual walk. She obeys my every order, don’t you Ivanna?” –London said, as she looked at her dog. –“Go on Ivanna, bark!” –she commanded her.

But, instead of doing as she was told, Ivanna leapt from her mistress’s lap and began to run around in circles around her. This all caused Maddie and Akita to start laughing. It was clear to them that Ivanna did not obey anyone, unless she wanted it to.

“I guess she’s not in the mood for barking.” –Maddie joked, as she patted London on the back.

After they were finished, both Maddie and London got ready to go downstairs to buy something
pretty to wear at dinner time. They asked London’s mom if she was coming, but she told them that she would catch up to them. She needed to rest for at least 30 minutes before going shopping, and she knew that that could be an incredibly exhausting task, given that she never managed to decide what she should buy, which was frustrating because being a jewel designer she was used to make quick decisions on how a piece should look like and what would look right with a certain precious stone and which shape should it have.

Taking Maddie’s mom and sister with them, the girls went down to the Tipton Galleries, the New York’s Tipton exclusive shopping gallery, in search of the most beautiful night dresses they could find. They entered in the first store and immediately fell in love with the dresses that were on display. The dresses themselves were fabulously colourful and it was hard for them to choose which was the most beautiful and dazzling one.

“Oh, this one would look great on you, mom.” –Maddie said, as she showed Miranda a beautiful orange dress.

“I’m with Maddie, mom, this one really looks great on you.” –Gennie agreed.

“Oh, I don’t know girls… it sure is pretty, but it’s too expensive.” –Miranda said, as she saw the price on it. She really thought that it was one of the most beautiful dresses she had ever laid her eyes on, but she did not want to take advantage of London’s good will.

“Nonsense, Mrs. Fitzptrick, its adorable and it’s quite cheap.” –London said truthfully. Everything that did not cost more than 100 million dollars was incredibly cheap, at least for London, and she really wanted to offer it to Maddie’s mom. –“Go on, why don’t you go and try it? I bet you’ll look divine.”

“Go on, mom, London’s taste in fashion is never wrong.” –Maddie giggled, happy to see her girlfriend and mother mingle so well. After what happened between them a few months earlier, it seemed amazing just how they had both put all that part of the past behind them.

Doing as she was told Miranda tried it on and just as they had told her, she looked dazzling. With the right shoes and a new hairstyle, she would look like the queen of a fairy-tale.

Soon after, London’s mom showed up, and this time she was decided to find the right dress just by following her instinct and fashion taste. Still, she needed the help of everyone to help pick the one dress she saw fit for the occasion. In the end, she chose a beautiful fucisia Manchurian-Chinese quipao with a silver design of a serpent down the left side, which matched beautifully with her eyes. London also decided to buy one, but this one was red and had a silver design of a tiger down the left side, instead of a serpent. As for Maddie and Genevieve, they both bought strapless dresses; Maddie’s being bright green and Genevieve being black. They also made sure to buy a beautiful dress for their grandma, although the one they chose was a more conservative one, and not as flashy or colourful as the others.

After London paid for everything, they all went to buy matching shoes, and then spent another two hours in the salon, fixing their hair, nails and eyelashes. They all wanted to look their best for that dinner. Maddie tried to make London to tell her why she had called them there, but she did not reveal a thing. This made Maddie feel like London was hiding something from her, but in a way, Maddie was actually proud of the heiress, because in the past she was not able to keep any secrets, and now, no matter how much they begged her, she would not reveal them.
At 8 o’clock sharp, everyone was ready and were waiting at the entrance of one of the hotel’s restaurants, the Tipton Bistro. The last ones arriving were London and Akita, who looked like two Asian movie stars, as they walked down the stairs, heading in the Fitzpatricks direction. But they were not the only ones who looked incredibly beautiful. Everyone looked as if they were on their way to the Academy Awards Ceremony in Beverly Hills. But London and Maddie were the highlight of that group. They looked so cute together, that Maddie’s grandmother was always telling them that they were the prettiest couple in that hotel.

All of the Fitzpatricks, especially Maddie wanted to know the reason why she had called them to New York City, and they were going to find out during that dinner, which was the first dinner they had together. As they all sat in their designated seats, London immediately thanked them all for coming and apologized them for her father’s absence, because he was supposed to join them that night, but at the last moment could not make it.

“I have to apologize for my father’s absence. He really wanted to come, but…”

“Don’t worry, London, we know that he’s a very busy man.” –Maddie said. –“So busy that he can’t even take a full day to spend with his only daughter.” –she sarcastically thought to herself.

“Anyway, I called you here because right now I’m working on a very special project, and well, I needed you all to see it with your own eyes.”

“What is it?” –Liam asked her.

“Oh, that’s a secret…” –London giggled.

“But you told us that you were going to tell us what this thing was all about.”

“Wrong, Blondie, I told you that I was going to explain you why I made you come here. I never told you that I was going to explain you what I’m up to. You’ll just have to wait until tomorrow morning.” –London told her. You could see a definite sense of pride in London’s eyes. Whatever she was up to, it was something really important and top secret.

Dinner went smoothly, and they quickly forgotten all about the secret matter that London talked about. For the girls it was with great pleasure they saw both families getting so well, even though London’s mom was the only one representing her family. The heiress did not say a thing but Maddie could see that she really wished her father was there with them. If someone asked her how she knew that, she would have replied, it’s one of those things a girlfriend knows. Still, Maddie tried her best to cheer her up by telling her what she had done during summer, forcing her to also tell her what she had done. Of course, London’s description was a little vague, but Maddie did not care. She just wanted London to get those bad thoughts out of her mind.

During desert, London whispered something to Maddie’s ear, which made her turn and share a kiss with her. Everyone at the table thought that that gesture was just adorable, and all applauded cheerfully. This made the heiress and the candy-counter girl blush a little.

“A few months ago, this would be unthinkable to all of them.” –Maddie thought.

“Glad that now we can kiss in public, without fearing any kind of retaliation from anyone.” –London also thought, completing Maddie’s thought, as if she had read the blonde’s mind.

They all remained in the restaurant until it was about 11 o’clock, exchanging family stories, and situations that had both happened to London and Maddie like when they dressed up like nuns to get
away from Sister Dominique, or when they got locked up inside London’s wardrobe only to find out that London had the wardrobe’s key with her the whole time and had completely forgotten. But the story that all interested them was how the girls fell in love and how they told each other they were head over heels for one another; a secret that had been guarded by those who had helped them, namely the Martin twins and their mother Carey, their girlfriends Barbara and Max, Mark and his father Stephen, and of course, Moseby.

“Oh that was really sweet of them to be singing that song.” –Akita said.

“Yeah, they were all realky sweet.” –Maddie admitted.

“I never took you for a romantic, Madeline.” –Grandma Fitzpatrick told her.

“I’m not a romantic, grandma, I just happen to like romantic stuff.” –Maddie short back playfully at her grandmother, who laughed.

“Oh, look at the time…” –Miranda said, as she looked at the enormous grandfather clock that was on display in the middle of the restaurant, which was now completely deserted. They were the only ones still in there.

“We didn’t even notice the time go by.” –Irving said. –“I think we should go.”

“Yes, it’s already time. Oh, and one last thing before we go; Tomorrow, be here on the lobby by 7 o’clock.” –London warned them all. –“Remember, don’t fall asleep, because tomorrow will be a day you’ll never forget… especially you, Maddie.” –London thought the last part.
Surprise Revealed

As she got ready for bed, Maddie thought that she would not sleep a wink, thinking about what London had upper sleeve for the next day. But, she proved to be wrong, for she slept like a baby, and the night passed quickly. When she finally woke up it was already 6 a.m. Just like London had told them, Maddie and her family were on the lobby when there were still minutes to the appointed time. In the hotel’s lobby, many guests were already checking themselves out, as a couple of maids made their way into the service elevators, carrying the typical hotel towel carts, on their way to the upper floors. Another couple of maids were also busy replacing the flowers in the various crystal vases spread all over the lobby. A few of the nightshift bellboys, who were counting the minutes to finish their shift, could be seen near the reception desk could be seen counting the tips they had won over night... this made Maddie remember about Esteban, who also did the same, when Moseby was not looking around.

Looking at the huge clock that existed on the lobby, Maddie asked herself what was keeping London. It was already ten past seven, and she was nowhere to be seen.

She who wanted to wear something special on that day, had decided to ask London on the previous night if she could borrow something for her. The heiress obviously told her that her wardrobe was hers as well. Going inside, she chose a blue tank top with the Supergirl logo stamped on it, a red mini skirt and a pair of high-heel sandals. When she showed the brunette what she had chosen, London immediately teased her calling her Supergirl.

“See you tomorrow, my Supergirl…” –London teased Maddie, as she headed to the door.

“See you tomorrow, Princess.” –Maddie blew her a kiss, as she closed the door behind her.

In the end, it was London who showed up late, failing to do what she had told the others. It was almost 7:15 when the elevator doors opened. London was wearing a short purple dress with a very beautiful adorned belt around her waist, a pair of blue leggings, white sandals. She was wearing her hair straight on one side, covering her right eyes, giving her a mysterious look.

She was accompanied by her mother who was holding Ivanna in her arms, but unlike Akita, who was serene and calm, the heiress looked quite stressed. You could see that she was almost in panic.

“Sorry, sorry, sorry, I overslept!” –London exclaimed as she approached them. Maddie had never seen her like that before, not even when they were both late to school.

“It’s okay, London, there’s no biggie.” –Maddie said, as she quickly placed a small peck on London’s lips, trying to calm her down.

“Yes there is… we have to go!” –London said, really panicking.

“London, honey…” –Akita told her, as she placed her hands on London’s shoulders and looked her in the eyes. –“Everything’s okay. Just because we’re a little late, that doesn’t mean it’s the end of the world. I know you want this to be perfect for everyone, but believe me; it will be perfect, no matter what happens, okay? I’ve already called for the limousines; everything is ready for our departure.”

As if by magic, Akita’s words calmed London, making her smile. It was amazing what just a few words said by the right person and with the right tone could do.
When Scampy, who was still half asleep saw Ivanna he began to bark at her, and Ivanna also barked back at him. They all laughed when they saw the two dogs clearly happy to see each other. You could almost say that they were the canine version of London and Maddie.

When they both finally stopped barking at each other, London grabbed Ivanna and Maddie did the same with Scampy. They all exited the hotel and got in the two limousines that were parked just outside. The vehicles were both identical, except in their colours, one being black while the other was white. London, Maddie and their moms entered the black one, while the rest of them entered the white one. As the vehicles followed through 5th Avenue, the blonde asked herself where they were heading.

“London, can’t you at least tell us where were going? I feel like a lab rat inside a maze.” –Maddie asked her.

“Go on, London, tell her… you can at least tell her where were going. It’s not like you’re going to ruin the surprise.” –Akita told her daughter. She knew she wanted to surprise her girlfriend, but she felt Maddie had been tortured by her daughter, not knowing where she was being taken.

“Oh, alright… we’re going to Downtown Manhattan Heliport, where there are a couple of people who are waiting for us.” –London told her.

“And, who are those people?” –Maddie insisted on knowing every detail.

“Sorry, Blondie. I said I would tell you where were going… I never said about telling you who will be there or where were going after that.” –London teased her once again.

“Aha! Then that means were going somewhere after we get there, which means that whatever you want to show us isn’t there, and we have to get a helicopter to get there!” –Maddie exclaimed throwing those conclusions to the heiress’s face, as an impish smile appeared on her face, knowing that she was absolutely right.

“Darn, you’re good.” –London said. –“Then again, if you weren’t that good, I wouldn’t have fallen in love with your intelligence.” –London teased her.

“Oh, so you’re telling me you fell in love with me just because of my intelligence, is that it?” –Maddie playfully asked her.

“I fell in love with you for your intelligence, your looks, your kindness, and definitely for your infinite patience and your sarcasm.” –London answered her, joking about it.

The girls kept exchanging playful insults, and teasing each other about their looks, their personalities and just why they still put up with each other. Laughs and more laughs that was exactly what you heard inside that limo. As for their mothers, both Akita and Miranda stood there witnessing all that happening in silence. They did not say a word, but both women were happy for their daughters’ happiness right then.

They had been apart for more than two months, and their love stood even stronger than before. If there was something that was as truth as the Earth revolving around the Sun, was that London and Maddie’s love was possible because they both respected each other and because they knew that there was no one else who could match the burning passion they both had in their hearts for one another. And now, London was just about to prove to Maddie that she was the most important being in her
life, by showing her something she had done, always bearing in her heart that this project was her way to show the blonde that she had been her inspiration.

Arriving at their destination, the limos stopped and their drivers quickly got out and opened the doors for them all. Even though it was a summer day, the wind was quite chilly, making them start to shatter their teeth. They were welcomed by two control workers, who were dressed in bright orange vests.

“So, now that we’re here, what now?” – Maddie asked London, not seeing anyone on the heliport.

“I don’t get it, they should have arrived at least half an hour ago…” – London said as she looked up to the sky, as if she was looking for something. And then, she saw it. – “… here they come!”

The heiress pointed to a black dot in the air that was closing in on them. At first, if did not look like anything, but as it got closer, everyone saw that it was a helicopter. But this was no ordinary helicopter. It was not like the ones Maddie was used to see the heiress using whenever she wanted to go from Boston to New York for a quick shopping spree. No, this one was a military aircraft, a Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey. Its shiny paint job made it look as if it had come out of a dream or something. Unlike most of its kind, this one had side windows, which enabled its occupants to look outside. As it approached the landing spot, its propellers started to rotate upwards, until they were on their vertical position, just as if it was a helicopter. Then, it started to descend, making the air around it spin and blow as if it they were close to a hurricane.

When the aircraft landed, the landing gear made a thud as it touched the asphalt. They all waited for the rotors to stop, before approaching it. Once they stopped, London and Akita were the first to advance towards it, followed by the rest of the group.

At the same time, the aircraft’s doors opened and from inside came a group of people everyone knew. The first ones to exit were two boys, one dressed in a white and blue striped polo, light blue shorts and white sneakers, and the other dressed with a red t-shirt, white shorts and beach-sandals.

Then, it was time for two other friends of the girls to exit the aircraft. He was dressed with a black t-shirt with the logo of Pirates of the Caribbean stamped on it, grey shorts and black Converse All’s. As for her she was wearing a purple tank top, black mini-skirt and a pair of purple sandals. They were the couple, London and Maddie considering being the cutest couple, right after them of course, and by the looks of them, they looked quite happy to be there by each other’s side… they were Mark Stevenson and his girlfriend, Anastasia Fontaine.

“Hi girls!” – Anastasia waved at them, happy to see her friends, after not seeing them during those summer months.

And finally, the two last persons came out of the aircraft, and they were Mark’s dad, Stephen, and Anastasia’s mom, Felicia. He was dressed in a Hawaiian shirt, caqui pants and black shoes, while she was wearing a yellow and orange long dress.

Seeing them all there made Maddie wonder why did London sent for them in the first place? Still, she did not mind having them there. God knew that she had missed their company, especially Zack and Cody, who made her laugh with their goofs. Looking at them, she saw that they just like London and herself were a couple of inches taller, but other than that, they were just like the last time she had
seen them.

“Hey, guys, how are you?!” –Maddie asked them, as she gave them both a bear hug.

“We’re okay.” –Cody answered her.

“Just peachy, sweet thang.” –Zack told her. –“So, are you still okay with London or can I ask you on a date?” –he asked her as he tried his best not to crack himself up.

“Yeah, I’m still with London and everything is peachy… as for that date you want, call me in about 10 years.” –Maddie laughed, making Zack also laugh. –“Don’t tell me you still think you have a shot?”

“Nops, but you know how old habits are… they die hard.” –Zack kept laughing.

A few minutes, it was just what they needed to catch up on what they all had been doing. They explained that they experience some turbulence right after leaving Boston, and that was the reason why they were a little late. Throughout the summer they had exchanged phone calls and sent messages to one another. But there was nothing like seeing your friends in person and ask them personally how they have been.

“So, how was the West Coast?” –London asked Mark.

“It was still on the same place…” –he joked about it. –“… okay, okay, now for real, it’s amazing to just travel up and down the coast, from Los Angeles to Seattle… But you know what? It’s always great to be back home to be with those you really love, isn’t that right, Gothie?”

“Gothie?” –Maddie asked him, not understanding why he said that.

“Yeah, Gothie, it’s my nickname.” –Anastasia told them.

“Oh, I get it.” –Cody said.

“I gave her that nickname because no matter what happens, even if she’s not dressed like a Goth girl, there’s always something about her that reminds me of Goth girls.” –Mark told them. –“Besides, she doesn’t mind, as long as I let her call me by my nickname.”

“And what is your nickname?” –Carey asked him, also curious.

“Well, it’s… its top secret!” –he said, making everyone laugh.

“That one was funny! But tell me, what are you guys doing here?” –Maddie asked them, hoping they would tell her what London was really up to. –“Believe me; I love to have you all here, but…”

“Don’t know, London called us a couple of days ago and told us that she had something to show us, and that she would send an aircraft to get us.” –Stephen answered her.

“Yeah, and it was just the most amazing and crazy trip ever! You really got to try and fly in one of those things; it’s like being in a Transformers’ movie!” –Zack exclaimed, still excited about everything.

“So, you don’t know what she’s really up to?”
“Afraid not…” –Carey told her.

“But you will, in about thirty minutes. Come on, hop back into the aircraft, everyone!” –London told them, as she grabbed Maddie by the wrist and pulled her to her.

“You heard her, our carriage awaits us.” –Akita joked about it with everyone’s parents.

Entering the aircraft, they all took a seat and strapped their belts. London was the last one to take a seat, and just before she did that, she signalled to both pilots that everyone was ready for take-off. Just as she finished strapping herself to her seat, the turbines began to roar and the propellers began to flip. Soon, the aircraft took off and they all saw Manhattan being left behind, as they were taken to an unknown destination. A destination only known by the heiress and her mother, and none of them was going to reveal it until the time was right.

About 15 minutes had passed since they left Manhattan, and deadly silence had come down upon them. The only noise you could hear was the muffled sound of the aircraft’s propellers outside. Not liking those long silences, London decided that it was time to cheer things up a little.

“So, are you all having fun?” –she asked deadpanned.

“Are we supposed to be having fun?” –Liam hot back at her sarcastically. Clearly sarcasm was something that ran in all the Fitzpatricks.

“For once, I’m with my brother, London. You tell us all that you have a surprise for me and that you have to show it to us all what it is, and then you drag us to a heliport, where we find out that you brought some of our best friends in this aircraft and then you tell us that we have to get into the same aircraft and fly to an unknown destination.” –Maddie told her. You could hear that she was a little upset because of all that secrecy.

“You’re right, and I guess you are all entitled to an explanation… especially you, Blondie.” –London said. –“You remember in Jurassic Park when John Hammond takes Dr. Grant, Dr. Satler, the lawyer and that guy that is really great with numbers… can’t remember his name now, but the point is, he says to the lawyer “I bring you scientists, and you bring rock stars.”, do you?”

“Did you even read Jurassic Park?” –Mark asked her.

“No, I just saw the movie.” –London answered him.

“Yeah, I remember about it, but what does this have to do with us?” –Maddie asked her. –“Don’t tell me that you bought an island!” –the blonde asked her,

Time seemed to stop as everyone waited for the heiress’s answer. After taking a moment to sigh, she said:

“Well, I could have bought one, but if I had, I couldn’t do the things that I’m going to do with it.”

“What are you talking about, London?” –Cody asked her.

“Just look outside… by my calculations you should be able to see my latest acquisition.” –London giggled.
Hearing that, everyone unfastened their seatbelts and looked through the windows, trying to see what London was talking about. When they looked, they could only see the ocean until the eye could see. Looking harder, they finally saw what they thought was what the heiress had told them about. It looked like a ship, but this one was a huge ship… a cruise ship! As the aircraft closed in on it, they all saw just how big it was. Even in the endless ocean, that ship looked huge.

“OH MY GOD! YOU BOUGHT A CRUISE SHIP FOR ME?!” –Maddie exclaimed, still not believing what her eyes were seeing.

“Surprise, Maddie!” –London smiled, making Maddie jump into her arms, as she kissed her as passionately as she could.

Seeing their mistresses so happy, both Scampy and Ivanna began barking as if they were saying that they were really happy for them. No one else said a word because they were still in shock. The looks on their faces was priceless. London’s mother had to concentrate really hard not to start laughing.

“So, did you like my surprise?” –London asked her, as she caught her breath.

“What do you think? Do I need to kiss you again to show you just how excited I really am?” – Maddie smiled at her. –“I still can’t believe that you bought me a cruise ship!”


“But wait, what’s the catch?! We’re not going to use that cruise ship just ourselves, or are we?” – Maddie asked her girlfriend.

“No, of course not. I’ll explain it to you and everyone else what is really going on, when we land.”

The minutes that preceded the landing, everyone asked the heiress all sorts of questions regarding the ship, but she kept telling them that she was not going to say a thing, until they all landed.

As they approached it, they saw just how gigantic the whole ship was. It was mostly white, with a few parts being emerald green. If one looked hard, they would be bale to see the coat of arms of the Tipton Hotels. They could not see it all, because of the trajectory angle, but if all of it was as beautiful as the sections they were able to see, then it was most likely the most beautiful and dazzling cruise ship ever since the Titanic or Queen Mary II. Plus, they all asked themselves just how the interior would look like.

When the aircraft landed, they all waited for the engines to stop before exiting; then one by one, all of them exited and the first thing they noticed was how windy it was. And it was not a simple sea breeze; it was a strong cold wind that you can experience when you are on open sea. Still, that was not enough to make them forget where they were right then. Looking around them they saw that the ship was gigantic, or better, colossal. If at first they thought this was the biggest cruise ship they had ever seen; now they were sure of it. As for the dogs, they had not even barked since they got out of the aircraft. They were most likely still adapting to the fact that they were on a ship on the middle of the ocean.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you aboard the S.S. Tipton!” –London exclaimed. –“I wanted to name it S.S. Blondie and Princess, but they told me that the name was already taken.” –she said, as she looked Maddie in the eyes.

“That’s okay, London. I think that S.S. Tipton is a beautiful name.” –Maddie told her, as she looked
around. –“It’s so beautiful.”

“She’s right, dearie, the ship looks incredibly beautiful” –Miranda agreed with her younger daughter.

“If you all think she’s beautiful on the outside, then wait until you see the inside.” –London told her, as she signalled everyone to follow her.

As they climbed down the stairs that led them to the main deck, Ivanna and Scampy joined their mistresses on the head of the group. When they saw themselves on the main deck they looked around, and quickly saw that there were a few dozens of workers working on placing the wooden plaques on it, as well as polishing the parts of the deck that had already been assembled. There was a distinct smell of wooden polisher, paint and other industrial products in the air.

“As you can see it’s still not finished yet. But it will be in a couple of weeks, in time for its maiden voyage. Initially it was going to be docked in Baltimore so the workers could finished its construction, but I did not want any paparazzi or reporter finding out about this before I could show it to you, so in the end, we decided to finish its construction in international waters.” –London explained them. –“It cost my dad a fortune to make sure to make this part of the ocean a no-fly zone… I know this sounds a little paranoid, but believe me, there are secrets that are worth waiting, before they are revealed.”

Hearing that, everyone thought that London was really being a little paranoid. She was clearly treating that ship as if it was a nuclear submarine or another top-secret government project. Still, all of them knew London, and they knew that she was many things, but not insane or crazy, so they assumed she had a good reason for doing all that.

“Anyway, you’re probably wondering what this ship has to do with Maddie and you all in the first place, am I right?”

“As a matter of fact, yeah…” –Felicia said, as they followed London through a door in which you could read on a small metal plaque “Access to Atlantis Deck”.

“Well, first of all, I want to talk to you about this ship. She’s the biggest cruise ship ever built, and of course, the most expensive. I spared no expenses to build this baby… it cost me about 3 billion dollars to build all of this.” –the heiress declared.

“3 billion dollars?!” –Cody exclaimed.

“Yes, give it or take a couple of bucks. You could almost say that this is the Crown Jewell of the Tipton Empire. Its 755 meters long and 102 wide, weighs more than 200,000 tons, it has the capacity to receive more than 12000 passengers and it can reach speeds of 32 knots per hour.” –London told them all.

“If I’m not mistaken, in terms of length, this ship is more or less three times larger than Titanic, am I right?” –Stephen asked her.

“Yes, more or less, you’re right.” –London answered him. –“And just for the record, unlike Titanic, the S.S. Tipton isn’t unsinkable.”

This last statement made everyone giggle, even though it was no laughing matter.

“Good, I remember the movie about it, and the infamous line “It is unsinkable. God Himself could
not sink this ship!”… well, I guess God sure has a nasty sense of humour, because we all know what happened.” –Mark told them.

As they headed down the stairs into the Atlantis Deck, they saw just how beautifully decorated the walls were. They were all painted in light shades of marine blue, golden brown and marine green and that was not all. They had also been sculpted in order to look like they were the walls of an ancient temple. But the most impressive sight was yet to be seen. When they finally got to the bottom of the stairs, they saw an enormous atrium that had been equally designed, built and decorated to the walls they had seen. The floor had also been created to look quite old, making that whole deck look like a scenery from an Indiana Jones movie or a Tomb Raider videogame. Just like the main deck it was still unfinished, and the proof of it was there were still parts of this deck still in need to be painted… plus, there were dozens of workers scattered around, working as fast as they could to finish it.

“Far out!” –Liam thought to himself.

“When London decides to do something, she clearly does it with style, and doesn’t look at expenses to achieve it…” –Anastasia thought to herself.

“Every deck has been designed with a unique design, which means there are no two decks that look the same on this ship. This one is Deck B, but we call it the Atlantis Deck. Deck A, which is located one level above us is called the Neptune Deck and you can all imagine it has a very different look from this one.” –London explained. –“That way, it will also be impossible for a person to get lost in this place, because every deck will be easily recognized.” –the heiress declared proud of herself.

“I find that a little hard, given the size of this place. It’s like a floating city.” –Gennie thought to herself.

“It really looks amazing. I feel like we’re in what used to be Atlantis.” –Felicia said, as she pointed out the details on the walls and on the ceiling to her daughter, who like her was amazed by what she was seeing.

“Believe me, every single deck is unique and there are all kinds of places you can visit. The ship has gyms, discos, night clubs, casinos, countless restaurants and stores, cinemas, theatres, a zoo, an aquarium, a botanical garden, a stadium, swimming pools, bowling alleys, libraries, video arcades, and of course, it also has an opera house!” –London stated. It was clear to everyone that that ship had really everything a person would want or need.

All of that was amazing, Maddie had to admit. Her girlfriend had outdone herself this time. She never really expected London to come up with such a thing. At first look, the ship looked like the 8th wonder of the world, and it was most likely that. Still, questions were forming on the back of her head; the one most important being why had she bought the ship? Still, there was something else she had not reveal them yet.

“London, I have a question… this looks amazingly beautiful, but you’re not telling us the whole story, are you?” –Maddie asked her, as an impish smile appeared on her face. –“There’s something else about this ship, isn’t it? That’s why you called us here in the first place, right?”

“Okay, you got me…” –London admitted. –“… there really is another reason why I bought this ship, and I’ll show it to you all. But to do that, we need to get down to the deck below us, the Caribbean Deck; follow me please.”
Following London, they all took one of the elevators to the Caribbean Deck. When the doors opened they could not believe their own eyes. That deck had been completely built to look as if they were on a real island on the Bahamas or the Caribbean; from the walls that seemed to have been completely quilted with a giant holographic screen which displayed a beautiful blue sky with seagulls flying in circles. In fact, they could even hear the seagulls. They all assumed that the deck was equipped with a powerful surround sound system which let them all hear all kinds of noises you would hear when on a beach. The floor itself was paved to look like sand. But the thing that had caught their attention immediately was the unfinished yet colossal and spectacular world globe that had been built in the middle of the lobby where they were now. Even though it still had to be finished, you could definitely picture how it would look like when it was finished. It was a perfect duplicate of the Earth. Looking at it, they could not find anything that you would say it was wrong about it. The only thing they felt it was strange was a red line that kept glowing and it travelled all around the globe.

“Oops, I completely forgot that they hadn’t finished this lobby.” –London said, as she tried not to step on anything that was lying on the floor.

“It’s okay.” –Cody said, as he also tried not to step on anything.

“This deck as you can see it it’s all about the Caribbean… it will also have a section which will be inspired on the Pirates of the Caribbean franchise. I had to pay a small fortune to Disney for the rights to do that, you know?”

“If all the decks look this cool, I would never want to get out of this ship!” –Zack exclaimed.

“You and me…” –Mark agreed with Zack.

“Well, what do you think? This here is the main reason why I called you here and also the reason, why I bought this ship.” –London stated.

“I don’t think we’re following you, sweetie.” –Carey told her.

“Uh… do you want to rule the world by using this ship?” –Zack asked her. Only he would even come up with a question as crazy as that one.

“No! The line! The glowing line around the globe! It’s the itinerary of the cruise that I spent most of the summer coming up with!” –the heiress pointed to the red dotted line, which kept glowing. –“I want you to come with me on this cruise!”
As she finished saying those, everyone was caught by surprise… all, except Akita, who already knew of her daughter’s plan. Looking at them, she immediately knew that London had managed to get their attention and then some. Not even for a second did she ever considered the possibility of that not happening.

“Could you repeat what you just said, London?” –Anastasia asked her, to see if she had listened to her correctly.

“I said I want you all to come with me on this cruise.” –London repeated herself.

“But, what cruise are you talking about?” –Cody asked her.

“Oh, the First Annual Tipton Cruise entitled “Seven Seas Cruise”.” –London said. –“This ship’s maiden voyage will be a cruise around the world, stopping on the most important ports in the world, and I would love to have you all in it.”

“Okay, now I’m confused…” –Carey said.

“You’re inviting us to take cruise around the world?” –Maddie asked London. The blonde did not know how to react to that; she did not know if she should kiss the heiress or slap her on the face.

“For the umpteenth time, yes, Maddie, I am.” –London waved her head, stating the obvious.

She then pointed out to the globe, where you could see the red line on it being the route the ship would take, once it set sail from New York City.

“The route has already been set and as you can see it’s quite big. Will visit the following cities… New York… Dublin… Edinburgh… Amsterdam… Southampton… Lisbon… Fez… Barcelona… Rome… Venice… Vlorë… Athens… the island of Sorunlari… Istanbul… Cairo… Dubai… Madagascar… Mumbai… Kolkata… Kuala Lumpur… Macau… Hong Kong… Tokyo… Sydney… Antarctica… Easter Island… Honolulu… Los Angeles… Acapulco… Lima… Buenos Aires… Rio de Janeiro… Havana… Miami… and finally, will be back to New York. It will be quite the trip, right?”

The destinations were some of the most beautiful and incredible cities in the world. London had really come up with a set of destinations that not only were beautiful, but were also filled with rich History. Still, that was not enough to keep Maddie from telling her girlfriend something she felt it was vital in all that process.

“Huh, London, I don’t want to rain on your parade, but Princess, we can’t go on a cruise around the world… school will start in a few weeks.” –Maddie told her, feeling that she might have forgotten about the fact that they all had to attend school, and that the adults all had jobs.

“You don’t have to worry about school, Maddie. We can go to school here.” –London declared, not making much sense. Maddie immediately thought that the heiress was talking about the two of them, and the rest of their friends to be home-schooled, like it happened to some kids and teenagers. But if there was one thing Maddie had always told herself, was that she liked school and liked to be around with other kids her age, so she did not turn into a social outcast.
“London, if you’re even suggesting the idea of being home-schooled…” –Maddie started, when she was interrupted by London.

“No, no, no, no… I’m not talking about that Maddie.” –London told her, waving her head. She had clearly not even thought about or considered that option it seemed.

“Then, how do you want us to go to school so we can learn anything?” –Cody asked her.

“She probably thinks we can all get a helicopter which will take us to school every morning, wherever we are.” –Anastasia joked about it, whispering it to Mark’s ear.

“Like I said, we can all go to school here, in this ship… we just need to go three decks down.” –London said, confusing them all even more. –“Come on, I’ll show it to you.”

“I wonder what this girl is up to now.” –Stephen asked himself, as he followed the rest of group, as they entered the elevator.

With everyone aboard the elevator, London pushed the button to the F-Deck, where you could read Athena Deck. Knowing his History and Mythology, Cody knew that Athena was the Greek Goddess of Knowledge, Wisdom and Courage, so he immediately assumed that whatever was in that deck had to do with

As the doors opened they were baffled with something they were not expecting. The immense lobby, as well as the whole deck where they were now was a two-story deck had been decorated to look like a school lobby. Still, it did not look like an ordinary school lobby. This one looked more like the lobby of a college or the lobby of a fairy-tale palace. A magnificent marble staircase gave access to the upper deck, while on the downwards deck, two corridors led to the rest of the deck. The walls were marble white, while the Doric columns that seemingly supported the ceiling, were spread evenly were made out of blue rock-crystal, having been marvellously polished after being sculpted with maritime motifs, like seashells, corals, fishes and waves in it. You could see multiple bronze and marble busts of what they assumed to be Greek philosophers, next to the columns.

As for the ceiling, this one was beautiful and ostentatious. In it, you could see multiple constellations carved, making it similar in a few ways to the magnificent ceiling of the Grand Central Terminal in New York City. The beautiful silver linings contrasted wonderfully with the light-blue background, where you could see multiple constellations, with their names both in Latin and English written beneath them.

The floor was crystal white, where you could see multiple medieval representations of sea creatures and sea monsters imprinted on it in navy blue. They also noticed that at the centre of the lobby, imprinted on the floor was a beautiful coat of arms, similar in many ways to the coat of arms of the Tipton, but also incredibly different. This one had various tones of blue, from navy blue to aquamarine blue. It had a few nautical elements in it, such as an anchor, a bell and a wheel. A delicate stripe surrounded it, where you could read “Achieving Success and Excellence Together.”, and just above it was something else written: “Tipton’s High Seas School”. Plus, unlike the rest of the decks they had visited, so far, this one seemed to be the only one that was absolutely finished.

“I welcome you to Tipton’s High Seas School! The most advanced and well equipped school in the world.”

“A school?” –Zack asked. –“Just when I thought things were getting good, she comes and shows me
“this...” –he thought to himself, clearly upset, for he thought that he was going to get rid of school while attending that cruise.

“Okay, I wasn’t expecting this.” –Carey said.

“If you thought we were going to skip school or being home-schooled, well think again, everyone. This is the real heart and core of this whole cruise. I made sure that this was the first section of the ship to be completed, no matter what happened.” –London told them. –“Come, I’ll explain everything as we take a closer look to this place.”

Following the heiress, they all took their time to appreciate the beauty of everything that surrounded them. More and more they all considered that cruise ship not to be just a ship, but a magnificent work of art. Climbing the staircase, they made their way into the depths of that beautiful deck. Just like the lobby, the corridors were similarly decorated. The only thing that changed was the ceiling that was white and the floor, which was absolutely blue.

“Like I was saying, this double deck is the heart and core of this cruise. I can’t exactly remember if I already said this, but I’ll say it again… this cruise is not just a cruise around the world. It’s also my way to create a new kind of teaching.” –London said, as she closed in to Maddie, who smiled at her. –“Maddie here knows that I’ve never been really good in classes, and if it wasn’t for her help, I would have probably flunked every class I attended until now. So, I started to ask myself, why can’t I be as smart as her? That’s when it hit me… because I usually tend to get bored by teachers always explaining things that I can’t see with my own eyes. I made a little research and found out that I’m not the only one who thinks that. So, I decided to create a new way to teach people, and that is exactly what you’re seeing here. This school, will go to different places in the world, where the students will be able to experience first-hand certain things that we only read in books, visit monuments and cities… in sum, having the opportunity to learn better and faster, while having fun.”

Madeline was surprised by what she had heard. She had once told herself that London was smart in her own way, and that it was on school that she struggled to stay afloat. It seemed she had found a way to make it easier for her to learn… for her and for others.

“In here, it’s where the magic starts...” –she said as she opened one of the corridor doors.

As the door opened, they all saw a really well equipped classroom, the kind of which any teacher in the world dreams about. She sure had not looked at any expenses. You could say that that classroom and the rest of them in that ship were the most well equipped classrooms in the world.

“... The classes are all equipped with computers and laptops, one for each student, and they will be linked to the Internet and to a common software program, where teachers will be able to storage all kinds of documents, so that anyone can read them and download them. Plus, all students will have four huge libraries to visit in order to check and find books to help them.” –London explained them.

All of what she had just told them was just too much for them to process in just a few seconds. Even Cody, who considered himself to be one of the top students of Cheevers Middle and High School felt that he had not understand everything London had said.

“So, in other words, you created a school for people to attend to, while they travel around the world.” –Felicia commented.

“Yap, pretty much.”
“But, who will be these students you’re always talking about exactly, London?” –Anastasia asked her.

“Well, they will be us, a good part of the students from our school, and then, we will also have students that have been handpicked from schools all over the country, not to mention that there will also be a few foreign exchange students.” –she told her. –“Believe me, I wouldn’t have built this school just for me and Maddie and the rest of you guys.”

This was all absolutely perfect, but neither Liam nor Genevieve was exactly into it. They had not yet told anything, but they did not see themselves embarking on a cruise, and studying aboard that ship. Doing that would mean being away from their friends, and on Genevieve’s case, away from her boyfriend. Still, they would wait for the right moment to say what they thought.

“I got to handle it to you, this really is amazing.” –Mark said, as her imagined the whole place cramming with students.

“That’s exactly what I told her as she came up with this entire project, but she was always saying that it was not good enough, and that it was going to stink…” –Akita said, as she caressed her daughter’s pretty face. –“… she’s got more talent than she thinks, but sometimes, she just can’t see it.”

“I tell her the same thing…” –Maddie agreed, as she placed a peck on London’s lips. –“If she wants to do something, and she puts her mind to it, she can accomplish anything, no matter how crazy that thing is.”

“Blondie, don’t say that, you’re making me blush…” –London giggled, trying not to blush from all those compliments.

“I’m only saying the truth.” –Maddie told her, always with a cute smile on her face.

“And when can we be expecting this cruise to start?” –Irving interrupted the girls.

“Oh, in a couple of weeks, on September 15th, and as for how long the cruise will take, it will take about 10 months, give it or take a couple of days.” –London said. –“But, I’ll explain all that during breakfast. I don’t know about you all, but I haven’t eaten a single bite today.” –London joked about it.

The truth was that excluding the Martin twins and their mother Carey, none of them had had breakfast on that morning. Following the heiress once more, they returned to the main deck, to a section of it that was already completed, where a buffet had been assembled for them all, and the food was anything but normal.

Displayed in front of them were hamburgers, pizzas with every kind of ingredients and toppings on them, finger sandwiches, meatloaf with potatoes, French Fries, roast beef, pork chops with rice, rice pudding, veal with mashed potatoes, cauliflower and carrots, potato salad, among many other things, plus there were a few of exotic dishes like Norwegian salmon with boiled quail eggs, braised pineapple stuffed with peanuts and chestnuts, Russian caviar, fried Indonesian calamari, spinach and gouda quiche, melon with Italian prosciutto, among many other dishes. On the table there was also glass jars filled with milk, orange, mango, papaya and pineapple juice and ice tea. You could say that that buffet was not a breakfast buffet, but a buffet intended for a lunch or a dinner. Still, no one said a thing. Like always, London had planned things with great pomp and circumstance; still no one complained… it was just her way to do things.
Zack and Cody were the first ones to attack that immense buffet. Grabbing each a slice of pizza and two hamburgers each, they immediately started to eat them as if they had not eaten in days.

“Boys, chew your food…” –Carey told them. –“Especially you, Zack! You’re eating like a slob.”

“I’m not a slob…” –Zack told his mother, as he gulped down the slice of pizza he was eating. –“… I’m just hungry.”

Little by little, the rest of the group joined them in that buffet. For a few minutes the only sound you could hear was the sound of people praising just how good the food was. Some of them even decided to take their plates with them and sat on the lounge chairs that had already been placed there.

Both Maddie and London put a little bit of everything on a plate and gave it to Ivanna and Scampy, who immediately began to eat it. The girls smiled seeing their dogs as happy as they were right then.

The wind that was felt when they arrived had been reduced to nothing but a breeze now, and that made lying on those chairs feel like they were already on that cruise London was talking about.

“You know, if London really is determined to have her way with this, I guess I could get used to live in a cruise ship. What about you?” –Anastasia asked her boyfriend, as she ate another bite of the delicious potato salad.

“I guess I could also get used to this… I mean, I already lived in a tent, in a cabana, and even in a tipi, a cruise ship would be like being back at the Tipton in Boston, except that I would be surrounded by water, 24/7.” –Mark joked, as he finished cheese sandwich.

“You aren’t the only one… I still can’t believe that she’s going to take us on a cruise around the world.” –Anastasia said.

After all of them had eaten, Carey decided to take a moment to talk with London about her idea of taking them all in that cruise.

“London, sweetie, I know you meant us well when you thought about all this, but I’m afraid I can’t embark on this journey. I need to work, and I just can’t let the boys come alone.”

“Oh, you’re worried about that. Well, don’t you worry about it, Carey, I was only going to tell you this a little later, but you won’t be working at the Boston Tipton for the next 10 months. You’ll be working here, on the cruise ship.”

“Say what?!” –Carey exclaimed, puzzled about it.

“That’s right; this will be your new home and working place, Carey. You’ll have the same schedule you have now, a raise and your own private showroom.” –London smiled at her. –“And you won’t be the only one to come and work here. Arwin, Esteban, Muriel, Millicent and Moseby have also been transferred to the cruise ship. We’re going to need some of the best to work here, and you are definitely the best at what you do.”

“Oh, London, I’m not that good… I mean, I know I have a good voice, but there are plenty of singers out there who can sing ten times better than me.” –Carey said, trying to be modest about it. Her voice had always been her pride and joy, other than her sons, but she did not want people to know that. Plus, right then she was trying not to sound like she was about to burst with joy.
“Maybe, but none of them are the mother of two of my best friends. Plus, I like to hear you sing.” – London giggled.

“Oh, London, I don’t know what to say.” – Carey said, as she gave the heiress a big hug, trying not to cry because of all that happiness.

“Maybe you should also tell the others about what you plan to do for them to accompany us, darling.” – Akita approached them, having been hearing the conversation between her daughter and the twins’ mom.

Following her mom’s suggestion, London told everyone to gather around her. When she saw that everyone was there, she began explain how she was going to make sure that they could all embark on that journey around the world. She said that all of the adults would be paid the triple of their annual salary, and that she had managed to come up with deals with their bosses, so as to when they came back, they would have their jobs waiting for them.

Still, even though she had had all that trouble to make sure everything worked out, Miranda and Irving Fitzpatrick had had already took a decision... they were not going. While they were eating, they talked about what London had showed them and if they should really accompany them on that voyage. In the end, and after pondering about it, they had decided they would not go, but they would not prevent their children from making the trip.

“But why?” – London asked them, not understanding why they were not going to accept that offer.

“London, honey, you need to understand, we would love to do such a voyage with you, but, we can’t just leave our jobs in Boston. How would our colleagues at work feel if we let go of everything and then came back one year later, as if nothing had happened? It wouldn’t be fair for them, especially given our country’s current economy.” – Miranda told her. –“If this voyage was for only a couple of weeks, we would be delighted to accept it, but a whole year?”

“That is simply too much for us. We both have responsibilities to our jobs... Besides, grandma there prefers to go back to Boston, and we can’t just leave her alone, can we?” – Irving said, pointing out to Grandma Fitzpatrick, and then turned to his children. –“But, there’s no reason for Gennie, Liam and Maddie shouldn’t accompany you. If you wish to go on this voyage, you’ll have our full support.”

Hearing that, Maddie felt something piercing her heart. She was happy for making that journey, but she thought that she would be making it with her whole family. She asked herself why her brothers and herself had not been included on that discussion... after all, they were a family and decisions like those should be taken as a family, at least she thought. Still, she understood their reasons, and why they could not accept London’s offer. Plus, having her brother and sister by her side with her would be good.

But then, something else happened that stroke her right in the chest.

“Actually, I also can’t accept it.” – Genevieve declared.

“And me neither...” – Liam said, a little surprised by his sister Gennie decision.

This time it did not feel like her heart had been punctured by a glass shard. It fell more like it had been sliced into two. She wanted to say something, but her tongue did not obey to her commands. She had frozen right there with her siblings’ words.
“But why not?” –Miranda asked them both. –“This is a once in a life time opportunity.”

“I know mom, but I just can’t leave college like that… and more importantly, I can’t leave. If I did Jeffrey would get a new girlfriend!” –Genevieve answered her. Clearly, she was more worried about her love life than college.

“What about you, Liam? Why don’t you want to go on this trip?”

“Well… mostly it’s because I don’t want to leave my friends back in Boston. I mean, I know it sounds like a lame excuse, but if Gennie says that she has to stay because of college and her boyfriend and that’s a pretty good excuse, why should mine be less valid?”

“Nobody said it was less valid, Liam.” –Irving told him. -“Still, I think that you both don’t go, you’ll be walking away from something you might never be able to experience again in your lives.”

“Of course, we can’t force you to go on this cruise, but the decision is up to you.” –Miranda told them. Secretly she really wanted all her three children to go on this voyage.

The words from both Miranda and Irving echoed in the consciences of both Liam and Genevieve. They were right about telling them they should take that trip, but they were also right about the part where they told them that they could not force them to do something they did not want to do. Taking a moment to reflect on what they had just been told, and what they really thought about it, they both came to a conclusion.

“Mom… dad… I know you want us to go on this trip because it will be good for us to know different places, different cultures and different people, but… like you once said, we need to know our priorities and my priority is college and Jeffrey.” –Genevieve told both her parents.

Liam took a couple more seconds to think about what he was going to answer.

“The same thing goes for me. I admit it, this place is amazing, and I’ll probably never have a chance to go around the world like this one again, but, I’ll be honest, going around the world without your best buddies or without you two, which is something you should share, it’s not that fun. I rather stay in Boston, where I can see my friends every day and being with you.” –Liam told them, being truth about the fact that he would miss his parents.

Hearing this, Maddie felt like she had been betrayed by her own family. No one was coming with them on that amazing trip, and that just felt wrong to her. Storming out of there, tears began to roll down her face as Maddie kept running, leaving everyone to ask themselves what had just happened. All she was feeling right then, was just too much for anyone to take, and she did not want anyone seeing her crying.

Puzzled about what happened, asked themselves why did the blonde ran away.

“What happened?” –Zack asked, after seeing Maddie storming off like that.

“I don’t know…” –Cody told his brother. Just like his brother, he had been busy looking around the main deck to even noticing the small discussion between the Fitzpatricks.

As for the group who had been listening to the Fitzpatricks, almost immediately felt that the reason why she had stormed off like that had because of what they had been talking about.
“Do you think it was because of what we’re talking about?” – Irving asked the rest of his family.

“Maybe…” – Genevieve agreed.

“I think someone should go and talk with her.” – Akita said.

“I’ll go talk with her.” – Miranda said.

“No… I think I should be the one to talk with her.” – London declared. – “I think that right now she doesn’t want to talk with any of you.” – the heiress told them. Something told her that Maddie’s family had unintentionally hurt her, and right then she needed to talk with someone who did not share any blood links with her. – “Give me 10 minutes to look for her and talk with her.”

Saying that, London quickly followed on the direction Maddie had run off. She told herself that Maddie could not have gone far, because there were workers still assembling the main deck, blocking the path to anyone who tried to cross onto sections that were still unsafe and unprepared to receive people.

It only took her a couple of minutes to find Maddie. The blonde was seated on one of the many benches that had been assembled on the main deck, crouching with her hands on her face. London immediately assumed that she was crying, and as she closed in on her, she heard her sobbing.

Closing in on her really gently so as not to scare her, London sat right next to her. For a brief second she asked herself what she should ask the blonde; she did not want to upset her or make her cry even more.

“Uh… Maddie, are you alright?” – London asked her. – “Damn it! What kind of question is that? Of course she isn’t alright, otherwise she wouldn’t be crying, you idiot!” – she thought, cursing herself for asking her that question.

Maddie did not say a word immediately; she just kept crying and sobbing, so London decided to give her some time before asking her another question.

Finally, the blonde stopped crying and took a deep breath, just before removing her hands from her face. Her make-up was all smudged around her eyes and her eyes were all red. Still, to London’s eyes, even when she cried, Maddie looked beautiful.

“It’s not fair…” – Maddie said.

“What’s not fair, Blondie?” – London asked her, trying to understand the reason why she was crying in the first place.

“It’s not fair… it’s… (sob)… not fair that you had all that work trying… (sob)… to make it possible… (sob)… for them to come… (sob)… with us on this trip, and now… (sob)… they just say that they’re not coming!” – Maddie said, as the tears kept rolling down her face. Judging by the tone of the voice, she was not just sad, she was mad, if not furious about her parents and her siblings.

As she finished saying that, Maddie buried her face on her hands again, and began to cry once more. Seeing her like that, London gathered the sobbing girl in her arms, holding her tight, gently rocking her. As she did it, Maddie’s words echoed in her head… London immediately understood that she
was crying not because she was mad or furious about the decision of everyone in her family to not do that trip, she was sad because thought she would have them nearby to experience something as exciting as that trip.

“There, Maddie, there… everything is going to be alright.” –London told her.

“No…(sob)... it won’t… (sob)...” –Maddie sobbed.

She waited for Madeline to stop crying before saying anything else. By now she knew that crying was sometimes the best thing to do. Letting out all of the bad feelings was something everyone should do when they were feeling angry, sad, alone or scared… it somehow helped people to gain courage or to face what was in front of them with a new perspective.

Finally, when she stopped crying, she handed her a handkerchief and then looked her in the eyes and said.

“Maddie… I don’t want to tell you this, but… I think you’re being a little selfish.” –London finally told her. She did not like to say things like that to Maddie, but it was the truth. She was only thinking about herself.

Upon hearing this Maddie felt annoyed and upset by what she had heard coming out of London’s mouth, but did not say a word. She wanted to hear what else London had to say to her.

“I’m really sorry about what I just told you, but it’s the truth… I know you wanted to have your family right next to you as we circle the globe on this ship, but have you thought that their reasons aren’t selfish, and that you are the one being selfish? Your parents want to stay is Boston because they feel that they have an obligation to their work and to the people who work with them. They don’t want other people to think that just because their younger daughter is dating one of the richest girls in the world they’ll take advantage of it. As for your sister, she’s choosing to stay in Boston because of her boyfriend… because of the one she loves. Don’t tell me you wouldn’t do the same if you were in her shoes? And as for your little brother, he doesn’t want to go because he fears he will miss both your parents and his friends.” –London told her with the sweet, yet serious voice. –“I know you’re thinking that they’re being selfish, but if they were selfish, they wouldn’t even let you come with us; they would just force you to go with them back to Boston. You’re the one who has told me that sometimes we can’t have things our way, but that doesn’t mean that’s something bad… It just means that we have to be strong.”

London’s words hit Maddie right in the core of her conscience. The brunette was right about calling her selfish… she was really just thinking about herself, and had forgotten about what the others thought. On that moment, a sense of shame fell upon her heart. Jealousy had taken the best of her and clouded her judgment, and now she was feeling awful about it.

Sobbing a little more she buried her face on London’s chest, this time crying because of the shame for her thoughts. London just hugged her as tightly as she could, kissing her hair and whispering soft and tender words to her ears.

“There, Maddie, my sweet bumblebee, there… everything’s alright, everything’s alright.” –London whispered to her, trying not to cry too. If she began to cry, it would make Maddie feel even bluer, and that was her last wish right then. She just kept whispering tender words and combing her beautiful golden hair with her fingers.

When her tears ceased, she lift her head up, looked London in the eyes and kissed her. It was a
simple kiss; their tongues meeting for just a brief second. It had not been like the passionate kisses they shared when they were making love or when they felt they needed to show just how much they meant to each other... it had been a kiss of friendship, the simplest kind of love one could nurture for anyone. Still, regardless of looking like a simple kiss, it was a kind of kiss only true friends could give to one another.

“Thanks, Princess.” –Maddie smiled at the Asian-beauty, as she hugged her with all strength. –“Thanks for reminding me, that there’s more than just my will. I’m glad I have you by my side in these situations.” –she gave her a playful kiss on London’s nose.

“Well, I had an awesome teacher, you know?” –London chuckled about it. –“But seriously, are you okay? I don’t want my special girl to feel like something is wrong.”

“I’m fine, Princess, I’m fine.” –Maddie assured her. –“I guess I just needed to take that out my system, and well, I’ll need to get used to the idea that I’m going to do this trip alone, without my family.”

“Well, you might not have your family around you, but believe me when I say that you won’t be alone, because I’ll be here and the rest of the gang too. Believe me; you’ll be having so much fun you won’t even have the time to remember they aren’t around.” –London tried to ease the situation. –“Besides, I’ll make sure they come to visit us during Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, and of course your birthday, silly. Wherever this ship is on the globe, I promise you that they will be here to celebrate those days with you.”

“You really have a heart of the purest gold, London.” –Maddie said, as she kissed her, this time making sure that left the heiress breathless before breaking the kiss.

“Whoa… now that was kiss…” –London said, as she regained her breath, always with a smile on her face. It was obvious that she loved when Maddie kissed her like that. –“But don’t forget that besides being made of gold, it also has a really, really big diamond encrusted on it.”

“Okay, okay, with a very, very big diamond encrusted on it, silly.” –Maddie cajoled, planting another peck on London’s lips.

“Thanks, Blondie…. Well, now that you’re feeling better, we’re going to straight up these clothes, clean this smudged make-up and put on one of those big smiles that I love in you, and we’re going back there and tell that everything is okay.” –London said, as she began to remove all traces of smudged make-up of Maddie’s face.

In a matter of seconds, Maddie was as good as new. Looking at her, no one would even think that she had been crying earlier. Smiling at her, London grabbed her hand and they both started walking back to where the rest of the group was.

The first ones to greet the girls were Ivanna and Scampy who ran towards them and began to yap eagerly, happy to see their owners. The girls both pick them up, and held them in their arms, as they approached the rest of the group.

“Sorry about that… I guess I was just feeling a little bit emotional.” –Maddie apologized to everyone.

“Maddie, baby-girl, are you sure you’re fine?” –Irving asked his daughter, worried that something might be wrong with her.

“Yap, I’m sure. I’m alright, dad.” –Maddie accented. –“I’m just really excited to go on this trip. Too
bad you won’t be coming, though.”

“Yes, about that…”

“Don’t worry about it. I understand why you won’t come. Like grandma says, we all have to follow our own path. You have to follow yours, and I have to follow mine.” – Maddie told them with such an adult attitude that surprised London. The heiress, who had moments earlier seen the blonde cursing the fact her family was not coming with her, was amazed by how quickly she had put everything regarding that matter behind her back. – “But believe me when I say that you won’t get rid of me that easily. I’ll still call you every day and I want you in this ship visiting me during my birthday and the holidays.” – she told them; this time with a more carefree voice… the kind of voice it characterized her.

Hearing her say that, every member of the Fitzpatrick family hugged her at the same time, making her laugh and giggle from all that affection. It was obvious that they were all happy for Maddie.

Looking at them all, London felt that now, more than ever, that trip around the world was the greatest present she could give to all her friends, and more importantly, to the girl she loved with all her heart and soul.
Ellis Island

The visit to the S.S. Tipton had made everyone in the gang eager for the day of their departure, of what would be their greatest adventure yet.

The Martins, as well as the Stevens and the Fontaines all went back to Boston to get things ready for their newest adventure, intending to come back to New York a week later. They had so many things to take care of like making sure they had everything they needed for their 10 month trip around the world. They would need to see what clothes they would take, what objects, like books and laptops they would take with them and of course, seeing if everything was alright with their passports.

As for the Fitzpatricks, they stayed in New York, wanting to spend as much time as they could with Maddie, given they would not be seeing her every day for a very long time. London told Maddie to take them to visit the town, because it would give them a reason to enjoy themselves while staying there; it would not make sense to just have them spending their time in the hotel, when they had an entire city filled with landmarks, museums and other places to visit.

On the first days, London did not accompany them. She said that she needed to take care of a couple of more things regarding the cruise. That said, she spent most of her time on the phone, talking and discussing with countless people. The only times she would let go of the phone was for her morning jog on Central Park, accompanied by Maddie, who saw that as an opportunity to be alone with the heiress, even if it was just for an hour.

During their morning jog, the blonde tried her best to know exactly what London was cooking up on the cruise ship, but the heiress told her that was nothing important, stating that it were just a last minute stuff regarding the decorating works on the ship, or a trial regarding the speed of the engines on open sea.

"It's just one of those thingies that you don't need to worry about, but everyone tells you it's important." –London told her constantly.

Maddie said nothing, but she knew London was not telling her the whole truth… there was something more she was up to; she could see on the Asian beauty's eyes. She should know; she was a pro when it came to read London. Still, instead of insisting on the matter, the blonde decided not to think about the subject. If London was really up to something, she would tell her sooner or later.

A week and a half later, Zack and Cody, as well as the rest of the gang all came back to New York. Checking in on the New York's Tipton, they would stay there until the day of the ship's departure. With them, also came Zack and Cody's sweet hearts, Max and Barbara, who just like the rest, had also been invited to go on the cruise and attend the Tipton High Sea's School. Just like their boyfriends, they were also extremely excited about the whole thing, especially Max who had never thought that one day she would ever get the opportunity to make a cruise around the world.

Needless to say that Zack, Cody, Barbara and Max kept fantasizing about all the places they would see and the people they would meet on that trip, and the same could be said for Mark and Anastasia, who had already, came up with plans of their own, of what they were planning to do during that trip. As for the grown-ups, they were also excited to go on that trip, even if they did not show it as clearly as the twins and the others.

In order to help them calm their enthusiasm regarding the trip, London took Maddie shopping for a
whole new wardrobe, accompanied by the others. Along with Anastasia they would enter a shop and spend a whole afternoon in it, trying on everything, from the shirts to the skirts, not mention the shoes, the gloves, the scarves, the hats and many other things.

"Look at this shirt!" –London showed the girls, holding the beautiful baby-blue and white short-sleeved shirt on her hands. –"Isn't it the cutest thing ever?!"

"It really is pretty… but this here beats it, Princess." –Maddie told her with a grin on her face, as she showed them a pink wool sweater with a smiley on it.

"It looks good, but this one here blows yours into smithereens." –Anastasia told them, as she showed them a black t-shirt with an image of Twilight Sparkle from My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic stamped on it.

"No fair! It's illegal to show clothes with cute cartoon characters!" –London told her, always with a smile on her face, making both Maddie and Anastasia to laugh.

As the girls kept seeing what were the cutest and best clothes in that shop, one of Barbara's favourite songs began to play on the shop's speakers, All That She Wants from Ace of Base.

She leads a lonely life
She leads a lonely life

"Oh my! I just love this song!" –Anastasia exclaimed.

"No way, I thought I was the one who loved the 80's in this group!" –Maddie exclaimed, a little surprised by Anastasia fondness of that song. The blonde knew that she fancied many kinds of music, but she had always thought that her musical tastes were a little more turned to alternative, dark rock and metal. Not in a million years would have she thought that this spiffy song would be among her favourites.

"Challenge you to sing it with me… if you think you can keep up with me!" –Anastasia challenged Maddie right there.

"This was my cell phone ringtone for almost a year. I know this song's lyrics as the palm of my hand… you're on!" –Maddie said, accepting the challenge, starting to sing right that moment.

When she woke up late in the morning light
And the day had just begun
She opened up her eyes and thought
Oh what a morning
It's not a day for work
It's a day for catching tan
Just lying on the beach and having fun
She's going to get you

"The only thing that we need now is someone with a camera to start filming you." –London told them both, giggling.

"Come on, London! Sing it too!" –Anastasia also challenged her.

"Forget it!" –she shot at them. –"You're not getting me to sing this song."
"Come on, London… you're not going to stay there watching singing this and having fun, are you?"
–Anastasia asked her.

"Leave her, Anastasia, London is too good and too important to be seen singing a song she doesn't like in public…" –Maddie playfully teased about her girlfriend, obviously trying to get her to join them.

"Oh, am I? I'll show you who's too important!" –London shot back at them, giggling, joining them.

All that she wants is another baby
She's gone tomorrow boy
All that she wants is another baby
All that she wants is another baby
She's gone tomorrow boy
All that she wants is another baby
All that she wants - all that she wants

So if you are in sight and the day is right
She's the hunter you're the fox
The gentle voice that talks to you won't talk forever
It is a night for passion
But the morning means goodbye
Beware of what is flashing in her eyes
She's going to get you

For someone who did not want to sing the song, London really sang it like a professional. In fact, Maddie knew that she knew the lyrics and that she had the voice to sing it, after all, it had been Maddie herself who had taught her how to sing properly, something the heiress always had wanted to, but had never had the proper teacher to show her how to carry a tune, much less to sing.

"London progressed so much in so little… she always had a wonderful voice, but was a disaster when it came to sing. Sure, there were a couple of songs she could sing without her voice betraying her, but that was it. Now, she can sing just about anything, without hesitating… I'm really proud of her." –Maddie thought to herself, proud of London's musical accomplishments, but also of her own skills as a teacher, as she looked at London, who kept singing.

All that she wants is another baby
She's gone tomorrow boy
All that she wants is another baby
All that she wants is another baby
She's gone tomorrow boy
All that she wants is another baby
All that she wants is another baby
She's gone tomorrow boy
All that she wants is another baby
All that she wants - all that she wants
When the song finally ended, the three girls kept humming it for a couple of more seconds, and then started to laugh about it.

"So, who's too important to sing that song?" –London asked Maddie.

Instead of answering her, Maddie just approached London, placed her hands around her neck and pulled her into a kiss, which lasted more than just a couple of seconds. When their broke the kiss, the blonde smiled and told her:

"You are… but even being as important as you are, you still sang it."

"You girls are impossible…" –Anastasia told them, as they all started to laugh once again.

As for the rest of the gang, while waiting for the girls to make all of their shopping, decided to buy a couple of things for themselves too. Dividing themselves into two groups, Cody, Barbara and Mark entered in all the bookshops that existed in that shopping mall, while Zack, accompanied by Max paid a little visit to a sports shop.

While inside one of the bookshops, Both Cody and Barbara had found a few books they had wanted to buy for some time, while Mark grabbed all the foreign novels he could lay his hands on. He intended to read them all, in order to also practice his knowledge of other languages, something he felt would come in handy during their trip.

"Look at this… Tolstoy, Dumas, Aristotle, Socrates… all of them for half the price." –Cody said, as he grabbed one of each.

"Who says culture can't be cheap, really needs to check out the prices on these books." –Barbara told Cody.

"I see that you have found something you like. Still, I bet that most of those books will exist in one of the ship's libraries so you can check them out. You should buy something that will most likely not exist in it."

"Like what? Comic books or graphic novels?" –Barbara asked him sarcastically.

"For example, but not only that. You could also buy foreigner novels in their original language, which I believe me will be a lot harder to find in any library London is assembling in that ship." –Mark told her, with a little smirk on his face. –"Now, if you guys excuse me, I'm going to check if they have the latest edition of The Necronomicon Ex Mortis."

"You do know that book is a fake, right? There isn't a real book with that name… it was created by H.P. Lovecraft back in 1922, as the basis for one of his stories and was later used as the base for movies such as Evil Dead and The Army of Darkness..." –Cody told him.

"... and comic books and other related media, yeah, I do know that… but as a writer I collect all kinds of texts, even those that are entirely fictional and were written just to promote other works." –Mark told him. –"Besides, the edition I'm looking for has one of the coolest covers I've ever seen." –he said, making that observation regarding it.

At the same time, inside a sports shop, Zack and Max were both trying to choose what they should buy. Unlike the rest of the girls, Max was not into shopping until dropping. She considered herself a tomboyish girl, mostly because of her love for sports, and her hate for a few juvenile romances,
which tried to capture the attention of people, by giving them a love story which was too perfect for being real.

There was only a love story she knew that was close enough to those written by authors whose only objective is to make young girls like her fall in love by the perfect man, and that one was Maddie and London's romance, and even that one had its ups and downs, like everything in life.

It was this attitude that had captured Zack's heart, when he met Max. She was like his female version. They shared similar tastes; acted much the same way… in sum, they were perfect for each other, and they both thanked every day for being a part of each other's life.

"Hey, Zack, catch!" –Max exclaimed, as she threw a fastball to her boyfriend, who barely managed to catch it.

"Whoa, girl, that it easy!" –Zack told her, as he caught the baseball. –"This ain't a baseball match." –he joked.

"By now you should know that as long as I have a ball, I'm a danger to you, even if we're not in a match." –she joked, as she closed in on Zack, and gave him a big hug.

Zack was expecting a kiss, but he should know better that Max was kinda shy, and only kissed him when they were alone or somewhere where she would feel no one was watching her. Still, he hugged her back, hoping that one day she would lose that shyness and kiss him in public.

"So, do you know if our new school is going to have a basketball, or football, or baseball or hockey team?" –Max asked Zack, because he had been talking with London about it.

"London told me that she was planning on having two mixed teams of basketball, football, soccer, and ice hockey simultaneously, so they can play against one another every week." –Zack told Max, as he examined a baseball glove he had grabbed a few seconds earlier.

"Only London would come up with an idea like that, but I like it. I can't wait to try out for the basketball and ice hockey teams. I feel like I'm going to eradicate the competition this year." –Max told him, chuckling; really excited about the news he had just given her. –"And what about you and the rest of our gang? Are you going to try out for any of the teams?"

"Are you kidding me? Of course I am. I'm going to try out for the ice hockey team." –Zack told her.

"Oh… I was hoping you would try for one of the basketball teams along with me." –Max declared.

"You know that I'm good at it, but I'm too short for being a basketball player." –Zack told her.

"That's got nothing to do with it. I'm just a few inches taller than you, and you don't see me saying that I'm too short for being a basketball player." –Max told him.

"Yeah, but you're way better than I am. What you don't have in height, you have in ability with the ball. You're like the female version of Mugsy Bogues." –Zack told her, being truth about it. Max was really better than him in basketball.

When he compared his girlfriend to the legendary Mugsy Bogues, who became famous not only for his agility and speed, but also because he was the shortest basketball player to ever play in the NBA, he was really being honest.
"You know that you're being stupid for saying those things..." –she told him. –"... but you're also being very sweet." –she smiled, planting a kiss on his nose, making him chuckle.

A few more days went by, and with the 15h of September getting closer and closer, the S.S. Tipton finally docked, getting ready for its grand departure. All it needed now was for it to be loaded with the passengers' luggage that had been sent earlier, as well as everything they would need until they reached Belfast. Needless to say that when that colossal ship entered the Hudson, already every last reporter, journalist, photographer and gossip blogger was trying to find out everything they could about the ship.

Everyone stayed in the hotel, so as to not be disturbed by the media and the paparazzi; not to mention to finish packing their things, before they were sent aboard the ship.

But before they embarked on that wonderful trip, they still had one last stop to make. London spent almost two days planning it all in secret, but it was going to be something that would make her girlfriend extremely happy.

On their last day in New York City, London had a surprise not only for Maddie, but for the rest of the Fitzpatricks as well. Borrowing her mom's private helicopter, she told them she had a surprise for them. As they all got in the helicopter, Maddie asked her what she was up to, but London told her that she had to wait, as a devious smile appeared on her face.

The helicopter took off and headed south, flying over Manhattan and making its way to New York Bay. They all thought the trip was going to be long, but they were proven wrong when the helicopter began to descend towards the ground.

Now, Maddie knew that the city of New York itself had been built on 4 different islands, but there were two small islands where houses had not been built, because the islands were too small for that purpose. One was Liberty Island; where the Statue of Liberty was, and since she could not see the statue anywhere, she immediately guessed where they were... they were on Ellis Island.

As the helicopter's wheels touched the ground and the rotors stopped working, Maddie asked London what they were doing there.

"Can you tell me what we're doing in Ellis Island, Princess?" –Maddie asked London with a smile on her face.

"Like I said, silly, I have something to show you all." –London answered her. –"We couldn't leave New York before I showed you all this." –the heiress stated, as she opened the helicopter's door, letting the cool marine air inside the aircraft. The fresh sea air felt amazing on that moment to Maddie. It transported her mind just for a brief moment into somewhere far from there.

After disembarking, London approached the pilot and told him something which none of the Fitzpatricks heard. When she came back, she signalled them to follow her. Maddie quickly catch up to her.

"What exactly do you have in store for me and my family this time, London?" –Maddie asked her, trying to find out what was her plan.

"You'll just have to wait... there's a person here that I want you to meet and... oh, there she is!"
London immediately pointed to a redhead woman in her mid-thirties standing next to a few bushes. She was dressed in a navy-blue business suit, matching stilettos and was carrying some sort of file in her hands. She immediately smiled at London, and approached the group.

"Good morning, Miss Tipton. I see that you are as sharp as a clock… I like a person who appreciates punctuality. And this is Miss Fitzpatrick and her family; a pleasure to meet you all." –she told them, as she shook hands with everyone. –"I guess, Miss Tipton has told you why you're here and what I'm about to show you."

"Actually, no she hasn't." –Maddie answer her, deadpanned.

"Oh, I see... well, then, I better tell you then. But first things, first, my name's Alicia Mayview, and if you'll please follow me, I'll be happy to answer that and other questions you'll have." –she said, as she began to walk in the opposite direction from where they had come. –"Like I said, Miss Tipton did not tell you what you're doing here, but she had a good reason; after all what I'm about to show you all is something that it took a lot of work from me and my colleagues to find.

"And what exactly is that?" –Irving asked her.

"Let me answer that question of yours with another question. Do you know why Ellis Island was so important during the late 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th century?" –Alicia asked them.

Then, it hit Maddie... it was such a trivial thing that she should have remembered about it as soon as she identified the island.

"Because it was the gateway for most immigrants that came from Europe!" –Maddie exclaimed.

"That is correct." –Alicia declared.

"Of course, if this was where the immigration inspection was made, then we're here to see something regarding our ancestors." –Maddie declared.

"Once again, you're right, Miss Fitzpatrick."

"That's my Maddie... she always gets it right." –London smiled, as she wrapped her left arm around the blonde's shoulders, pulling Maddie to her, making her smile.

Then, from behind a beautiful garden, with tall beautiful trees, in front of them appeared a huge building. You could definitely see that it was an old building, because of its French renaissance structure in red bricks with limestone trim. Everyone recognized it either from a picture they had seen in their History book, or from a TV report they had once seen.

"Well, then, I welcome you to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum." –Alicia told them, as they approached the building, which seemed even more remarkable, each step they got closer to it. With its four towers and its architecture it resembled more to a small palace, or maybe a monastery that you would find in France, than a government building.

The place looked deserted which did not surprise them since it was a Sunday, and most museums were closed. They all immediately assumed that London was also behind that.

"As you can imagine, this wasn't the first building that housed the inspection station. The first federal immigrant inspection station was an enormous three-story tall structure, with out-buildings, built of
Georgia pine, containing all of the amenities that were thought to be necessary for the job the inspectors needed to do.” –Alicia said, as she opened the main door, and entered, followed by the rest of the group, who was now hearing every last word. –"Needless to say that that building no longer exists, as it was destroyed by a fire in 1885, most likely due to faulty wiring. Then, in 1897, the construction of this building you see started. The design belongs to the architects Edward Lippincott Tilton and William A. Boring and it opened on December 17, 1900."

Once inside, they saw themselves on the Main Hall. That room itself was quite impressive, not because of its size, but by the way it had been decorated. The walls were all dark beige, with the exception of the columns that supported the second floor walkway, which had its upper half were painted white. The ceiling was covered with marble tiles, contrasting with the brick-red tile polished floor. On the ceiling several antique chandeliers hanged. As for the windows they had a semi-circular shape, similar to the one where the entrance door was inserted in. On the walkways' you could see two American Flags hanging, but these were not ordinary American Flags. If one would look at them and counted the stars on them, they would notice that it had 48 stars, instead of 50, being the version of the flag that was used from 1912 to 1959, before the inclusion of the stars representing the states of Alaska and Hawaii.

"In this museum, it's our work not only to show new generations how their ancestors came to this country, most of them in search of a better life, but also to find out about the roots of their families. You probably are wondering why we do this... well, sometimes stories and facts about the previous generation disappear, are omitted for multiple reasons, or simply get lost in the sands of time and the next generation doesn't get to know them. That's why this museum was built in the first place, to allow people to get the chance to know who their ancestors were, where they came from, when they arrived, and most importantly, how they looked like." –Alicia explained them. –"But before we proceed with the reason of your visit here, does anyone have any questions regarding this building or the museum itself?"

"Well, I actually have one. Just how many immigrants passed through this room?" –Miranda asked her.

"Well, the number isn't an exact number, but we safely assume that more than 12 million immigrants passed through this hall during the years this place worked as an immigration station."

"Why is that the US flags have 48 stars instead of 50? Did you buy them at a discount store, where they sold you defective flags?" –London asked playfully. She knew of course that they were not defective, but still felt the need to ask it, as if it was some sort of joke.

"Oh, that... You aren't the only one who asks that. The reason why the US flags you see hanging have 48 stars, instead of 50 it's because during the time period this island served as an immigration station, the official flag was the version that you see, so no, they aren't defective or anything,.."

"Is it true that the immigrants were sometimes forced to take on new names against their wishes?" –Liam asked Alicia. He had heard that countless times and had seen it on various television series, but never knew if it was true or just an urban myth.

The question obviously made Alicia giggled upon hearing Liam asking it.

"Of course not. That is just an urban myth that has been kept alive by television and countless books and novels which use it as if it was an historical fact. In fact, the inspectors used the passenger lists given to them by the steamship companies to process each foreigner. These were the sole immigration records for entering the country and were prepared not by the U.S. Bureau of
Immigration but by steamship companies such as the Cunard Line, the White Star Line, the North German Lloyd Line, the Hamburg-Amerika Line, the Italian Steam Navigation Company, the Red Star Line, the Holland America Line, and the Austro-American Line. As for the Americanization of many immigrant families' surnames was for the most part adopted by the family after the immigration process, or by second or third generation of the family...." –Alicia kept explaining it all to Liam, and the others, who were listening to her.

Needless to say that as she kept talking, she completely lost Liam. What he thought was going to be something that would make him laugh, turned into something similar to a History class. Maddie giggled when she looked at her brother's face, and immediately told herself that she was going to miss his brother's antics.

"I'm really going to miss that little rascal..." –Maddie thought to herself, smiling.

"And now, if you'll follow me, I'll show you exactly what we found out about your family." –Alicia signalled them to follow her.

Following her, they all entered in a long corridor. It was not a scary looking corridor, but the fact that there was very little illumination, made them a little uncomfortable. London quickly wrapped her right arm around Maddie's waist, and gently pulled toward her.

After awhile, Alicia stopped and opened a door, which led them to a smaller room. This one was really no bigger than a class room. It was filled with showcases, where you could see numerous paper sheets on display, and at the centre, there was a huge touch screen table, the kind of which you see on NCIS: Los Angeles, which is equipped with Microsoft Surface. Approaching it, she touched it and immediately it turned on.

"Well, here we are. This is where the magic happens... the museum has records from everyone that passed through here, including photos. Tell me, does anyone of you know the name of the first member of your family to come to America?" –Alicia asked the Fitzpatricks, as they gathered around the table.

It took them a couple of seconds to realize that none of them knew... none of them, except for old grandma.

"If my memory is right, it was my grandfather, Seamus Fitzpatrick. He was one of the first Fitzpatricks to ever come to this country, back in 1901."

Maddie immediately remembered about her grandma telling her stories about her great-great-grandfather, and just how cheerful he always was about everything. Even when things got rough or did not go according to what it was planned; he always looked on the bright side of things, something unusual for a Fitzpatrick, whom since they could remember, had always been unable to do it.

"You're absolutely right. Seamus Fitzpatrick was the first of the Fitzpatrick clan to come to America. But, he did not come alone... he came with his brothers Andrew and William Fitzpatrick, not to mention of course, his sons and daughters. Three sons and one daughter, whose names were Matthew, Thomas, Kevin and Catherine," –Alicia told them. –"They all came from a small town in the south of Ireland called Blarney, just a few miles from the city of Cork."

When she heard the name of her great-grandmother, a small tear ran down from Maddie's eyes. Looking at her, London immediately understood why that happened. The blonde had not told
anyone, except to the heiress about what had really happened while she was in a coma.

When everyone asked her how it had been, she lied to them by saying that she did not remember a thing. But to London, she had told her the truth. She told her about how she had seen her great-grandmother Catherine, and what she had told her when she was in Limbo. It was something that only a person who was as close to her, as London would understand, and that's why it was their little secret... a secret they would keep between them, until the day they would tell it to their children. Smiling at her, she grabbed her left hand and squeezed it, showing to the blonde that she knew what she was thinking about right then.

Touching the table's screen, it immediately showed them an old photo that was amplified so they could see it better. The photo was dated August 27th 1901 and it showed them a group of people, surrounded by a few suitcases and bundles. Touching the screen once again, the names of each of the elements on the photo appeared, revealing who was who.

"And here we have, the original American Fitzpatricks, the first ones who came to our country." – Alicia told them. –"At the middle you can see the Fitzpatrick brothers; Andrew on the middle, and then Seamus and his wife Mary on the left and William on the right. As for the children, standing up we have Matthew and Kevin, who were 9 and 10 respectively, and sat on the ground, right next to their parents are the youngest, Catherine who was 5 and Thomas who was 7." – she pinpointed to them. –"Every immigrant was photographed, and in the case of families, they were photographed all together. Most of them had never seen a photograph before in their lives, and that's why they were given it, as a token of friendship, or if you prefer, one of the many privileges of becoming an American citizen."

"I can easily imagine what a shock it must have been seeing themselves on a photograph." – Irving told himself.

"It's amazing, Grandma Catherine looked just like me when were 5." – Maddie thought to herself, remembering the photo that her father's friend, Patrick O'Brannigan had showed her and London when they visited his pub in Philadelphia a few months before. –"I guess good looks run in the family."

"I guess good looks run in the family." – London thought to herself, sharing Maddie's exact same thoughts.

"But, you're probably wondering what happened to them after got to the United States, aren't you?" – Alicia asked them, even though she believed that the Fitzpatricks themselves knew at least a couple of things regarding their ancestors' fate.

"Well, we know that our great-great-grandfather was a blacksmith in the old country and that he managed to open a small shop in Pittsburgh, which he managed with his two brothers." – Liam answered her.

"Yeah, but not for too long... remember what great-grandma Catherine told us? That great-great-grandfather Seamus had a big fight with his brothers and that they each went their separate ways and never spoke to each others' again?" – Genevieve asked him.

"Not really... you know that I always fell asleep after she began to talk about these things." – Liam answered her.

"Well, I don't know if your parents or your grandmother know about this part of your family's
history, but if they don't mind, I may be able to answer that." –Alicia declared, looking at their parents and their grandmother, who all waved her that she could tell them. –"Well, then, Seamus Fitzpatrick and his wife Mary, along with their four children left Pittsburgh and established themselves in Boston, where you still live. Your great-great-grandfather opened up a new shop. As for his sons, Kevin, Matthew and Thomas all ended up working on a brewery, while their sister, your great-grandmother Catherine worked as a nurse in the Massachusetts General Hospital. As for your great-great-uncles, William moved to Buffalo, New York where he opened a tavern. He also met a French lady named Josephine and ended up marrying her; they had three girls named Kelly, Eileen and Marcy. As for your great-great-uncle Andrew, after failing to set up a shop in New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey, he returned to Ireland, where he married a local girl named Noelle and had two children, a boy and a girl named John and Barbara."

Alicia went on and told them everything about each of the family's branches and what they had become. She talked about every single member of the family accomplishments as if all of them had been royalty or someone extremely important like a Nobel Prize winner or an ambassador, or something like that. They all felt that they were not just part of a normal family, but of a family who had done impossible things... a family that had come in search of the American dream, and had found a piece of it.

When she met London for the first time, Maddie felt so inferior when compared to her, because she had been born into such a powerful and rich family, and Maddie had been born into a middle class family. Of course, that was then, because with time, she learned that it did not matter a person's roots, because some of the most important people in the world had all come from humble starts. She was really proud to be part of that family, and London could see it in her eyes.

"Thank you so much for this wonderful gift, London." –Maddie whispered to the brunette's ear. –"You don't know just how big this is for me and for my family, to find out a little more about our roots."

"Well, I can imagine... after all, you've got a wonderful family. It's only fair for you all know where you came from and who your ancestors were." –London whispered to her.

"It's because of things like this that I'm head over heels for you, Princess."– She whispered once again to London's ears, and then playfully licked her earlobe.

"Maddie, we're in front of your family..." –London giggled, as Maddie's tongue kept licking her earlobe.

"Don't worry... they won't mind. They're too busy hearing the explanation." –Maddie giggled back.

"You're such a minx." –the heiress whispered to her ear in a playful tone of voice.

"I know I am, but what are you then?" –the blonde whispered back at her.
The time they all spent on Ellis Island was fantastic. It had been a day none of them would ever forget. But just like everything else, it came to an end. Still, the end of something is the beginning of something new, and the beginning of something new is the end of something old... and for the Martin twins and their friends it was time for them to begin a new adventure, which would be their biggest ever.

At six o’clock in the morning, when the sun rose on the horizon, everything aboard the S.S. Tipton was ready to receive their first passengers. The ship was fully booked with more than 12000 passengers. The crew of more than 3850 was the best money could buy and anyone who would be working aboard the ship had every reason to be happy, after all, they would be working on the largest, fastest, most luxurious and prettiest cruise ship that ever sailed the 7 seas.

When the time came for the first passengers to embark through the hatchways, the two most important members of the crew would already be on board, making sure that the last minute details were dealt with, while supervising both the crew and the passengers. Those two crew members were none other than the captain himself, and of course, Marion Moseby. The former hotel manager of the Boston Tipton had been chosen by London herself to be the S.S. Tipton Cruise Manager for that first year. Initially he did not like the idea, mostly because he did not want to leave “his” precious hotel in the hands of someone else he thought was less capable than him for the work; but London begged him for nearly a week, and just as always, he ended up agreeing.

As he packed his things, he felt sad because he was going to leave the hotel which had been his life for the last two decades, even if it was just for a year. He was going to miss the smells, the noises and particularly the ambience. He would not miss the people he had working for him, or with him, mostly because most of them had also been transferred to that ship during the following year.

But now, as he walked by the still deserted Poseidon Deck’s grand staircase, one of the three grand staircases of that ship, which would in a few hours be filled with laughter, cries and footstep noise from the passengers, he told himself that this ship would be his new house during the next 10 months. That particular staircase was probably one of the most beautiful works of art in that ship. Made out entirely out of stone, the different colours of the stones made it look like a person had entered a royal palace. The floor was caramel-brown and the borders were milky-white, as for the stairway steps these were reddish-orange and the balustrade was also milky-white. Just like the rest of the deck, it was entirely polished and shiny, that you could see one’s reflection on it. On top of the staircase there was a set of three statues that represented the Poseidon, Hades and Zeus, gods of the sea, Underworld and Thunder respectively. The statues were gigantic, and had been sculpted to resemble the Renascence statues. As for the ceiling, it was beautiful dome similar to other domes seen in early 20th century cruise ships like the Olympic, the Titanic, among many others.

Climbing up the staircase towards the main deck, he took a few minutes to look at his reflected image on one of the multiple mirrors that adorned the walls. He was wearing a navy blue blazer with the Tipton’s coat of arms in the lapel, over a white shirt, beige Bermuda shorts and black polished shoes. In his hands he was holding a list of activities that he was to announce later, when the ship would already be on open sea.

“Well, Marion today is the big day. Time for us to prove to London that she chose the right person for the job.” –Moseby told himself, when he was interrupted by someone, who was calling his name.
“Mr. Moseby! Mr. Moseby!” –Moseby heard someone calling his name. Turning around he saw who was calling his name. It was Esteban Julio Ricardo Montoya de la Rosa Ramirez, or simply Esteban Ramirez as he liked to be called, the former bellman from the Boston Tipton. He had also been recruited by London and was made Moseby’s assistant, because Moseby himself could not find a better person for the job.

Esteban looked up to Moseby as a father figure, trying to learn as much as he could from him, for one of his wishes was to one day become a hotel manager just as Moseby. As for Moseby, he saw Esteban as a valuable employer, and someone he knew he could always trust, even though sometimes he tended to screw things up with his own antics. Still, he saw Esteban’s attempts to learn from him everything he could as a noble thing to do... sometimes he saw Esteban as the son he did not have. But, whenever he heard Esteban shouting his name, while running towards him as fast as he could, Moseby knew there was a problem.

“Yes, Esteban?” –Moseby calmly asked him. On that day, he did not want to lose his temper, for he wanted to remember this day as an occasion where he had managed to solve any problem without losing his head. He looked at Esteban and saw that he was dressed in a similar way to him; the only difference was that he was wearing white sneakers, and instead of a blazer, he was wearing a polo shirt.

“Mr. Moseby, the couple that was going to stay on the Liberty Suite on the Mermaid Deck called just a few minutes ago and cancelled because of some misfortune, and God know how, people found out and now I have at least five couples who are travelling with us, saying that they had made clear that if there was any last minute dropouts regarding any of the main suites, they wanted to have it... but how can I chose which one of the couples is entitled to that particular suite?!” –Esteban asked Moseby, clearly in despair.

“Esteban, Esteban... calm down. Take a deep breath and try to relax.” –Moseby told him with a soothing voice, trying to calm him down. When Esteban looked a little more relaxed, Moseby looked him in the eyes and said:

“Now, Esteban... having worked with me these last years, what is it that I always tell you?”

“That I shouldn’t eat jalapenos and mushroom sandwich because I start burping like crazy?” –Esteban told him, not knowing if that was the answer Moseby wanted to hear from him.

“No... The customer is always right!” –Moseby exclaimed. –“Remember, the customer is always right. It is our job to make sure that every customer, or in this case, passenger is satisfied. Now, the problem you have is very simple... follow the procedure, just like we did back at the Tipton in Boston; check the reservations, and the couple who made the reservation first and signed the papers saying that in case of a last minute dropout they would want the suite, gets it. As for the other couples, tell them that suite has already been occupied and send them a complimentary fruit basket to their respective rooms.”

“Yes, Mr. Moseby, right away sir.” –Esteban said, relieved to find out that the answer to his problem was really simple. –“Oh, one more thing, Mr. Moseby, when will the passengers start to board?”

“In exactly two hours.” –Moseby told him, as he looked at his watch. –“By the way, do you know if Arwin has already finished doing what I asked him to do?” –he asked, seeing as he had given a task to him three days ago, and still had not heard a word from him since then.
“Oh, he’s almost finishing it. Don’t worry, everything will be ready on time.” –Esteban answered him.

Outside, the media had been camped on the limits of the docks ever since the ship arrived, and during that time they had snapped all the photos they could, but they had not been authorized to see the interior of the ship. Now that the passengers were about to climb aboard, while interviewing some of them, they would have their first opportunity to see just how magnificent the interior of that colossus was.

On the cargo hold, the crew made sure that the cargo was all aboard. Among the things the ship would be carrying, the most amazing of them all was one of the most luxurious car collections ever assembled that was owned by none other than London, who had decided that she would need a car for each occasion.

When the clock stroke 9, the whole Tipton gang exited the hotel on their way to the docks. They were all excited to see just how the interior of the ship looked like when finished, and to start their trip around the world. Divided into four different limousines riding in a convoy, they all crossed the island of Manhattan towards the harbor. The Fitzpatricks were all, minus Maddie and Miranda, on the first limo, while on the second Limo were Zack and Cody, their mother Carrie and their girlfriends, Max and Barbara and their parents, who had taken the day from work to come and wish their respective daughter a safe trip. On the third limo were Mark, his father Stephen, and Anastasia and her mother Felicia. Finally, on the fourth limo were London, Maddie and their mothers, Akita and Miranda. As always, the traffic was a complete madness, and the cab drivers did not help. Still, the limo drivers were used to that New York City traffic and knew every street on that island, and which shortcut they should take in order to get to their destination.

As they closed to the harbor, But before they could board the ship, London still had to christen the ship. Initially it was supposed to be her father to do it, given that he was the CEO of Tipton Industries. But when they were already in limo, London got a call from him, who told her that because of a sudden storm that was lashing the skies of San Francisco, he would not be able to take off and arrive on time. That said, she would have to be the one to baptize the ship.

“Dad’s always doing this!” –London sighed in frustration. –“Every time I need him, he’s never around! I bet he’s even going to send me some stupid jewellery to apologize for not being here... again.”

Those who did not know London would say that she was angry and furious about all that. But in reality, she was disappointed and sad about it, and Maddie knew it. Putting her left arm around her waist, Maddie let the heiress place her head on her shoulder.

“Princess, you can’t blame him this time. He might be one of the most powerful men in the world, but not even he is able to control the weather.” –Maddie told her, as she kissed London on her forehead.

“Yeah, I know... but he could have come to New York earlier. That way he wouldn’t have been stuck in San Francisco, and I wouldn’t have to replace him.” –London pouted.

“Remember, he’s a very busy man, but he’s also kind and attentive, otherwise he wouldn’t let you date me.” –Maddie told her, as she caressed London’s chin.

“You’re girlfriend is right, pumpkin.” –Akita agreed. –“Your father is probably cursing himself right now for not being able to be here to wish you a safe trip. Believe me, I know him.”
London just smiled. She knew her mother and her girlfriend were right. The few times her father had been with her he showed that he was sorry he was not always there for her. Trying not to think about it, she concentrated on what she was going to say when it was time to christen the ship.

Usually, when she needed to give a speech, someone would write it for her, and London would just need to read it. But, in emergency cases, she came up with speeches based on multiple factors. It was something that she did ever since she was 10, but Maddie had helped her improve that special talent of hers. She would look at what she was dressed in, where she was going to talk and what kind of people would be hearing her. Combining those elements, she could come up with small speeches that could be said just about on any occasion.

Looking at herself and to Maddie, she immediately began to make use of that talent of hers: she was wearing a pink and white sundress and white sandals. As for Maddie, she was wearing an orange and yellow summer dress and white Mary-Janes. They were going to christen a cruise ship and then she was going to talk to a bunch of reporters, as well as some passengers. As she finished thinking about it, the whole speech just popped in her head.

“I’m such a genius!” –London told herself, as her smile broadened. Upon seeing her smiling like that, Maddie could not help but to ask her what she was thinking about?

“What are you thinking about?

“Oh, nothing... I was just wondering, would you like to baptize the ship with me? I never did anything like that in my life, and I don’t exactly know what I’m supposed to do.” –London asked Maddie.

“Sure, if you want to.” –Maddie immediately answered. –“But, it shouldn’t be that hard. I mean, you only have to say a few words and then slam a champagne bottle against the ship’s hull.”

“Yeah, I guess you’re right... but now that I think of it, why should we even waste a good champagne bottle on that ceremony?”

“Because it’s a custom.” –Miranda answered her. Maddie’s mom had been quiet ever since they left the hotel, and these were the first words she said. –“For example, ship launching participants in ancient Greece wreathed their heads with olive branches, drank wine to honour the gods, and poured water on the new vessel as a symbol of blessing. The practice of breaking a bottle of wine over a ship’s bow was introduced by the British navy in the late 17th century as a cost saving measure! Previously the ships were baptized with a "standing cup" of precious metal, which was then promptly thrown overboard. The rapid production of ships during the height of the British Empire put an end to that. ...” –she kept explaining. When Miranda looked at the girls they were both eyes open and their jaws dropped, looking at her as if they had both seen a creature from another world. – “What? You know that I like to watch the Discovery Channel or the History Channel when there’s nothing good on television.”

This comment made the girls laugh like crazy, and their mothers soon followed them. In an instant the limousine’s interior became filled with laughter. When the laughter ceased, London grabbed her cell phone and began searching on the Internet for speeches used in ship’s christenings... the last thing she wanted was to not know what to say as she performed the ceremony.

Finally, they made it to the harbor. The ship was easily recognized not only by her size but also because of its gleaming white and electric-blue colours. Looking at through the smoked windows, it
was as if a person was looking at a huge shiny diamond that had just been polished.

The people all gathered on the docks to see the ship and also to say farewell to family or friends that were embarking. The security was tight and before they could enter the pier where the ship was docked the police inspected every last person, trying to avoid any kind of trouble. The last thing people needed was a man or a woman with a pistol or a revolver trying to shoot somebody, or with a knife. People complained about it, but ever since 9/11 this was standard procedure on this kind of events.

Making its way through the crowd that was there, the limo drivers had to horn a couple of times for the people to get out of the way. Finally, they stopped near the ship’s bow where a small stage had been assembled. It was there where the London and Maddie would christen the ship by breaking a champagne bottle against it.

London grabbed her cell phone and texted the rest of the gang as well as Liam and Genevieve on the other limos, telling them to order the drivers to stop, because she wanted them with her and Maddie upon the christen ceremony. As soon as they received the message, they did as she told them, and the remaining limos stopped in front of the stage.

After the drivers opened the door for them, everyone exited and joined the girls who were waiting for them next to their limousine. The heiress had decided that having Maddie next to her was not enough and that their friends and respective families had also the right to be next to them; after all, they too had played an important part in the construction of that ship and the planning of that voyage... their friendship was the main reason, right after her love for Maddie, for that voyage to happen.

Photographers were all snapping photos at them all. Zack felt like a Hollywood superstar with so many eyes looking at him. As for Cody, unlike his brother, he tried to behave like always. Looking at them, the photographers and paparazzi that had recognize them as the twins that were always hanging with London, though they could not tell them apart for Carey had dressed them equally. They were both wearing orange Bermuda shorts, red t-shirts and black and red sneakers. As for Carey, she was wearing a lime-green summer jacket over a black strapless shirt, white Capri pants and green sandals.

Barbara looked dazzling in her baby-blue summer dress and matching shoes. She had even changed her glasses’ rim to match the rest of her clothes. As for Max, she had chosen a more sportive look. She was wearing a black tank top, a red and orange A-line skirt and red and white sneakers.

Following them were Mark and his dad Stephen, Anastasia and her mom Felicia. Mark was wearing one of his trademarked t-shirts, a red one with the Adidas logo stamped on it, blue jean shorts, black sunglasses and red Converse Alls. Stephen, on the other hand was looking a little more festive than his son, wearing a Hawaiian shirt, grey trousers, black leather shoes and a pair of sunglasses; in fact, he looked like one of those detectives you see on series such as Hawaii-o-Five or Miami Vice.

But when it came to clothing, Anastasia was certainly the one who stood out from everyone else. She was wearing a black corset which tightened her waist and her chest making her waist look smaller and her breasts bigger, a black leather skirt, leather gloves, fishnet stockings and high-heel boots. In her hands she was holding a black lace Goth umbrella. Her raven-black hair was done in two beautiful pigtails, and her pale complexion was even more emphasized by the red-ruby lipstick she was wearing. She was incredibly beautiful. In fact when looking at her you could almost say that her unique look was the combination of the looks from Lydia Deetz from Beetlejuice, Abby Sciuto from NCIS and Queen Amidala from Star Wars.
Compared to her daughter, Felicia, who was wearing a simple green summer dress, looked rather
simple. In fact, no one would say that the two of them were related in any way.

Making their way over the red carpet, they all joined the girls and their mothers, and then proceeded
to climb the stage, where two persons were waiting for them. One of them was Moseby, who was
incredibly happy to see them all, and the other was none other than His Honor, the Mayor of New
York City, Michael Bloomberg.

Upon seeing him, London just wanted to give Moseby a big hug and tell him that she had missed not
having him around to lecture her or to point her in the right direction when she did not know what to
do. But because they were in public, she restrained herself. Still, she winked an eye at him, and
Moseby smiled at her. As everyone got on the stage, Mayor Bloomberg approached London and like
a true gentleman, he kissed her hand, and then proceeded to do the same with Maddie and their
mothers, as well as the rest of the girls and women, while shaking hands with the boys and the men.

“Miss Tipton, I have to say it’s an honour to meet you, your mother, your girlfriend, as well as her
family and your friends.” –Mayor Bloomberg stated.

“The pleasure is all ours, Mr. Mayor.” –London declared.

“Mr. Moseby has already told me that you’ll be the one to christen this magnificent ship. In the name
of city of New York, I thank you for choosing this town to be the one to witness the departure of the
S.S. Tipton on its maiden voyage.”

“Yes, well, we chose the city given its History and because it’s also a beautiful city. But I’m afraid
that I’m not only own who’s going to christen this ship… we all are going to.”

The whole group was speechless. How was she going to do that? Maddie herself asked that same
question, regarding that it was impossible for them all to hold the bottle at the same time and smash it
against the ship’s bow.

“Huh, London… how are you going to do that?” –Moseby whispered to her ear.

“Simple… we’ll all sign the bottle, then we tight it to a rope and me Maddie will smash it together.
That way, every one of us will be able to christen it.” –London smiled as she explained her plan.

“Well… I guess it’s a way to do things.” –Moseby asserted.

“I say that is a wonderful idea.” –Mayor Bloomberg also agreed. –“Not only are you pretty, but
you’re also a smart young lady.” –he chuckled.

“Well, if that’s how it’s going to be, we better have the champagne bottle signed…” –Moseby said,
as he grabbed a walkie-talkie he had on his back pocket. –“Esteban, where is that champagne
bottle?” –he asked, waiting for the answer from Esteban.

“It’s coming, Mr. Moseby… it’s coming!” –Esteban answered over the walkie-talkie.

A couple of seconds later, Esteban appeared, climbing the stage stairs as fast as he could, holding the
six-liter bottle on his hands, and his walkie-talkie on his teeth. Passing by everyone, as he was about
to handle the bottle to Moseby, he slips on a cable and drops to the ground, letting go the bottle in the
process. What happened next was something that seemed only possible in movies. It was as if
everything began to move in slow-motion. Moseby tried to grab it, but missed it. London also tried to catch it, but was unable to do it… then, out of nowhere, Max shows up, having threw herself to the ground, she landed on her back and grabbed the bottle just as it was about to hit the ground.

Helping her out, they all congratulated her, as everyone snapped photos. It had been quite the feat, and only someone as athletic as Max would have been able.

“Nice work, Max!” –Maddie told the girl, as she helped her getting up.

“Thanks, Maddie.” –Max said, as she handled the champagne bottle to Moseby. Then she turned to her mom and said –“See mom? This is why I don’t wear dresses! You can’t do what I just did while wearing a fancy dress.” –Max stated, to her mother, who was always trying to get her into dresses and make her act more lady-like, something Max just hated.

Everyone just cracked up laughing for a brief second.

“Thank God you have such swift moves, Max, otherwise we wouldn’t have this bottle here, now would we, Esteban?” –Moseby said, as he looked at Esteban, clearly upset with him.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Moseby…” –Esteban apologized.

“Never mind that, Esteban. What’s important is that the bottle didn’t break.” –Maddie stated the obvious.

After that, they all proceeded to sign the bottle, which would have been an impossible task, if Stephen did not have a pen with him, for no one else had one.

“I always carry a pen wherever I go. You never know when you’re going to need one.” –he said, as he handled them the pen.

The bottle was a very expensive one. In fact it was the most expensive champagne in the world; a six-liter bottle of 1907 Heidsieck, which was worth 275,000 dollars. It would be a real waste to smash it against the ship, but the ship deserved no less. London and Maddie were the first ones to do so, and then the rest of them also did the same. Mayor Bloomberg was the last to sign and then handled it to London.

“Okay, Esteban, be very careful and take it to the poop deck, wrap a rope around it and then slide it down very slowly, okay?” –London explained him what to do.

“Yes, Miss Tipton.” –Esteban waved his head, as he received the bottle from the heiress.

“And be careful with it… if you break it, it will come out from your salary for the next 100 years.” –Moseby warned him

“Y-Yes Mr. Moseby.” –Esteban gulped, knowing that Moseby did not kid around when he issued those warnings.

Taking it with him, it would take at least 15 minutes for Esteban to complete the task he had been given. That would give London enough time to give out a small speech and to answer a few questions from the media. Signaling Moseby that she was ready to start the speech, he handled a microphone to her and another to the mayor. Taking a deep breath, she looked once more to Maddie who winked at her, wishing her good luck, and then began:
“Good morning everyone! I know that most of you were expecting my father, Wilfred Tipton to be
the one here today, but due to unforeseen events, he won’t be able to join us.” –London talked to the
microphone. –“Anyways, I want to thank you all for coming, especially to His Honor, the Mayor of
New York City for being here, because on this day, History will be made. Today this which is the
largest and most luxurious cruise liner ever built by Man will departure on its maiden voyage around
the world. Still, the S.S. Tipton is not just a cruise liner for the famous and for those who have the
money to make such a trip; it is also a school. Some of country’s top students, as well as a few
foreigner students will attend a school which was created with one purpose and one purpose only: to
stimulate learning and provide the students that will be attending it, a chance to get to know foreign
countries and to know about their customs, their religious beliefs, their culture… in sum, to learn
about our world, while experience things first hand. It is my wish that one day every single student in
the world might have the opportunity to experience school in the same way these students.”

The sound of applauses was heard for a brief second, before London went on with her speech. The
reporters and the journalists wanted to start asking questions, and she knew it… she could see it in
their eyes. The only thing that would make that even clearer was if they began all to salivate like a
dog, when it sees a juicy steak. Still, she would not be answering questions just yet.

“Ever since this ship arrived to this harbor, many have speculated why the secrecy; why Tipton
Hotels and Tipton Industries did not publicized it… well, I might as well tell you. I wanted to
surprise my girlfriend and my friends by taking them on this cruise, and you can all imagine that it’s
impossible for me to keep a ship this size in my pockets.” –she joked about it. –“So, there you have
it… this ship, as well as the cruise started as a surprise for those I love the most, but ended becoming
so much more than that. It became my contribution to students everywhere, hoping that one day this
dream and wish of mine for every student to have the chance of having a better education and to
come into contact with different cultures and lifestyles, and by that, becoming better people, with a
better understanding of our world, becomes reality.”

Another wave of applauses was heard, this one a lot louder than the previous. As that sound faded,
Moseby stepped forward and announced that London would now be answering a few questions,
before the ship’s christening. He needed to give time for Esteban to complete his task of tying the
champagne bottle to a rope and lower it. One by one, London answered a few questions.

“Just how many passengers will take this cruise?” –a male reporter who was covering the story for
CNN asked her.

“I don’t have the exact number, but I can tell you that there will be more than 12000 passengers, not
including the ship’s crew of course. In fact, I’m surprised we’re fully booked.” –she giggled about it.

“Miss Tipton, what it is the name of the school aboard the ship and how many students will be
attending it?” –a female reporter asked the brunette.

“The school’s name is Tipton High Seas School, and it will have 2500 American students attending
it, as well as 1000 foreign students, which will join us later on the voyage.” –London answered.

“Given that the S.S. Tipton is the largest and most luxurious cruise ship ever built, and this is its
maiden voyage, aren’t you a little nervous about the famous Titanic curse?”

The curse the woman was referring to was obviously the one surrounding the famous ship, which
sank after hitting an iceberg. Ever since then, people assumed that during their maiden voyage, all
cruise liners were under the curse of the Titanic, and until they reached the end of it, the curse and spectre of what happened would always be hovering in the air.

“Not at all.” –London declared. –“The ship is equipped with the most sophisticated technology and safety equipment, not mention that the crew is composed by some of the most skilled professionals there are. Plus, I won’t say that the ship is unsinkable or that not even God could sink it.” –she joked about the last part.

As London kept answering a few more questions, on top of the ship’s bow, Esteban had finally managed to find a rope in order to tight around the bottleneck. Giving a nice and firm knot, he then grabbed the other end of the rope and proceeded to tight around the railing.

“There… now for the worst part.” –Esteban gulped, as he began to silently pray to himself–“Please, Holy Virgin of Sierra Malograda, don’t let me drop this bottle, and I promise that I’ll light up a candle in your honour, every night until the end of this journey.”

Grabbing the bottle he passed it to the other side of the railing, and then began to drop it very slowly, so as to not hit the ship. After almost five minutes, the bottle finally reached its destination. Moseby grabbed the bottle and signaled Esteban, telling him that everything was right.

Esteban sighed in relief, when he saw Moseby signaling him that everything was right.

“London… the bottle is ready.” –Moseby whispered to her.

Hearing that, London decided that she had answered enough questions regarding both the subject of the ship and of her relationship with Maddie, and that it was time for the christening of the ship. She did not want to answer questions regarding that last subject, for multiple reasons, but mostly because she did not feel like telling people the details of their relationship. As she grabbed the bottle, she did her best to remove those thoughts out her mind. It was not healthy for her to think about those things, she told herself.

“And now, ladies and gentlemen, it’s time for the christening of the beautiful ship, to which I ask the love of my life, Madeline Fitzpatrick to join me.” –London exclaimed, as Maddie approached her. –“Ready to do this, Blondie?” –she whispered to Maddie’s ear.

“I was born ready, Princess.” –Maddie whispered back to London’s ear, as they both grabbed the bottle.

Photographers readied their cameras to snap a perfect photograph, as London and Maddie also readied themselves to break the champagne bottle. Among those who were about to snap photos were Carey and Miranda, as well as just about anyone who had a cell phone. At the same time, they began to serve champagne glasses to those on the stage. Zack and Cody also grabbed one each, even knowing they were not very fond of champagne, especially Zack.

“Try not to throw up, okay?” –Cody told Zack; reminding him what had happened the last time he tried to drink a champagne glass.

“I didn’t throw up last time.” –Zack said in his defense.

“No, but you nearly did, so that’s why you have to be careful.” –Cody smirked at him. It was times like this that he loved to be his brother’s babysitter, because he got to tell him what he should and shouldn’t do.
London and Maddie were the last ones to grab a glass. When they saw that everyone had been served, London began a speech she had seen on the Internet.

“For thousands of years, we have gone to sea. We have crafted vessels to carry us and we have called them by name. These ships will nurture and care for us through perilous seas, and so we affectionately call them "she." To them we toast, and ask to celebrate the S.S. Tipton.” –she said as she took a small sip, with everyone else mimicked her. –“The moods of the sea are many, from tranquil to violent. We ask that this ship be given the strength to carry on. The keel is strong and she keeps out the pressures of the sea.”

She raised her glass once again, as the others mimicked her once again. –“Today we come to name this lady, the S.S. Tipton, and send her to sea to be cared for, and to care for the all her passengers. We ask the sailors of old and the mood of God that is the sea to accept the S.S Tipton as her name, to help her through her passages, and allow her to return with her crew safely.” –London declared, as she again, raised her glass, and everyone mimicking the heiress."TO THE SEA...TO THE SAILORS BEFORE US...TO THE S.S. TIPTON!"

As she finished, she winked her eye at Maddie, signaling her that it was time for smashing the bottle.

“Well, there’s only one last thing to do… Have a drink you too, fair maiden!” –London giggled, as the girls both threw the bottle against the bow.

It is considered bad luck for a ship if the bottle does not break upon the first hit. Fortunately for the S.S. Tipton, that did not happen. The strength they both used was enough for the champagne bottle to break into tiny little bits which then fell onto the Hudson. The golden champagne splashed against the white bow, with a few drops ricocheting and landing on their faces. Seeing that, London and Maddie turned around to the cameras and shared a kiss, with the audience applauding them. The noise of the applauses was only interrupted by the sound of camera flashes and whistles.
It had been a beautiful ceremony; one that would be remembered by those who had been present, as one of the most beautiful and memorable ever. But that had only been the beginning for those who were about to board up the ship. Entering through the hatchway on K Deck, the Luna Deck, the passengers were immediately astounded by the magnificence of the ship. After passing by the reception desk and the passengers registration desk, where they were offered appetizers and some refreshments, the first thing they saw was the opulent and colossal central grand hall. This one stretched all the way from the poop deck to the Luna Deck as if it was an enormous octagonal cave. Its dome was made out of stained glass, where you could see a red and orange windrose, while the floor was marine-blue, polished in a way that you could see one’s reflection on it. On each of the corners there was a magnificent round glass elevator, decorated similarly to the rest of the hall, which allowed the passengers to look outside. But the most impressive section of that grand hall was without a doubt the colossal statue of Poseidon himself, which looked like it had been carved from a huge block of white marble. Its eyes had been carved in a way that when a person looked at it, it seemed like it was following it, just like what happened with the Mona Lisa. In its left hand it was holding a black metal trident, pointing it to the sky. It was an otherworld beauty and it matched perfectly with the rest of the decoration, which evoked the theme of the oceans.

“If the whole ship is as beautiful as this, then it’s even more beautiful than I thought it would be.” – That’s what most of the passengers told themselves, as they entered and saw the opulence of the environment that surrounded them.

As he watched the passengers boarding, Moseby told himself that it was the moment of truth. He kept calm as he smiled and approached the first passengers. It was a young married couple in their honeymoon. He remembered them, because he had been the one who took care of their reservation.

“Welcome aboard the S.S. Tipton. We hope you have a nice and pleasant stay aboard. Anything you need, just call room service.” –Moseby informed them; in such a fashion that one would still say that he thought he was still back in Boston, in the Tipton.

After registering themselves, the passengers all proceeded to their rooms to leave their things, before exploring a little of the ship, and going up to the poop deck to wave goodbye to those who stayed behind.

Passing by the registration office, the gang saw some of their colleagues from school, who just like them, were also taking the cruise, courtesy of London who had arranged things for almost half of Cheevers High to come along.

As they passed by them Corrie and Mary Margaret, they jumped in front of London and gave her a huge hug, thanking her for bring them on that cruise. Corrie had grown a few inches since the girls last saw her, and the same thing could be said by Mary Margaret; still they were the same size as London. They were both wearing their hairs straight, and you could see that they had been at the beach; their tan gave them away immediately. As for their clothes, Corrie was wearing a pink summer dress and matching stilettos and purse, and Mary Margaret was wearing a white tank top, black mini-skirt and black tennis shoes.

“Thank you, London, thank you!” –Mary Margaret exclaimed.

“Yes, thank you for bringing us with you.” –Corrie told her, as she gave her a big hug.
Like always, they did not even pay attention to Maddie. Even knowing she was dating London, they paid very little attention, focusing solely on London.

The heiress was happy that their parents had allowed them to come along, but right then, they were the last people she wanted to see, because she was with Maddie and her family, not to mention the rest of her friends.

“My pleasure...” –London said. –“I've got to find a way to get rid of these two...” –she thought to herself.

“Oh, hello there, Maddie.” –Corrie finally noticed the blonde, giving her a hug.

It felt strange to Maddie, as Corrie and Mary Margaret gave her a big hug and told her that they had missed her. For as long as she could remember, they had never said anything nice to her. They had always treated her like a peasant or a maid that followed London everywhere.

Maddie had always told herself that she would one day get even with them; she would get her revenge for always treating her like crap. Countless times, in her head, she imagined herself slapping them, or calling them every name on the book. But now that she clearly had the chance to get her revenge on them, she just could not do it. Smiling at them, she returned the hug, and said:

“It’s awesome to see you girls too.” –Maddie told them. -“But right now, we still need to check out our accommodations and see if everything is alright. Catch up with you later!” –she exclaimed, as she walked away with London and the rest of the gang.

“I thought you hated them.” –London whispered

“Wrong, the old me hated them, Princess. The new me is nice to everyone, even if they were mean as Hell to me for so long.” –Maddie told her.

“So in other words, you still hate them, but you’re not going to give them the pleasure of getting pissed off by them treating you like a person, unlike they did before we began to date, am I right?” –London tested her, to see if she was really saying the truth.

“No, it’s called being superior to all that, London. I’ll show them that I’m not holding any kind of grudge regarding the past.” –Maddie insisted.

“Whoa... you sound so sexy when you talk like that.” –London teased her.

“Like that song says... “I’m sexy and I know it”.” –Maddie laughed about it.

Already in the possession of their keycards, everyone in the gang went to see where they were staying at. Being guests of London, they knew they would all be staying in awesomely cool and luxurious suites, but not even they were prepared for awaited them.

The Martins stayed on the B Deck, the Atlantis Deck, on the Roman Suite, which was composed by the rooms B-64, 66 and 68. When they entered they were just blown away by what their eyes saw. The suite was decorated in a way to mimic the decoration seen in movies like Ben Hur and Gladiator. The magnificence of the décor with all its marbles of multiple colours, roman columns and
furniture clearly inspired by the suite’s theme made it look like it had really been taken of one of those movies. They also had a private promenade deck, big enough for them to play squash. Carey fell in love with everything in that suite. Never in her life had she imagined London would go to such extent with them all. She would have been happy to just have a simple room, but this... this was way better. They had everything, a promenade deck, Jacuzzi, fireplace, among other things. It was the perfect suite for them.

“Oh, my gosh! I can’t believe what I’m seeing…” – Carey gasped, as she looked around, trying not to cry of happiness.

Of course, the best part of the whole suite for the twins was their play room, where you could see multiple pinball machines, every gaming console there was and shelves filled with so many videogames that it would take them years just to play them all.

“Radical!” – Zack exclaimed as he tried to grasp everything that was around them.

“I can’t believe London gave us all this…” – Cody said,

“Pinch me, bro! I need to be sure that I’m not dreaming.” – Zack asked his brother, afraid that all of that was nothing but a wild crazy dream.

On the same deck, Barbara Brownstein and Maxine “Max” Vaughn, the boys’ girlfriends stayed in the Plato Suite, composed by the rooms B-130 and 132. This one was similar to the one where the Martins stayed in, but its décor was more inspired by the ancient Hellenic style. Beautiful statues of nymphs adorned the entire suite, and the girls’ rooms looked like rooms designed for someone like Helen of Troy. But, the most amazing décor piece in that suite was the dark metal statue of Plato in the middle of suite’s foyer, which gave the suite its name.

Accompanied by their parents, the girls fell in love with their suite.

“So, you girls think you’re going to be alright?” – Barbara’s father asked them, as he admired the beautiful suite.

“You can bet that, dad.” – Barbara told him.

“Yeah, this is great. If the rest of the cruise is anything like this, then London will have succeeded in spoiling us rotten.” – Max declared.

“I’m sure you’re both going to have lots of fun.” – Max’s mom told them. – “But do remember…”

“I know mom, I know. Be careful, don’t take advantage of London, by telling her to buy us something expensive that we see and all that... although, I think we won’t need to ask her anything, because she tends to spoil just about everyone in the gang with expensive gifts.” – Max told her mother, giggling.

“Still, don’t get carried away.” – Max’s mom warned her.

Two decks below, on D Deck, the El Dorado deck, Mark and Stephen were staying on the Hernan Cortez Suite, composed by the rooms D-85, 87 and 89. The interior was decorated in an Imperial style, incredibly beautiful. Just like the Roman Suite, this one also had a promenade deck. It was a beautiful suite, nothing like the one they stayed back at the Tipton. Mark loved it, although Stephen still preferred their suite back at the Tipton, mostly because it was not as opulent as that one, but also
because it was not his style. Still, not even he could deny that it had a certain glamour and beauty, especially since he had written so many books with rooms and houses built in that style. Looking at it better, he felt that he would eventually get used to it.

“Not exactly our style, is it, dad?” – Mark asked Stephen, as he opened every door, and checked what was behind them.

“I make your words mine, sport. It really isn’t our style, but it is pretty. I think the fireplace is a nice touch, you know?”

“Yeah, still I… whoa… oh my God, you got to see this!” – Mark exclaimed to his father.

When he opened one of the suite’s doors, he was just baffled by what it was in front of him. The room itself was quite big, twice as big as their living room back at the Tipton. Various paintings adorned two of the salmon-pink walls, while the other two were covered up with bookshelves, giving it a very warm feeling. The ceiling was white, and the floor was covered with a beautiful Persian carpet. But it was not the room itself that made Mark gasp… not, it was the object that was in the middle of the room; a beautiful Steinway mahogany grand piano.

“A grand piano! She got me a grand piano!!” – Mark practically shouted on top of his lungs, incredibly happy about the fact that he had a piano just for him. – “Oh, wait until Anastasia knows about this…”

“Got to handle it to London. She sure knows how to please people.” – Stephen said, smiling, pleased with the fact that the heiress had offered such a wonderful gift to his son, something he had always wanted to offer him.

At the same time, on the same deck on the Goth Suite, Anastasia and her mom Felicia stood in the foyer, getting used to the luxury that surrounded them. The suite was enormous, comprising the rooms D-22, 24 and 26, and it lived up to its name, for its decoration looked like it had been pulled out from one of Dracula’s sweetest dreams. The colours that adorned it were the red, black and purple. Its dark polished columns were carved in a way to give the impression that they were covered with real living creatures such as bats, black cats and other creepy creatures. Frescoes decorated the ceiling, most of them being like Goth versions of famous frescoes by many artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael. As for the floor, it was done in black tiles so polished one could see their reflection in them. Even the curtains that adorned the windows were black. In one word, it looked like they had stepped into the room of Dracula’s brides.

Needless to say that Anastasia loved the suite. But her mother, she felt a little unease about its decoration. She had always thought the suite would look like a little more neutral decoration, instead of that mix of Goth and art-deco style.

“Whoa, mom, this is so beautiful.” – Anastasia awed as her eyes tried to capture every last detail.

“Well, it certainly is… unusual.” – Felicia said as she looked around, feeling a little unease.

“Oh, come on, don’t tell me you’re scared of this place?! This is incredibly beautiful. It’s like London told the decorators to read my mind and come up with this.” – Anastasia said, as she ran her fingers over one of the carved columns, admiring its beauty.

“You might like things this way honey, but me on the other hand; I prefer things a little less dark and less creepy.” – Felicia told her daughter.
“Suit yourself, mom, but I can tell you this, I’m going to love this trip!” –Anastasia said, as she practically jumped to the magnificent black leather chaise long that was near her. –“Can’t wait to see what else this ship and this trip have to offer us.”

All of the suites that had been especially designed and decorated for the gang were beautiful; there was no doubt about it. Still, none of them could rival with the one that had been built for them… the Wonderland Suite. This one had not been built when the gang visited the ship for the first time. This one had been built only after London knew that Maddie’s family would not be coming along, and it was London’s special project on the following weeks. This suite had been the reason why on the first days after their return to New York she did not accompany Maddie and her folks. She wanted this suite to be everything Maddie deserved.

The suite had been built a few meters above the poop deck, in front of the funnel that was nearer the ship’s stern. From outside it looked like a huge white hockey puck. The enormous windows went around at least two thirds of the structure that was the suite, giving it a futuristic look. The only way to enter it was through a circular elevator that literally hidden in plain sight. This one opened itself when a person placed her hand on a palm-reading scanner that was near it. The system was programmed to only recognize the palm prints of London, Maddie, their friends, and Moseby of course.

Still, if it looked good on the outside, then on the inside it looked amazing. The suite had a futuristic design. Wherever you looked, the only colours you would see were white and black. The furniture was similar to the one that London had in her suite back in Boston, but some of the pieces had a futuristic look. Unlike the other rooms, this one had a fully equipped kitchen. It also had a small gym, Jacuzzi, a sauna, an indoor pool, a private movie room, not to mention an enormous wardrobe, as big as the one London had in Boston, or even bigger. One thing was for sure, the girls would always have clothes to wear for every occasion. Plus, the suite also had a room where you could see an upgraded version of the Tipton Virtual Reality Amusement Chair, or TVRAC for short. London had made sure to place two of these in every major suite in the ship, especially because she wanted the rest of the gang to also experience that which had been one of the greatest experiences she and Maddie had.

As for their bedroom, it matched perfectly with the rest of the suite, but there was one thing that Maddie felt it was strange. On the middle of the room, there were two single beds, instead of a king-sized bed; though she imagined that if her family saw just a king-size double-bed, they might get the wrong idea.

Still, regardless that Maddie found it hard to believe what she was seeing. She knew that London would never settle for anything less than a suite worthy of a queen or an empress, but all that had toppled all her expectations. She loved the whole suite, especially since London told her that all of that had been built thinking about them.

“When I think you have managed to give me the most beautiful gift in the world, you surprise me by snatching the Moon and giving it to me, wrapped around a pink bow.” –Maddie exclaimed, trying not to cry out of happiness.

“Well, I wanted to give you the Moon along with this cruise, but they told me that it wasn’t for sale.” –the Asian-beauty joked about it. –“Still, I might find a way to buy it just for you, one of these days. But until then, this will have to do.” –London kept joking about it. –“So, do you like it?”

“Like it?! I love it!” –Maddie exclaimed, jumping into London’s arms, smothering her with kisses all over her face. –“It’s really beautiful!”
“Well, at least you girls will be well accommodated.” –Miranda told her daughter.

“It really is a beautiful suite, sweetie. I’m so proud of you and your taste. You clearly inherited my excellent taste.” –Akita joked about it with London. Both mother and daughter had always shared an ability to know what to use and what looked good on a person or in this case on a room.

“Thanks, mom.” –London blushed lightly, upon hearing her mother’s kind words. –“Truth be told, I tried to make it simple by mixing my tastes and Maddie’s tastes.”

“And it came out amazingly well, Princess.” –Maddie told her, giving her a big kiss on her left cheek. –“I’m going to be extremely happy here.”

“Well, right now, I envy you, Maddie… no parents, no rules, no nothing. Absolute freedom!” –Genevieve joked about it. –“You’ll be having the chance to know how college students feel when they leave home.” –she told her. Truth be told, right then Gennie envied Maddie a little bit, because she never had had the chance to try that kind of feeling, because she had decided to stay home, instead of moving to the university campus.

“Maybe… Still, I’ll be extremely responsible as I always have been.” –Maddie joked about it with a slightly serious tone. –“After all, what kind of example would I set for London if I decided to play hooky all of a sudden?”

“As if I needed a role model!” –London chuckled after hearing her girlfriend. –“And, just so you know, I intend to be the perfect student aboard this ship.”

Looking at it, Liam was now feeling really sorry he had decided not to take this trip. In his head he thought that if he had known that he would be entitled to an extravagant and luxurious suite just for himself, he might have reconsidered things a little.

“Man, you really are going to be living like a princess here.” –Liam said, as he checked out the huge plasma screen TV that was on mute, playing some documentary about lions and other great felines.

“You can say that again, little bro. Princess here will make sure that I’m treated like a real princess.” –Maddie giggled, calling London by her nickname.

“I sure will, you can bet that. By the way, I got a question for you… how do you like the colour? Is it alright, or do you think it’s too white for our taste?”

Maddie did not know what kind of question was that, but she knew that whenever London asked her something like that it was because she had one more trick up her sleeve.

“Well, it’s really white… it looks almost as if the whole suite is covered with powdered snow. But why do you say that?”

“Watch this…” –London told her, as an impish smile appeared on her face. –“Pink!” –She exclaimed, while clapping her hands twice.

All of a sudden, the whole suite started to change colour, until every surface, every single object became bright pink. No one believed their eyes. Liam even rubbed his’ in disbelief. How was it possible that one second the whole suite was mostly white, and on the next it was bright pink?
“What did just happen?!” –Maddie asked, as she swung her head both ways, trying to understand how that happened.

“The whole suite has a brand new nano-technological system which enables one to change the colour of things by just saying the colour out loud and clapping its hands twice. So, whenever we get tired of the suite’s colour, we can always change it.” –London explained, as she took a seat on one of the couches. –“Plus, if we want to only change the colour of one thing, let’s say, a piece of furniture, all we have to do is touch it and say the colour… baby-blue.”

As she finished saying the colour, the couch immediately started to change colour, until it was baby-blue.

“We’ll be having a brand new suite, whenever we want. Think of all the money I’m going to save in furniture and paint.” –London giggled.

“No wonder you called this suite the Wonderland Suite… it’s wonderful in every sense of the word.” –Maddie gave her one more kiss.

After showing the Wonderland Suite to their respective families, the girls decided that it would be nice for them to spend the rest of time they had before departure on the poop deck, enjoying themselves. As everyone went to the door, Akita signaled Miranda that she and London would join them in a moment.

Seeing themselves alone, Akita asked her daughter to take a seat on one of the chairs that were around a beautiful round glass and metal table, on the sitting room.

“What’s the matter, mom?” –London asked her, as Akita looked her daughter in the eyes with a very serious, yet tender expression.

“London, honey… I know we already talked about this, but I just wanted to remind you about what’s going to happen.” –Akita told her. –“You and Maddie are going to be alone, and I know that you’re already used to not being around your father or me, but Maddie is different from you. She’s used to see her family everyday and to talk with them. You need to be by her side always, and be her family from this moment on. Remember, you need to always be there for her.”

“I will mom. Maddie’s the most important person in my life, I’ll be there for her, no matter what happens. That, I can promise you.” –London assured her.

Hearing her say that, Akita wrapped her arms around her daughter and held her tight against herself, not wanting to let go of her. For years, she thought that London would be better without her in her life, and now, more than ever, she regretted not being there for her before. London had matured into such a wonderful young woman, and now she was afraid that that when she’d be able to see her again, she would change to the point that the little girl she remembered would not be there for her.

“You’ve grown so much this past year, sweetie. As a mother I’m really proud of being your mother.” –Akita told her with a smile on her face. –“You are one of a kind.”

“Yay me!” – London exclaimed, using her well known catchphrase, clapping her hands in excitement. –“Thanks mom, but you’re not the only one who’s proud. I’m also proud of being your daughter.”

“You see? This is what I’m talking about… one of these days you’ll no longer be this cute and
adorable little girl, but a fully-grown woman, who won’t need me for anything.” –Akita said playfully, shedding a small tear, as she gently pinched London’s cheeks.

“Oh, mom… no matter my age, on the inside I’ll always be a little girl, and I’ll always need you by my side.” –London hugged her mother even tighter, while also shedding a tear.

After that mother-daughter moment both London and Akita joined the rest of the group, who was already outside on the poop deck. When they arrived, they had been joined by the Martin twins and the rest of the Tipton gang. London could hear Maddie telling them just how amazing their suite was. Smiling, London was incredibly happy that Maddie had fallen in love with their suite.

“You guys got to see the suite. It’s just mind-blowing!” –Maddie exclaimed to them.

“If it’s anything like ours, then it’s got to be one of a kind.” –Cody told her.

“Just one of a kind?! You got to be kidding me… even mom here says that she fell in love with it. One of a kind it’s not enough to qualify it.” –Zack told his brother.

“Well, since you’re talking about it, I might as well ask you guys. Did you all like the decoration of your suites?” –London asked them, as she approached the gang.

“Are you kidding?! We loved it!” –Carey told her.

Grabbing her and lifting her up in the air for a brief second, Mark kissed London on both cheeks, just before putting her back on the ground.

“Thanks so much for giving me a piano; especially one as beautiful as that one.” –Mark smiled at her.

“It was nothing. Besides, you’re always saying that you wanted to have a piano to play whenever you felt like.” –she told him. –“What about you, Anastasia?”

“I love it in every sense. My mom on the other hand… well, she’s going to have a couple of nightmares before getting used to it.” –Anastasia giggled about it.

“What about you girls? Do you like yours?” –London asked Max and Barbara.

“Let’s just say that no matter how much we both try, we can’t find anything bad to say about it.” –Max told her.

“It’s a really beautiful. There just aren’t words that can describe how beautiful it is… okay maybe there are, but I can’t find them right now.” –Barbara declared.

Hearing all those kind words, London felt like she had achieved one of her main goals. She had managed to make their friends feel at home. Now, she needed to make sure that this went on for the rest of the trip, on board the ship, off board, of course.

The sun already pointed noon when it came the time for those who were about to say goodbye to their families, mainly Maddie, London, Max and Barbara. Unlike the rest of the gang, who were going to travel with their families tagging along, Maddie and the rest of the girls had to say goodbye
to their families, who were staying behind.

Needless to say, that all four of them cried when saying good bye to them.

“Now, Maddie, don’t cry.” –Irving told his younger daughter, also trying not to cry. –”We’ll see each others on Thanksgiving.”

“Your father is right, honey.” –Miranda said, as she hugged her daughter. Unlike her husband, she could not help but to cry, while holding Maddie in her arms.

“I know, mom, but still… it will look like an eternity.”

“Oh, time will go by so fast that when you least expect it, we’ll be knocking at your door.”

“Your girlfriend and your friends will make sure that you won’t get bored.” –Gennie told her younger sister, as she also gave her a big hug.

“Yeah, and besides, we’re just a phone call or a click on the web.” –Liam assured her, while giving Maddie a very big bear hug, to her and London. –“London, make sure to treat her well.

“I will, don’t worry.” –London answered him, as she also said goodbye to her mom, by hugging her. –“Do you really have to go, mom?”

“I’m afraid I can’t, sweetie.” –Akita told her daughter. –“You know that my work prevents me from doing this trip with you all.”

And London knew that her mother was telling the truth. As a jewel designer, she was constantly travelling around the world, not only to find the best materials for her works, but also to inspire herself. Only in the summer, did she take a break from all of her work.

“I know, mom, I know. Still, I wished you could.” –London told her.

“But don’t worry. Like Maddie’s mom said, you’ll see me soon. And next time, I’ll bring your father along, even if I have to drag him.” –Akita joked about it.

It was hard for them to say goodbye to those who they love, but the girls knew that once the ship departed and they saw themselves in motion, they would feel better. They all accompanied the Fitzpatricks, Akita and Barbara and Max’s parents to the exit ramp.

“Have a safe journey.” –Barbara’s father wished them all.

“And remember, write us a postcard.” –Max’s mom told her daughter.

“Mom, nobody writes letters nowadays… we text or send e-mails.” –Max joked about it, while trying not to shed a single tear. She did not want her parents to see her crying.

“Oh, whatever, just remember to write us, okay? We wanna know where you are, and what you’re up to.” –Max’s mom warned her. –“Be sure to take care of Max, Zack.”

“I will, Mrs.Vaughn.” –Zack quickly told her.

“You do the same thing with Barbara, Cody.” –Barbara’s dad told the second Martin twin.
“You can count on me, Mr. Brownstein.” –Cody assured him. He would make everything in his power to protect Barbara, although he knew Barbara could take care of herself; after all she was a sho-dan, or first level black belt in Judo.

As they went down the boarding ramp, everyone kept waving them goodbye. Just like them, the rest of the parents and family that had come say goodbye to their children began to disembark. As the last of the parents exited the ship, the gangways were closed and the boarding ramps were pulled.

People began to gather on the poop deck where they began to wave goodbye to those who stayed. The people were so many that the gang had to be careful not to be split apart during that commotion. At the same time, the anchor was raised from the water; the thick mooring lines were dropped into the water, as the ship’s horn howled. It was time, the S.S. Tipton was leaving and it would only be back in an about 10 months.

“Goodbye! Take care!” –Maddie waved her family, as she bended over the railing.

“Goodbye mom! Goodbye dad!” –Max also waved her parents, who waved back at her.

“Goodbye!” –Barbara waved her family.

“See ya in a few weeks, mom!!” –London waved to Akita, who kept waving back at her.

Everyone on the poop deck and on the balconies kept waving to those who were on the docks, until those people became nothing more than tiny little dots in the distance. Soon, they were leaving the city of New York, as well as the iconic view of the island of Manhattan with its skyscrapers, as well as good old Miss Liberty. Needless to say that New York City disappeared, fusing itself with misty horizon they were now leaving behind.

As the S.S. Tipton made her way to the Atlantic Ocean, everyone on board all thought the same thing; This was going to be a wonderful trip. As for the Tipton gang, they all felt that this trip would forever change their lives, though they did not know when exactly, or how yet.
Our New Home

Already on high seas, people began to disperse. With so many things to do and with so many places to visit or hang out in that ship, it was hard for a person to choose what to do first. While some decided to visit the shopping district, others went to visit either the botanical garden or the aquarium, while others just stayed in the poop deck enjoying the sun and the sea breeze.

As for the Martin twins and the rest of the group, Carey, Felicia and Stephen decided to treat them to an ice cream. Going to the restoration district on the C Deck, the Caribbean Deck, they chose the ice cream shop that was more deserted, which in this case was the one named “Surf’s Up”. The shop décor had been inspired in the theme of the beach and surf, with most of the furniture being shaped like surfboards. The tables were shaped like them, the chairs and benches had been built with pieces of surfboards; even the building itself had a surfboard shaped door and windows. The waitresses were all wearing red or blue t-shirts with the ice cream shop’s logo on them, black mini-skirts and roller-skates, which made it easy for them to move around.

Taking a seat on one of the empty tables, a waitress quickly arrived, handing them the menus and waiting for their orders. Zack and Cody did not even waste time looking at the menu; they both knew what they wanted to eat… a Banana Split, each with four scoops of ice cream. Max and Barbara opted for a chocolate and caramel sundae respectively. London and Maddie decided to share the house’s specialty, the Strawberry and Lime Glory Sundae. As for Mark and Anastasia, they both decided to share a Knickerbocker Glory. Finally, the three adults decided to eat each a simple cone with a scoop each.

As they ate their ice creams, they kept talking about what they were going to do before that night’s dinner. Yes, that night’s dinner… like it happened on every grand cruise liner, there would be a dinner presided by the ship’s captain, where he would welcome them aboard. Of course, with so many passengers aboard, there would not be enough room for all of them, so, only a handful of people, per say, would have the opportunity to dine with the captain. Fortunately, London had made sure that she and everyone that hanged out with her would be there.

“Don’t gulp your ice-cream like that, Zack, or you’re going to end up with a stomach ache.” –Max told Zack, who was eating his ice-cream, as if had been weeks since his last meal.

“What are you, my mother?” –Zack asked him with a sarcastic tone.

“No, she isn’t. I’m your mother, Zachary Martin, and your girlfriend is right. Eat slower, or aside from a stomach ache, you’ll get a brain freeze and a week without television and Internet.” –Carey warned him, taking Max’s side.

“Yes, mom.” –Zack said with a low voice, as he started to eat slower. He knew that when his mother called him by his full first name, he should just comply and not say another word about it.

The rest of the gang all laughed. Zack’s antics always provided a good source of laughs, whenever one need to relax or just have a laugh.

“So, what do you guys plan to do before dinner?” –London asked them.

"I'll probably check out the ship. There’s so much to see.” –Barbara answered her.
“I’ll be in my room. I’m going to try and sleep for a few hours.”

“Well, I’ve got to check out the showroom where I’ll be singing during the next few months, before going back to the If anyone of you wants to, you’re free to join me.”

“Thanks mom.” –Cody said as he ate the Banana’s split cherry.

“I’m heading back to the suite and I’m going to sleep a couple of hours and play with my new mascot, which should have been left on the suite.” –Anastasia told them.

“Mascot? What mascot?!” –Maddie asked her.

“My new animal mascot… that’s right, I bought myself a cat!” –she happily chirped about it. –“It’s a beautiful black and orange tabby. Here, I got a picture of her in my cell phone.”

She took the cell phone of her purse and immediately showed them a photo of her new pet, lying on her bed. She was a beautiful cat, with very a lustrous coat. Her fur was reddish-orange with black stripes and her little paws were white, making her similar to a miniature tiger.

“Oh, she’s so cute… what’s her name?” –London asked her.

“I called her Bombalurina, because when I looked at her she reminded me of my favourite character in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical CATS.”

“Oh, that name is just perfect for her. She really does look like a Bombalurina.” –Barbara told her, envying her a little, because her parents never let her have a pet.

“I know right? She’s incredibly sweet and doesn’t hurt a fly. I knew when I bought her that I wanted to bring her along with me on this trip.”

“But, she’s not the only one who has a new pet.” –Mark told them, capturing everyone’s attention. –“I also bought myself a cat.”

“Don’t tell us you decided to imitate your girlfriend?” –Max asked him. –“Or don’t tell me that she was the one who imitated you?”

“Actually, none… we both bought our pets on the same day, and on the same store, when we went back to Boston.” –Mark told them, as he picked up his cell phone and showed them his new pet.

“That is so typical of both of you.” –Maddie giggled. –“Do you have a photo of your cutesy cat?”

“He’s not cutesy, he’s slender and ferocious.” –Mark told her. –“And, his name is Cheshire. He’s an Egyptian Mau, and yes I do have a photo of him here.”

“Oh, he’s so cute. You and Anastasia have such great taste.” –London said. –“And his name… only you would call your cat Cheshire, after the Cheshire cat on Alice in Wonderland.” –she said.

“Thanks, but let’s be honest, the hardest part in all this was to convince our parents here.” –Anastasia told them.

“It was hard on your part, because my dad here actually encouraged me to buy a cat.” –Mark pointed it out.
After they finished eating, they all went their separate ways. The twins followed their mom to her new working place, which was located on the E Deck, the Mermaid Deck. Just like London had promised her, Carey had a showroom just of her. Just above the door you could see a blue and golden sign decorated in a baroque style saying *The Sensational Carey Martin*. When they opened the double doors they revealed the inside was even more beautiful than any of the Martins had ever dared to imagine. The whole place had been decorated just like the old 30’s nightclubs with its beautiful atmosphere. The colours were mostly the beige and the baby blue. Looking at it, the place was more less the same size as the showroom back in the Tipton, but it was 10 or maybe 20 times more beautiful then that one.

“My gosh! This is so beautiful…” –Carey said, as she looked around, noticing every little detail there was. She had never worked on such a beautiful place. –“Boys, if I ever said anything bad about London, I take it all back.”

“This really is beautiful, mom.” –Zack said. He admitted that it was not his style, but it was nonetheless beautiful. Plus, he liked to see his mother smile.

“There’s no a doubt that London hired the best guys in the business to take care of this. She practically read your mind.” –Cody agreed with them.

“Oh, I can’t wait to start working tomorrow night!” –Carey exclaimed as she went up to the stage. Just as always, from the top of the stage, the view was magical, even if the audience was just her sons. –Boys, I know you already know this, but I’ll say it again… the next few months will be the best in our lives so far.”

“We know, mom.” –Cody waved his head.

“So, which songs are you going to sing tomorrow?” –Zack asked her.

“I still don’t know, but they’ll be cheerful, that I can promise you.” –Carey giggled.

At the same time, both Mark and Anastasia arrived to their respective rooms. When each one of them arrived, they saw that in the foyer of their suites they had a box waiting for them. Picking it up, Mark took it to his room, while Anastasia took hers to the living room.

When Mark placed it on top of his new desk and opened the lid, out came his feline companion, Cheshire. Just like he had told the rest of the gang, Cheshire was a very slender and beautiful Egyptian Mau. He did not like strangers, and he would only obey his master’s orders, even if Anastasia had told Mark that she would end up taming that “little ferocious feline” as she liked to call him.

“So, what do you think, Cheshire? Do you like our suite?” –he asked the cat.

The cat simply walked from left to right, lumping on top of the furniture, getting a good look at his surroundings. Finally, after about forty seconds, Cheshire jumped onto the bed and then meowed, before blinking his eyes twice.

“I’ll take that as a big yes.” –he said, as he grabbed him, and then sat, placing him on his lap. –“Now remember, don’t let Anastasia tame you. You’re a wild cat, who doesn’t like pretty things… you’re a rebel! I’m counting on you to stay just the way you are.”
Cheshire just meowed in compliance. To anyone else that had been just a simple meow, but not to his owner; to Mark, it had been a “yes, sir”. Mark’s smile just became broader, as he felt filled with pride. —“That’s a good kitty, Cheshire… or in your case, a bad kitty.”

At the same time, in Anastasia’s suite, after taking her new mascot out of the box, she began to pet her behind the ears. Bombalurina just loved when Anastasia did that. As she stroked her behind the ears, Anastasia felt like she owned her new mascot not for days but for years. It was such a strange, yet wonderful sensation.

“You like this don’t you, my little tigress?” —Anastasia asked Bombalurina, as she started to pet her on the lower neck. Bombalurina on her hand, just meowed, as if she was thanking her mistress for doing that to her.

As she kept petting Bombalurina, her mom entered the living room, heading towards her. In her hands, she was holding two cups of passion fruit tea, one for herself and the other for Anastasia. Sitting next to her daughter, she handed her the cup, telling her that it had two spoons of sugar, just like she liked it, and ran her fingers by Bombalurina’s belly, making her purr lightly.

“She really is so cute and precious.” —Felicia said, as she listened to the cat purring.

“And you didn’t want me to buy her? I guess you really changed your mind about it, huh?” —Anastasia shot at her mother, as she drank a sip of tea.

“Well, I do admit that initially I was a little unsure about you having a pet.” —Felicia said.

“A little? Mom, you practically opposed the idea, as if I was asking you to adopt an elephant or a rhinoceros.” —Anastasia laughed, as she picked up Bombalurina and gave her a big kiss on the nose.

—“Imagine, Bombalurina, mom here thought that having you as a pet would be the same as having a rhinoceros or an elephant.”

“I never said that! I just said that you would probably didn’t have what it takes to have a pet of your own!” —she answered in her defense. —“Still, I guess I’ll just have to get used to it, just like I’ll have to get used to the decoration of this suite.”

“There you go again with the decoration, mom.” —Anastasia chuckled, seeing that her mother had not completely got used to the idea of spending the next 10 months in a place decorated like Dracula’s room. —“Sometimes I wonder if you really are my mother…”

“Of course I’m your mother! I was just unlucky you inherited your father’s taste for the bizarre, the occult and everything that has ties with the darkness.” —Felicia sighed. Every time she talked about her late husband, it made her remember the time when he was alive, and the silly arguing they had because he had always been attracted to everything that was dark, creepy and sometimes disgusting, while she had always been attracted to cute and fuzzy things.

“Lucky me!” —Anastasia giggled as she placed the tea cup on the living room table in front of her, remembering the last birthday her dad spent with her, when he offered her, her first Goth make-up kit as well as her favourite doll, which was a Dracula’s bride doll. She thanked that had her father’s taste in things, and not her mothers. Don’t get her wrong, Anastasia also liked cute and fuzzy stuff, but they wouldn’t caught her dead wearing a pink dress and matching stilettos, like a Barbie doll.

“Yeah, lucky you and unlucky me.” —Felicia said, as she hugged her little girl, hugging her cat as well. —“There isn’t a day it goes by that I don’t thank God for having a daughter like you, my sweet
As Felicia kept pampering her daughter with hugs and kisses, up on the poop deck, or in the Wonderland suite to be more exact, London and Maddie were enjoying each other’s company, as London showed her around the suite; this time, showing her what she did not show her, when the rest of the people were around.

Just before the suite’s entrance doors opened, London gently placed her hands over Maddie’s eyes, stopping her from seeing what was in front of her. When the doors opened, London whispered to the blonde’s ears to go in front, as they were surprised by their pet dogs Ivanna and Scampy.

“Hi, fellas!” –Maddie exclaimed, as she grabbed Scampy and kissed him on the nose. –“Man, I’ve missed you, you little rascal you!”

“I take it you missed Scampy a lot.” –London smiled.

“You know I can’t live without him, just as you can’t live without Ivanna or me.” –Maddie laughed.

“You’re right; I can’t live without the two of you.” –London admitted, as grabbed Ivanna and imitated Maddie, by kissing Ivanna’s wet nose. –“So, are you ready to see the secrets hidden within these walls, Blondie?”

“Of course, I am, silly.” –Maddie told her.

“Okay, then… here’s the first one.” –London said.

At first, she did not see anything, but then, London pushed a small metallic circle on the floor, next to them, and the next thing it happened was a small section of the floor shaped like a square to slide underneath, revealing a hidden stairway. Scampy and Ivanna immediately began to yap nervously, not understanding what was really going on, forcing their mistresses to calm them down, by petting them on the head. When London told her about the hidden secrets, she really was not kidding around.

“A secret passage? Where does it lead to?”

“You’ll see in a minute… come on, you’re going to love this, my beautiful mermaid you.” –London told Maddie, grabbing her by the hand and gently pulled her.

Heading down the secret stairway, Maddie was soon baffled by what laid in front of her. Underneath that suite was paradise for all those who liked gyms and swimming pools. They had assembled an enormous a huge swimming pool. Looking at it, she loved it, especially the details regarding its décor, like being pink and having the Tipton logo stamped on the bottom of it. Seeing it too, both Ivanna and Scampy barked happily.

“London, I can’t believe this.” –Maddie told her.

“Well, you better start to, Maddie, because this is all just for the two of us.”

“Reeeeeally?” –Maddie asked her sarcastically, as an impish smile appeared on her face.

“Okay, okay, our friends can use it too… but you know what I mean.”
“Yeah, I do.” –Maddie told her, as the impish smile was replaced by a sweet smile. –“I’m already imagining all the pool parties we’re going to give.”

“Girl, I’m really a bad influence for you.” –London giggle.

“You said it. You’re my favourite poison, London.” –Maddie kissed her again. –“And if you were a snake, I would let you bite me all you wanted.” –the blonde giggled.

“Oh, don’t say that, you’re making me blush.” –London giggle, as she began to blush with those compliments. –“But if you think the pool is great, wait until you see this little surprise… believe me, it took forever for the geniuses of the Bioengineer department of Tipton Industries to come up with this by my request. It’s really something.”

Approaching a white table that was near the pool, she grabbed a small remote control that was on it, and pushed a button. Instantly, the pool’s water began to be drain out in a matter of seconds. Then, a few holes appeared on the pool’s walls and something began to pour out of them, filling the pool all the way to the top. When looking at it closely, the things that were on the pool were the size of marbles, but they did not look like marbles; they looked more like…

“Diamonds?! You filled the pool with diamonds?!” –Maddie exclaimed, not believing her eyes.

“Close, but no; they look like diamonds, feel like diamonds, but they aren’t diamonds. They’re little cubes of refined sugar, shaped like little diamonds, and then coated in a substance that makes them slippery enough to feel like they’re floating on water… in other words, it’s the closest thing to a pool filled with real diamonds.” –London explained to Maddie, whose eyes still did not believe what she had in front of her.

“I think you’ve been watching Duck Tales and reading too many Uncle Scrooge comic books.” –Maddie chuckled.

“Maybe, but don’t tell me you never wished you could dive in a pool filled with coins, or shiny gems?” –London asked her; but noticing by her face that Maddie never had actually thought about it, she said: “Not even in your wildest dreams?” –the heiress asked her in a childish tone, blinking her now sad puppy eyes.

“Well… maybe once or twice when I was five or six.” –Maddie giggled, as she approached London by the pool, followed by Scampy and Ivanna. sticking her left hand on those sugary diamonds, as she liked to call them, she loved the feeling. It was like London had described it. And more incredibly, when she took her hand out of it, it was absolutely wet. –“This ain’t half bad.” –She told London, as she wiped her hand with a towel the heiress had thrown to her.

“See? I told you. I bet that from now on, Uncle Scrooge will be the one jealous for not having a pool like this one.” –London told her, as she kissed her. –“So, did you like this first surprise?”

“I loved it.” –Maddie said, as she returned her the kiss. –“It’s a really sweet thing this gym and this crazy pool.”

“Well, if you think this is good wait until you see the rest.”

Taking her back to the above suite, followed by their dogs, who kept yapping happily, London took them to their bedroom. When they entered it, Maddie remembered that they had separate beds, instead of a kind-size double-bed. She did not say a thing, but she was hoping to sleep every night
next to London, as the couple they were.

“Let me guess… you were expecting a different kind of bed, weren’t you?” –London asked, reading her mind. –“You don’t have to tell me, because your eyes are telling me that.”

“Yeah, I would be lying if I said I liked this.”

“I know what you’re saying, sweetie. How can we snuggle at night if we sleep in separate beds?” –she asked rhetorically. –“It’s a good thing people invented secret doors and secret compartments.”

Finishing that sentence, London clapped her hands twice and the wall as well as the floor began to rotate, making the bed’s being replaced with a king-sized double-bed. It looked like magic, yet it was one of the simplest tricks in the world. The humongous bed seemed like it was tempting them to jump right in, so Maddie did just that. She jumped on the bed, loving just how soft the mattress was.

“Yipeee! Come on, London jump in!” –Maddie said, as she grabbed one of the pillows and squeezed it against her.

Not caring about formalities or etiquette, London jumped into the bed, making it shake like crazy, and then grabbed Maddie, putting her arms around her waist and began to to playfully kiss her. The sound of Maddie giggling was music to her ears, and she was going to make sure she kept giggling, by tickling her, all over her body.

“L-London, that’s not… (laugh)… fair!”

“All’s fair in love… (laugh). and tickle fight!” –London also began to laugh, as she tickled her. –“You’re the ticklish girl I know, Maddie! Cootchie-cootchie-coo!”

“Oh, yeah?... (laugh)... I’ll show you… (laugh)... who’s ticklish!” –Maddie exclaimed as she began to tickle London, making her giggle like crazy.

When they finally stopped tickling each other, they just stood there breathing heavily, trying to regain their breath, in silence. None said a word for what looked like an eternity. Finally, Maddie

“Another great surprise, no doubt about it.” –Maddie giggled.

“Thanks. I wanted this bed to be all soft, spongy and bouncy. I really hoped that this mattress stuffed with Egyptian cotton and red rose petals, over a water mattress would be something you approve.” –London smiled.

“It sure bounces a little, but not too much. It’s quite pleasurable.” –Maddie approved it.

“I told them to make it this way for when we decide to do some kinky things, while we snuggle at night.” –London told her.

“Which reminds me, did you plan on bringing a few toys for us to play?” –Maddie asked her with a naughty tone and a similar look on her face.

“No, I didn’t bring any of those we had… instead, I bought some new ones, which leads us to the third secret I have for you.” –London told her as she dragged her to their wardrobe.

Following her girlfriend, Maddie knew exactly what was going to happen; she was going to show
her their new playroom. And just like back in Boston, this one was located in a hidden room, deep inside their giant wardrobe. Just like the original one, this one could only be opened if you pushed a hidden button. Once inside, the blonde was blown away with what awaited them inside. The room itself was almost two times bigger than its sister back in Boston, and not only that, it had the double of the toys like armbinders, ball gags, harnesses, posture collars, shackles, collars, dildos, vibrators, among others, and of course, new BDSM torture devices like spreader bars, a Berkley Horse, a spanking bench, an X-cross, among others. Plus, they had at least ten brand new dominatrix suits, each one of them in a glass display case, and London would be sure to buy more of them whenever she had the chance. Each one of them was spectacularly sexy and beautiful, with colours ranging from basic black to cherry red, as well as navy blue, lily white, emerald green and nightmare purple, among others. It was hard for the blonde to actually decide which one of them was the prettiest, and which would look sexier on her.

“How did you manage to put all of this here without anyone knowing or thinking that you like these things?” –Maddie asked London, as she admired the collection of whiplashes, vibrators, strap-ons and other sexual toys that adorned two of the walls.

“I had three different teams coming in separately; one for building it, the second to decorate it and the third to assemble everything and put every little toy and accessory in their place. Of course, none of them found out where they were, or what exactly they were doing, because they were brought here in secret and paid a little extra to just forget about it.” –London explained her, as she ran her fingers through the collection of dildos in front of her.

“I guess this room is in a way the naughty part of Wonderland, right?” –Maddie giggled, as she checked on the shackles hanging on the walls and to all of the impressive BDSM devices that existed on the room. –“How much did all these things cost?”

“Don’t know exactly, but whatever the cost was, it’s worth every single last penny, because I love it and I tell you that we’re going to spend so many nights in here, kissing, caressing, yelling and punishing each other.” –London told her, finishing the last part of that remark with a naughty voice.

“You really are the kinkiest, most pervert, and lustful girl I’ve ever met... and I love you for that. I wouldn’t want my ass to be spanked, kissed, whipped or fucked by any other person, but you.” –Maddie told her, as she wrapped around London’s body like a snake, kissing her on the neck.

“S-Stop it, Maddie... (laugh)... otherwise you’re going to make me wet.” –London giggled. –“Man, she’s getting better every time we do it... her tongue feels as if it is alive.” –she thought to herself.

“That’s part... (kiss)... of the plan... (kiss)... my beautiful... (laugh)... vixen.” –Maddie answered her.

But as they were getting ready for some more action, both Scampy and Ivanna entered, yapping, happy to have found their mistresses, interrupting the girls.

“I guess they don’t want us to be naughty to each other just yet.” –Maddie said, as she let go of London.

“But don’t worry; we’ll have plenty of time for doing this and much more, later.” –London told Maddie, always smiling. People usually hated to be interrupted when making out, but not London. She always felt that whenever she and Maddie were interrupted, it was just a break, before the main course. –“Come on, I still have two more secrets I want to share with you.”

Once again, the heiress grabbed Maddie by the wrist and almost dragged her out of that room,
closing the door behind her. London sure managed to come up with awesome surprises and the
“secret diamond pool”, the rotating room and their new BDSM secret room had just blown Maddie
away. Still, nothing could have ever prepared Maddie for what she was about to be shown.

When they got to the living room, London pointed to what she wanted her to see. In front of them,
on the floor was some kind of light projector. She remembered about seeing a few more of those
spread throughout the whole suite, but did not pay real attention to them, because she really thought
they were just that. But after taking a closer look, she saw that these were similar to holographic
projectors she had seen in many futuristic films. Still, she knew that that kind of technology was still
a decade away… then again, it would not be the first time London would surprise her, by showing
her something that in theory should only exist in a movie.

“Is this what I think it is?” –Maddie asked London.

“And what might be the thing you’re thinking this is, Maddie?” –London asked her girlfriend, with a
playful smile on her face.

“Well, I’m thinking that this is a holographic projector, just like those you see in sci-fi movies.” –
Maddie told her, deadpanned. –“Am I right, or am I wrong?”

“You’re half-right, my strawberry shortcake.” –London said, giggling. –“It really is one of those
things you just said, but it’s only part of something way bigger… really bigger.”

“You’re scaring me, London… (laugh)… in a good way, I mean.” –Maddie giggled, joining
London. –“Come on, tell me what it is! You know I don’t like waiting.”

“I thought I was the one who didn’t like being kept waiting.” –London joked about it.

“I guess spending so much time with you is a bad thing for me.” –Maddie giggled, as she planted a
kiss on London’s lips. –“Come on, tell me what it is.”

“Okay, okay, I’ll tell you… it’s something Arwin has been working on for the last two months,
along with some of the biggest geniuses in the world, when it comes to computers, software and all
that stuff that makes my head spin, when I just think about it.” –London laughed. –“When I asked
for this they thought it would be impossible to come up with it, but it’s a good thing Arwin is such a
crazy inventor, who never accepts defeat, and whose dictionary doesn’t have the word
“impossibility” in it, according to him.” –London laughed once again. –“Maddie, ma petit chou…
my beautiful sparkling diamond… watashi no akachan, I give you Firmware Ram Analog Network,
or FRAN for short, our new Artificial Intelligence housekeeper.

As she finished that sentence, the projector activated itself and what happened next was something
the blonde was not ready for. A hologram appeared. This one was human, a woman to be more
exact. She was tall, brunette, light-skinned and she was wearing a beautiful red and black stripped
sweater, a black mini-skirt and red shoes. Looking at it, Maddie felt like she had seen her before,
though she could not picture where exactly.

“Why, hello there!” –FRAN exclaimed, waving at both London and Maddie. –“I’m Firmware Ram
Analog Network, or FRAN for short, and it’s a pleasure to meet you both.”

Maddie was speechless. She did not know what to say after seeing and hearing what she did. The
look on her face spoke for itself, she was in shock. London, on the other hand, was normal, as if all
that had been the most normal thing in the world. As for their dogs, Scampy and Ivanna kept barking
uninterrupted, because they did not understand what was going on. London had to calm both down, by petting them, because Maddie was still in shock. The heiress had to shake the blonde a couple of times, as well as call her out to bring her back to reality.

“Maddie! Maddie! Earth to Maddie! Are you still in there?!” –London asked her, as she shook her.

“How calling spaceship Fitzpatrick… do you read us?” –London joked about it.

“Uh… what did you say?” –Maddie asked, still a little confused about all that.

“Are you alright?” –London asked her.

“I’m fine.” –Maddie assured London. –“It’s just that I wasn’t really expecting this.”

“Oh, I’m sorry if I scared you, Miss Fitzpatrick. I didn’t mean to.” –FRAN told her. –“Can I offer you a drink, or perhaps a smoothie? Miss Tipton says that you love peppermint smoothies.” –the AI told her.

“FRAN; I told you already, don’t call me Miss Tipton, call me London, and also address to Maddie by her first name.” –London ordered her.

“If you insist, Miss T… I mean, London, I shall do that.” –FRAN said. –“Anyway, can I offer you something?”

“Well, maybe an explanation to all of this?”

“Let me explain you. I wanted our suite to have a housekeeper, or some kind of guardian if you prefer, and then it hit me, why not having a computer who does everything? And, of course, it would be our secret confident.”

“And, what about it looking exactly like Fran Dresher, as well as sharing her first name, huh?” –Maddie asked London.

“Oh, well, it was sort of a coincidence. I didn’t knew what the AI was called. I just knew I wanted someone who was always filled with joy and happiness, and well, I happened to remember about the actress… she was incredibly happy to be the model for FRAN.” –London explained her. –“Now, I think you both started on the wrong foot, so let’s start this from the beginning… Maddie, this is FRAN; FRAN, this is Maddie.”

“A pleasure to meet you, Miss Fitzpatrick, I mean, Maddie.” –FRAN giggled. Even her giggle was exactly alike Fran Dresher’s giggle. They had really programmed her so well, that if you did not notice that she was a hologram, she would pass for the real actress.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you too.” –Maddie replied.

“FRAN, would you mind shutting off for a little while? Maddie and I need to talk.”

“Certainly, London. If you need me, just snap your fingers twice.” –FRAN said, as its hologram shut down, leaving the girls once again alone.

“I know this was a bit sudden and I should’ve told you about it before turning it on, but I wanted to surprise you.” –London told Maddie, blinking her eyes a couple of times, while smiling tenderly to the blonde, trying to look as innocent as she could. –“Don’t be mad at me.” –she pouted with tiny
and child-like voice.

Seeing and hearing her girlfriend behaving like that, Maddie looked her seriously in the eyes. Her face was like the times she became upset by something London said her, or by an insult. But the expression on her face soon changed. A silly smile appeared on it, and she burst into laughter.

“How can I… (laugh)… be angry at you… (laugh)… silly?” – Maddie kept laughing. –“I’ll never get tired of your surprises, especially when you present them like this.”

Saying that, Maddie planted a kiss on London’s lips, which London returned, but letting her tongue play with Maddie’s, and for the next thirty seconds, there was only the two of them, and the rest of the world did not exist.

“And I’ll never get tired of the way you kiss me with those beautiful and delicious lips of yours.” – London told her.

“Well, there are more from where those came from.” – Maddie smiled to London, giving her an impish look with her eyes.

“But before that, I’ve got one last surprise for you…” – London said, as she planted a kiss on the blonde’s lips. She never got tired of tasting Maddie’s lip-gloss. –“Go and take a seat over there. I’ll be right back.”

Doing what London told her, Maddie took a seat on one of the couches, and waited for the heiress to come back. While waiting she decided to take advantage of the nanotechnology imbedded in the whole suite and decided to change the colour of the couch, as well as the pillows. She changed the colour of the couch to candy-cane red, as for the pillows, they were changed to vanilla-white. Giggling lightly, she decided to rest for a little by lying on her back and closing her eyes for just a second. She heard both Scampy and Ivanna who were now chasing after each other on another division of the suite. With her eyes still closed, she heard London’s footsteps getting closer.

Opening her eyes, she saw that London was carrying a book in her hands. Signalling her to lie right next to her, London gently snuggled right next to Maddie and showed her the book she went to get.

“This is the last surprise I have to show you, Maddie… remember that story I was writing with Mark a few months ago? Well, I finally finished it, and I want to read it to you.”

“You did? I still remember how good the draft looked like, so the finished version must be something awesome.” – Maddie told her.

“Oh, thanks, but I’m not a great writer, Maddie. Mark did most of the writing… I just told him the story and I helped him with a few details.” – London told her in a shy voice, being truthful about it.

“You know, a lot of Hollywood directors come up with awesome stories, but they ask help from other people to help him write the script. So, in a way, you wrote it, and I’ll be happy to read it with you.”

Maddie said the most truthful and cutest things a girl like her could ever say, and London just loved that. Giving her a big hug and a huge kiss, she then handed Maddie the book. Taking her time, she took a good look at the white and black cover, shaped like a yin-yang symbol with golden-trimmed letters. In the cover you could read “Light and Darkness; a story by London Tipton and Mark
“Now let’s see…” –Maddie began to read the envoy. –“To my dear sweet Madeline, my beautiful girlfriend, who’s also my best-friend and my one true-love… oh, Princess…” –Maddie could not hold her tears.

“Go on, the envoy is just the icing on the cake.” –the heiress told her, as she rested her head on Maddie’s right shoulder.

“Chapter 1: Acceptance… What makes love so beautiful, so unique, so pure, so amazing? Is it the fact that our hearts beat faster when we find the person we know is the one for us? Is it the way a simple smile’s able to express what a thousand words combined cannot say? Is it the fact that we have someone who likes us for our qualities, but loves us for our defects? Or is it all of that combined? Sometimes it’s hard to know what the answer really is, and for Ashley Terrence and Brenda Mockingbird it was not an easy thing to find out.” –Maddie read out loud, to London’s delight. She loved her voice and loved when she began to read for her. –“It’s an awesome start, London.”

“You really mean it?!” –London asked her. When looking into her eyes, Maddie felt like London’s subconscious had been replaced by the subconscious of little girl who eager for approval after showing her mother a drawing she had made just for her.

“Yes, I mean it, sweetie.” –Maddie told her.

“Well, go on. I like hearing you read.” –London begged her.

“But, what about the party? Shouldn’t we get ready?” –the blonde asked her.

“The party will only be at 8 o’clock. We still have lots of time, and I took the liberty of choosing what we’ll be wearing for tonight in my head. Besides, it’s a lot more important to spend time with you doing something I like to do, than worrying about a silly party. Besides, if I have to choose between attending a party and spending the rest of the day, alone with you, I’ll go for the second option.” –London told Maddie, as she placed her head over the blonde’s chest, hearing her heart beat.

“London… I’m surprised at you! It’s not a silly party; it’s the welcoming party for everyone on board.” –Maddie told her with a serious voice. It was really unusual for London to say that. Almost a year ago, she would have considered a party to be more important than anything else. Now, spending time with her was more important than anything else. Maddie saw that as incredibly irresponsible from London’s part, but on the other hand, extremely cute. –“Though, it is tempting, especially after so many emotions on the same day, to just stay here, snuggled right next to you, whispering sweet and lovable words.” –she ended the sentence with a mushy voice.

“Indeed it is.” –London snuggled closer to the blonde. –“Still, we have to go, right?”

“You know we have to.” –Maddie answered her.

“This is what I hate about being the daughter of one of the richest men on this planet. I always have to attend events, even when I don’t want to.” –London sighed. –“Still, I guess since you’re going to be by my side the whole time, we can consider this as a date.”

“Mmm… okay, a date it is.” –Maddie told her, as she opened the book again and began to read
where she had stopped. –“Now, where was I? Oh yes… For these two girls, their love was not an easy thing to find because of how their world and society were shaped. They had been both raised to believe that if they worked hard enough, one day they would find their prince charming and live happily ever after. What they did not know was that their prince would actually be a princess, and that life was everything but easy, especially when you love a person of the same gender.”
It had been an awesome party, in all sense of the word; that’s what London kept telling herself. Being the welcoming dinner and party for all ship’s guests it was something that everyone was supposed to attend.

There were a few parts of the party that had been just plain old boring like the captain’s speech telling that he and his crew were there to serve everyone, and assure that the cruise would not run into any kind of trouble, but other than that, the party was one of the best they had attended to.

For such an occasion London and Maddie decided to wear the most beautiful dresses they had in their wardrobe for such an occasion. Initially, Maddie told London that it was not really going to be a formal party and they should wear something simple, practical but still beautiful. It would be a shame to wear our best dresses for such a party, she told her. Listening to her girlfriend, London quickly understood she was right and that they needed different clothes.

When the party finally ended it was almost 1 in the morning. As the girls said their goodnights to the gang, they told them that they would see each other first in the morning in school, which led Zack to say one of his lame jokes.

“School?”

“Yes, school, Zack. What did you think? That we would forget about school, because there are so many things to do?”

“Well… yeah.” –Zack said. –“I thought that if I didn’t say anything, people would just forget about it.”

“Then, think again, Zack. You’ll be going to school aboard this ship, whether you like it or not.” –Maddie joked with him.

“Life’s not fair…” –he muttered to himself.

Saying goodnight to all of them, the heiress and the candy-counter girl went straight to their suite for a well deserved night of sleep, while the rest of the gang also head back to their suites to do the same. When they got to their suite, the first thing they did was taking off their shoes, tossing them around. Ivanna and Scampy were already asleep, so the one who welcomed them back was FRAN.

“Hey, galls! So, how was the party? Come on, tell me all the details. Did you take photos?!” –FRAN asked them enthusiastically.

“It was okay.” –Maddie told her.

“We had lots of fun, but we didn’t take photos. But don’t you worry, the photographers that I hired to photograph the whole cruise sure had a full night photographing everything and everyone.” –London told her. –“By tomorrow, they will have put them all on Facebook and on the ship’s photo gallery, and we’ll be able to see ourselves.”

“No, we’re fine. But thanks for asking.”

“Oh, I’ll be shutting down for tonight. If you need anything, just call my name and I’ll turn back on… by the way, before I forget it, your school schedule has been sent to your cell phones while you were out, so you better check them out before you hit the hay… See ya!” –she said, as her hologram disappeared.

“I think I’ll never get used to that.” –Maddie said. –“All of this still looks like a dream I’m about to wake up from, any minute.”

“Trust me, Maddie, it’s not a dream…” –London said, as she placed a peck on the blonde’s lips. –“… in a dream, my kisses would not feel this real, now would they?”

“I guess you’re right.” –Maddie kissed her back. When they broke the kiss, she said as she grabbed her by the hand and pulled her: “Come on, Miss Billionaire, let’s check out our schedules.”

“Miss Billionaire?”

“Yeah, I’m trying to come up with a new nickname for you.” –Maddie told her.

“Why? I thought we both had nicknames… you’re Blondie, and I’m Princess, remember?” –London remembered her, as they entered their bedroom, where they had left their cell phones.

“I know, but, I don’t want to get tired of always calling you the same thing, so I thought that I should come up with a new nickname; one that I could call you once in a while, so I wouldn’t get sick of always calling you Princess.”

“Oh, I get it… well, let me tell you something, that one is a definite no in your list of possible new nicknames.” –London told her, with a sweet and caring tone.

“Okay, then let me try again…” –Maddie said, as she began to think of a new nickname. She had thought about dozens of possibilities, but right then, she could not think of one that was even good enough to mention. –“Well, how about “Candy Apple”?"

“What am I? A girl from either Kansas or somewhere in the Midwest?” –London giggled, as she heard that suggestion.

“Okay, okay… then, what about “Sunshine”? After all, you are the closest thing to a real sunshine when it comes to beauty.” –Maddie said, acting a little coy.

“Sunshine… I like it, but it’s still not good enough; sounds a bit like the names of one of the “My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic” cartoon.” –London stated. –“Hey! Now that I think about it, I think I found the perfect new nickname for me… Rarity! And if I’m Rarity, then you should be… Twilight Sparkle!”

Hearing that Maddie cursed the fact she did not think about it before. She and London were both huge fans of the series… according to herself, a person was never too old to like cartoons or ponies, or the combination of both. Still, she was also happy that London came up with the idea. It felt good to not always being her having the best ideas.

“Hmm… I like it. You really do look and sound like Rarity, when you want to.” –the blonde said,
she picked her cell phone. –“But, why do you think Twilight Sparkle is the perfect nickname for me?”

“Well, you’re pretty and super smart, and you value friendship above anything else, when it comes to people that surround you.” –London explained her.

“Oh, I may be smart, but you’re just as smart as I am, and you also value friendship.”

“Maddie, let’s face it, you’re smarter than me. You helped me overcome so many troubles I had with school, and if helping someone to see just how easy things in school can be if you look at them through the right perspective, doesn’t make you smarter than others, I don’t know what it does.” –London smiled. –“Besides, you look way better in purple than I do… my Twilight Sparkle.”

“Is that so, my cute and sexy Rarity?” –Maddie giggled as she said those words. –“By the way, should I be expecting Spike to show up and try to take you away from me?” –she once again giggled, referencing the show’s baby dragon, who had a major crush on Rarity.

“I don’t think that will be a problem.” –London told her, as she began to kiss her repeatedly.

After a couple of smooches, the girls sat together on the bed, and opened the emails with their class schedule. They were quite happy with them, because although their classes started at 7:30 a.m. by 13:00 p.m. they would be as free as birds to do whatever they wished to do.

“Not bad… I mean, we don’t get to sleep until 8 a.m., but at least we’ll get to have fun during the afternoon.” –Maddie said. –“Too bad Zack and Cody aren’t in the same classes as us.”

“Well, we can always hang out with them later. Besides, Mark and Anastasia have the same classes as we do, so we

“Yeah, but I would rather not have any classes.” –London laughed. –“That way I could spend the whole time with you.”

“Well, we do have the same classes, so we’ll spend the whole time together, Princess.”

“I thought you were tired of calling me that.” –London said, as she playfully pinched Maddie on the arm.

“I guess I’m not as tired as I thought I was. But now, I have two beautiful nicknames to call you, and so do you.” –Maddie told the Asian beauty as she placed a peck on her lips.

A little later, while doing their bedtime routine, the girls had to go through their bags to find their toothbrushes. None of them had the idea, or the will power to unpack before dinner. Grabbing them, they quickly brushed their teeth, brushed their hair and put on their pajamas. Climbing into the soft bed, they snuggled in and pulled the covers up, laughing a little at doing it. It felt good to be in each other’s arms once again, feeling their warm bodies against one another.

“You don’t even know how much I dreamt about this moment.” –London whispered to Maddie’s ears.

“Well, me too… it seems like it has been decades since we were alone like this, just the two of us,” –Maddie told her, as she placed her arm around London’s shoulders, and kissed them.
“Yeah, so true; don’t get me wrong, being around our friends is awesome, and the same thing could be said, about hanging out with our families, but it’s really good to be alone, just the two of us.” – London gently turned her head to the left and kissed Maddie. – “It’s the only time we can do naughty things to one another.” – she whispered in a low and sensual tone. – “Which reminds me, what would you say if we tried something I saw in a softcore porn movie once?”

“I don’t know London, it’s been a tiring a day… I don’t know if I even had the strength to hug you until both of us fall asleep, much less anything else.” – Maddie told her.

“Oh, come on, Maddie, it’s not that hard… believe me, it’s something really softcore. Please, just a few minutes… if you do it, I promise I’ll kiss you until you fall asleep.” – London begged her, looking at her with her big beautiful brown eyes. – “Come on, don’t make me use my “sad puppy eye look” on you again… you know you can’t resist it.”

“Fine…” – Maddie sighed, giving up. She was really tired, but as one would say, curiosity killed the cat, and now she was dying to know just what London wanted to try with her.” - “What is it that you want to try?”

“Well, it’s basically this… we take a feather or something that looks like a feather, and we begin to tickle one another… of course, there’s a penalty for each time we giggle or laugh; the person who laughs or giggles has to kiss the other… after one of us gets 10 kisses, the loser must lick the winner’s pussy until she reaches climax. See? It’s not that hard.” – London explained to the blonde the game.

“I do admit it sounds tempting.” – Maddie said as she sat on her knees. – “Okay, but just one game, and then we hit the hay. We need to wake up early tomorrow.”

“Yay!!! I knew you wouldn’t resist… you have the most perverted mind I know, right after me, of course.” – London joked, as she looked around for something that she could use as a feather.

“Sure…” – Maddie said with a sarcastic voice, before laughing about it.

Another hour went by without the girls noticing. What was supposed to be just one game, ended up being three or four games. They both agreed that that was a fun game to play between them. When they finally looked at the clock and saw that it was that late, they both pulled the covers and closed her eyes, falling asleep almost instantly.

When they finally woke up to the sound of their new alarm clocks, the sun had already risen in the horizon, and it looked like it was going to be a beautiful day. The sky looked so pretty, it looked like a painting. As they exited the bedroom, the girls took a few minutes to enjoy the wonderful landscape that was in front of them.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” – London asked Maddie.

“It sure is… you see those little white things on the horizon?” – Maddie asked the brunette. – You know what they actually are? They’re icebergs.”

“Icebergs? You mean huge blocks of ice, such as the one that sank the Titanic?” – London asked in a playful tone. – “But they seem so little.”

“That’s because we’re still far away from them, silly.” – Maddie joked, as she hugged London and kissed her head. – “But who knows, we might just be able to see them up close while we’re in the
“If you want to, I can ask the captain to make a small detour and take us closer to them.” –London
told Maddie. Needless to say that the blonde knew the heiress was being serious about what she said.

“No, that’s okay. If we don’t get to see one up close, now, we’ll be sure to see at least one when we
reach Aunt Arctica.” –Maddie joked, teasing London about the way she used to pronounce
Antarctica.

“You meanie!” –London playfully slapped her on the shoulder.

After a few more minutes admiring the view, the girls quickly took a shower and got ready for the
busy day they were going to have. One small detail that London had not told Maddie about was that
while attending classes at Tipton’s High Seas School, they would be required to wear a uniform…
during the winter months; they would wear a heavier uniform, while during the summer months they
would wear a lighter uniform. During night, to each of the students it was sent two complete winter
uniforms to wear. The boys would wear a navy blue tweed jacket, matching pants, a white shirt, a
blue tie and a pair of sneakers. As for the girls, would wear a navy blue blazer, a matching pencil
skirt, white shirt, stockings and just like the boys, a pair of sneakers. All of the clothes had the
emblem of the school.

As she got them out of the wardrobe, and gently placed them on top of the bed, London noticed
Maddie’s surprise.

“You never told me we would have to wear a uniform.” –Maddie said, a bit surprised with that.

“I know, and I’m sorry. It just slipped my mind.” –the Asian-beauty said, noticing Maddie’s
expression. –“It was a bad idea, right? I should have kept it simple. Everyone would wear what they
like, and that was that.” –London said, feeling that it had been a lousy idea to adopt a uniform.

“On the contrary, Princess, I think it was an awesome idea. They aren’t dreadful or anything; in fact,
they look beautiful; they’re not high-couture or anything, but they certainly are beautiful and fancy in
their own way.” –Maddie said as she grabbed the blazer and felt just how soft the fabric was.

“You really think so?” –London asked her.

“Yeah, I do. I’m just sad I won’t get the chance to wear any of the clothes in the wardrobe, while
attending classes.” –Maddie stated, feeling a little sad about it.

“Well, actually, you will. You see, the uniforms are mandatory, but on Fridays you can wear casual
clothes… what? Did you really think that was going to force us to wear nothing but uniforms?” –
London asked Maddie, laughing.

“Oh, I don’t know… I mean, these uniforms are kinda sexy, you know?” –Maddie purred at
London’s ears. –“There’s something sensual about a girl in a school uniform that really turns me on.”
–the blonde purred once again, this time using a low, sensual voice.

“Me too… you know, if it wasn’t our first day of school, I would even suggest you to play hooky,
but we can’t have that, now can we?” –London teased Maddie because of the fact that the blonde
had always had a perfect attendance record.

“Well, I can say the same thing about you, after all, after you began dating me, your attendance...
record has also been perfect, and I’ll make sure it continues that way.” –Maddie told her girlfriend.

With their uniforms on and their hairs and make-up done, the girls went to have breakfast. Having a kitchen in their suite, meant that they could cook whenever they wanted, but on that particular morning, London ordered breakfast, which had been delivered while they were drying their hairs.

As always, London ordered everything they were entitled to. Bacon and eggs, muffins, croissants, orange and pineapple slices, toast, orange juice and of course, two delicious cappuccinos.

“Mmm… these croissants are so good. You got to tell Moseby to give a raise to the chef who made these.” –Maddie said, as she ate one.

“You’re right, he really deserves a raise for these.” –London agreed, as she tasted one of the croissants. –“Still, I didn’t tell the guys who built our suite to put in a fully equipped kitchen just because it looks pretty. I really want to cook meals for the both of us.”

“But can you even cook, London?” –Maddie asked her, already knowing the heiress couldn’t even boil an egg.

“No…” –London told her.

“Don’t worry, I’ll teach you. Remember, back at home, I used to cook for the whole family when my mom came home late at night, so a kitchen doesn’t have any secrets to me.”

“You mean it?” –London asked her, as she sipped the glass of Orange juice.

“Sure… by the end of this cruise you’ll be good enough to participate either on MasterChef or on Hell’s Kitchen.” –Maddie told her. –“It’s just like Chef Gusteau said on Ratatouille; anyone can cook.”

“Girls!!!” –someone screamed on top of its lungs, startling both Maddie and London. It was FRAN, which had turned itself on. –“What are you girls doing? If you don’t hurry, you’ll be late for your first day of school. Hurry up!”

It felt so strange for them to be warned by Fran Dresher to hurry up, especially because the AI was mimicking the actress’s character on The Nanny, and because she wearing a different outfit. London would have to tell Arwin to make a few adjustments, like turning down a bit of her voice volume. With their breakfast finished and their teeth brushed, they both grabbed their backpacks and made their way outside, to catch the elevator on the Neptune Deck.

But when they got there, an unpleasant surprise awaited them. No matter how much they looked, there was not a single elevator that was not completely full, and the worst part was that there were still people waiting to get on them. When they both realized that they would not be able to get there on time if they waited, London signaled Maddie and told her that they were taking the stairs to the Athena Deck. Climbing down the staircase, they saw they had not been the only ones to have that idea. As they climbed down, more and more people bearing the same school uniforms showed up.

“Looks like aren’t the only ones who had this idea.” –Maddie told London.

“I knew I should have asked for them to build an express elevator inside our suite.” –London said, cursing herself right then for wasting that incredible idea.
“Yeah, well, now it’s too late. Besides, this way we get to know the ship and better, and we take a little longer to get there.”

“What’s good about that?”

“Oh, I don’t know… maybe we can use this time to spend with one another, because once we get inside the class, we have to behave, if you know what I mean.” –Maddie gave London a naughty smirk.

“Yeah, once we go inside, we can’t kiss or whisper words to each other’s ears. Still, by lunchtime we’ll be as free as two little birds.” –London told her.

“By the way, I never got the chance to actually ask you, but who are our teachers? I hope you didn’t have the idea of recruiting Sister Dominique from our old school.” –Maddie declared, remembering the times she and London tricked the old nun, while attending Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow School for Girls.

“Of course not, I’m not insane… you think I would forget the punishments she gave us both?” –London laughed. –“No, my mom helped me choosing some of them. Most of them are complete strangers, but there are a few of them we already know, and I bet everything I have that Zack and Cody are just going to love to have him aboard… I made sure that their class had classes with him.”

“And who is it that we’re going to love to have aboard?” –a voice asked. Turning around, the girls saw the Martin twins along with Max and Barbara. Right behind them were Mark and Anastasia. Looking at them, London felt that she had absolutely done the right thing with uniforms, like Maddie had told her before. All of them looked fabulous in them.

“Good morning!” –Max said.

“Good morning, everyone.” –Maddie said.

“Hey, sweet thang! So, who is it that me and brother here are going to love as our teacher?”

“Don’t ask me, Zack, London’s the one was telling me all about it.”

“So, who is it?” –Zack asked London.

“Oh, you know him… he’s just your old P.E. teacher and basketball coach.”

“You mean… Coach Little?!!”

“B-I-N-G-O, and Bingo was its name-o!” –London exclaimed, as she pretended to fire a gun with her fingers.

“I can’t believe it… Coach Little! This is gonna be awesome!!!!” –Zack exclaimed and started to leap from one side to the other, as if he was a frog. –“Can you believe this, Max??” –he asked his girlfriend.

“Now you got me interested. What’s so special about this Coach Little? Don’t tell me he lives up to his name, and that he’s actually a midget?” –Mark joked about it, not even dreaming about the fact that he was absolutely wrong about that last statement.
“No way, Mark, Coach Little isn’t a midget, he’s a 6 feet tall giant.” –Zack told him.

“Yeah, he’s also a real softy, although he doesn’t like to admit it.” –Cody declared. –“Remember the time when we won that last game in the school championship and after the game he disappeared? We found him in the locker room crying out of happiness.”

“I sure did… he told us that he had something in his eyes… man, Coach Little is literally the best. Everyone’s going to love having classes with him.” –Zack stated what it seemed obvious to all of them.

“I knew you would happy about this, especially after he left last year.” –London told him, always with that dazzling smile of hers on her face.

“Yeah, we didn’t even have an opportunity to say goodbye to him,” –Max declared.

“Well now instead of saying goodbye, you can say hi to him.” –Anastasia told her.

“Man, this is gonna be great. Hey, do we have P.E. with him today?” –Zack asked Max.

“Why don’t you check the schedule? It’s on your cell phone.” –his girlfriend told him.

“Oh yeah, I forgot… here, let me see.” –Zack mumbled to himself as he took the cell phone out of his pocket. –“Here we have… dang! We only have P.E. tomorrow morning.”

“But, the trials for the basketball teams are this afternoon, and according to this post, Coach Little will be in charge of the tryouts for the Tipton Tridents.” –Barbara told him, after reading the news on the school’s website. It was really awesome to be able to do such a thing. Every piece of information was just a click away.

“Does it say anything about the tryouts for the cheerleading squads?” –Anastasia asked them.

“According to this, they will be in two days for all teams.” –Barbara said –“You’re going to try out, aren’t you?”

“You bet I am. What about you girls? Are you any of you going to the tryouts?” –Anastasia asked the girls.

“Yeah, we are. We had a blast being on the cheerleading team last year.” –Maddie said.

“Well, you won’t be the only ones attending the tryouts. We also decided to try for the teams. Me and Mark, along with Max, we’ll be trying out for the basketball team, while Cody and Barbara are going to try for the hockey team.” –Zack told them. It really surprised him when his brother told him that he was going to try out for a hockey team; Cody Martin, his own twin, the kid he knew that was always saying that he would rather exercise his brain by playing a game of chess, than to enforce himself into a more physical activity… sure he loved to skate, but playing a team game, that was a whole different thing.

“How did you convince Cody to even try for the team in the first place?” –Maddie asked Zack.

“It wasn’t me, it was his sweetheart.” –Zack joked.

“Barbara here thinks it will do me good to try new things, and since she found out that the teams are
going to accept both male and female players, and she also likes to play hockey. I’ll join her. Who knows? I might even start to like playing it, as much as I like skating.”

“And we’ll be there to watch it, and to cheer for all of you.” – Anastasia said.

Finally arriving at the Athena Deck, the place was completely packed. Most students stopped in the middle of the hall to admire its beauty and all of the statues and mosaics. The place really did look like a palace where a king or queen would suddenly appear to greet all of their loyal subjects who had assembled there to pay tribute to them.

As she looked around and saw so many people, the first thought that popped up on London’s mind was the memories from not so long ago, when she did not like to go to school. In a flash, all the memories about how she got kicked out of every single private school because she did not attend classes, how she ended up in the same school as Maddie, the infamous Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow School for Girls, on how they later got transferred to Cheevers High, and of course, of the time her father warned her that if she did not start to attend classes, he would cut off her allowance as well as cancelling all her credit cards came to her mind. But even more importantly, she remembered how she did not like to go to classes, because she did not understand what the teachers were saying, and how could those things help her in her future adulthood. It was only when Maddie decided to help her with all the school subjects that she finally began to take an interest for school. She had changed so much in such a short time, that sometimes it still felt to her as if everything was nothing but a long dream, from which she would wake up at any second.

Seeing London looking into the horizon, like when she was with her head on the clouds, Maddie decided to snap her out of it, by placing her hand on her shoulder, and gently shaking her, thus bringing her back to Earth.

“London, sweetie, are you okay?”

“O-Oh, it’s nothing, Maddie. I guess my mind decided to take a stroll down memory lane.”

As she finished saying that a melodious harebell filled the air. The sound was similar to the one you hear when attending school in Japan. It was different that was for sure, for most of the students that were in that lobby were used to the sound of a regular school bell.

Soon the lobby cleared out, and only a handful of students who were still a little confused as to where their classroom was, were still there.

For their first period Zack and Cody, as well as Barbara and Max were going to have Geometry, then American History and for their last period, they were going to have Biology. As for London, Maddie, Anastasia and Mark, they were going to have English Literature for their first period, then Spanish, and finally, just before lunch, they were going to have Arithmetic’s.

Zack, who believed that he was going to get extremely bored during classes, found himself enjoying the classes, for what seemed like the first time in a very long time. He did not know if it was the teachers or the way they explained the subjects, but he was enjoying himself. Of course, being Zack, he occasionally yawned when the subject was too boring, but then again, everyone also did that.

“Who in their right mind would want to have classes, when aboard such a cool ship, and with so many things to do?” - That’s what most students thought, as minutes went by and lunch time closed in.
When the harebell sound off for lunch, almost everyone felt as if a ton had been taken off their shoulders. With the afternoons free, the students could do as they saw fit; they could spend their time at the library, practice some sport, or just hang out lazily on one of the innumerable spots that existed on the ship.

But before doing any activity, everyone in the Tipton gang (at least, that’s how Zack had baptized them) needed one thing: lunch. While most students decided to have lunch in the school’s cafeteria, the twins and the rest of the group decided to have lunch on their suites, before meeting back on the poop deck, next to London and Maddie’s suite.

When they reached their suites, they either called room service, like Barbara and Max, or waited a little longer for their lunch to be done, like Mark and Anastasia. Both his dad, and her mom had had the idea of cooking up lunch for them, using it as an excuse in order to find out how their first day of school had been. As for Zack and Cody, they also had their lunch waiting for them, but Carey was nowhere to be seen.

“Mom! Mom! You’re home?” – Cody asked, as he opened the doors to every room in their suite, looking for Carey.

“I don’t think she’s in, bro.” – Zack told him, as he dropped his backpack onto the floor.

“And I think I know why, look…” – Cody said, as he noticed a sheet of paper with a message scribbled on it, on the kitchen table. –“It says: Sorry, went to check out a few last things at the showroom for tonight’s show. Your lunch is in the fridge; just put it on the microwave. P.S. I’ll make it up to you during dinner tonight. Kisses, mom.”

“And I thought things we’re going to change now that we’re aboard this ship.” – Zack sighed his brother.

“Come on, it’s not the end of the world… mom’s still trying to get used to all this, just like we are.” – Cody told Zack. –“Now, let’s see what did she left us for lunch.” – he said, as he patted him on the back, trying to cheer his brother up.

And finally, up on the Wonderland Suite, Maddie and London had decided to cook up something themselves, instead of ordering up, or going out for lunch. After changing into more casual clothes, the girls rolled up their sleeves and got ready to cook something delicious for their lunch.

“So, what do you feel like cooking, Maddie?” – London asked her.

“I don’t know really. Maybe something light like a salad… what about you?” – Maddie asked her with a playful tone.

“Me? I hardly can make toasts and scrambled eggs.” – London said. –“Well, I can also make a few salads.” – she admitted.

“Then it’s settled, we’ll make a salad.” – Maddie told her, as she ran her fingers through London’s dark silky hair. –“And since you know the basics already, I think we can go a little deeper then. I can teach you how to cook a few more things, since I’m used to make dinner for my family.”

As they opened the fridge, they saw all the goodies they had inside.

“You know, if you’re so good around the kitchen, why didn’t you try to teach me how to cook
properly before?” –London asked her, as she grabbed a lettuce and placed it on the work bench. –“I mean, we certainly had a few opportunities.” –London said, with the first opportunity that came to her mind being the time when her father temporarily lost their fortune, and she stayed with the Fitzpatricks.

“Hmm… let’s see, maybe because you didn’t care about that kind of things before…” –Maddie shot at her, with a playful voice, as she grabbed the bacon.

“True…” –London giggled. –“… back then I only cared about money, fancy clothes and restaurants, and jewels and what would be the next big fashion. God, I’m glad I changed.” –the Asian-beauty sighed in relief. She really loved the fact that was a whole new person thanks to Maddie’s love and friendship.

“And for the better too, my beautiful Rarity.” –Maddie giggled, as she called London by her new nickname, and then kissing her on the nose. –“I like you better this way.”

“I also like me this way, my Twilight Sparkle.” –London kissed her passionately, savouring the sweet flavor of Maddie’s lips. –“But I like… (kiss)… you better… (kiss)… Maddie.”

“Whoa… (kiss)… take it easy… (kiss)… Princess.” –Maddie said, as she broke the kiss. –“We’ll have plenty of time for that later.”

“Oh, but Maddie, I wanna kiss you right now…” –London pouted, looking at her with sad puppy eyes.

“You can kiss me after lunch, silly.” –Maddie said, as she placed herself behind the heiress, and wrapped her arms around her waist, slowly pulling the brunette towards her chest. London immediately felt the blonde’s breasts against her back, as well as the beat of her beating heart.

“Fine, but I won’t let you forget that promise.” –London said, as Maddie gently nibbled her neck.

When they finally stopped teasing one another, the girls quickly made a delicious salad. Grabbing the lettuce, the tomatoes, the pineapple, the sweet corn, the cucumbers and the oreganos, they prepared the salad as if they were painting a picture. To accompany it they made some toasts with various pates and some freshly squeezed orange juice.

“Very Mediterranean, don’t you think?” –Maddie said, as they both sat to eat.

“Indeed. So, do you have any plans for tonight? We could maybe go and see a movie, or take a walk on the botanical gardens, just the two of us.” –London suggested.

“I don’t know… depends on how tired I’ll be; but why? Did you have any plans for us?”

“Oh, not really…” –London told her; although in fact, the heiress really did have something special for them to do later on. Still, she did not want to ruin the surprise. Deep inside her mind, she knew that it would be something it would be carved in Maddie’s memory for the rest of their lives.
An Incredible Afternoon

Just like they agreed, the gang met after lunch to hang out together. They gathered in the B Deck, or Atlantis Deck grand hall, which had been rightfully named Atlantean Dominion. True to its name, the grand hall looked like it was a giant underwater gallery dimly lighted, giving it an underwater feeling. The beautiful white marble staircase had been sculpted and carved in order to look like it had been taken from an ancient palace or a temple. At the top of the staircase, three giant statues of Zeus, Hades and Poseidon were illuminated in a way it made them look like the gods were flesh and bone, instead of cold white stone. The blue ceiling was illuminated in a way it mirrored the ocean waves, which contrasted with the white Doric columns. In many ways, the staircase was almost identical to the one located on A Deck, or if you prefer, Neptune Deck, except that the statues were a little smaller, and it was not as worked as the other one was. Still, it was a marvellous staircase, carved with numerous details.

Numerous tanks were filled with fishes and other creatures such as jellyfishes, octopuses, eels, sea turtles and sharks. One could say that that hall was the biggest aquarium in the world cruising the seas. Plus, the whole hall was also ideal for any Disney fan to lose itself in a treasure hunt, for the room had been adorned with several Disney motifs of The Little Mermaid film, like two beautiful crystal statues of Princess Ariel in her mermaid form at the end of the staircase, not to mention, a beautiful mural with sculpted many other characters from the film like Sebastian, Flounder and others.

The first ones to arrive were Mark and Anastasia, who took the opportunity to admire the wonderful fauna that was in the tanks; and they were not the only ones. Many other passengers were also doing the same thing; it was almost impossible not to admire such beauty from the animal kingdom.

“So many jellyfishes… I think I now know how Marlin and Doris felt when they were surrounded by these little guys in the film.” –Mark said, as he tried to count how many jellyfishes there were in the tank.

“They look like they’re from another world.” –Anastasia told him.

“Just like you… but in a good way, of course.” –Mark smiled at her. –“I could easily stay all day in this place looking at the fishes… it would be as relaxing as when I’m with you.”

“Am I hearing right? Are you comparing me to a fish?!” –Anastasia asked him with a slightly angry voice. –“Mark Stevenson, are you telling me that I look like a fish?!”

“No, no, I’m just saying that they’re b-beautiful and that some of them a-are as beautiful as y-you and…” –Mark began to stutter a little, afraid that he might have said something he should not have, when he was interrupted by Anastasia, who placed her finger on his lips, and with her eyes told him to shut up, as her lips formed a mild smile.

“I’m messing with you, silly…” –she said, as she placed a peck on his lips. –“As long as you don’t compare me to a whale, you can compare me with any fish.”

“If you say so… still, you know that whales are mammals, not fish.” –Mark laughed.

“You know what I mean, silly.” –Anastasia giggled.
“And what would that be that you mean, girl?” a voice was heard, approaching the couple. Approaching them, were the Martin twins and their girlfriends, Barbara and Max.

“None of your beeswax, Zack!” –Anastasia told him with a playful tone.

“She’s right, none of your beeswax!” –Max told him.

The six of them then all took seats in one of the nearby couches that furbished the hall, and waited for the last two members of the gang to show up, which took a little longer than they expected. After having a light lunch, changing clothes and taking a little bit to feed, walk and play for a little bit with their pet dogs Ivanna and Scampy, Maddie and London made their way to the meeting point, where the rest of the guys awaited them.

“Finally, we were start to wonder if you had been thrown overboard.” –Barbara joked, as the girls sat in the couch in front of them.

“Sorry, we were having such a great time playing with Ivanna and Scampy, we completely lost the track of time.” –London explained them.

“I know what that is. I also lose track of time with my dog, Chief, or Mischief as my dad likes to call him.” –Max said.

“You never told me you had a dog.” -Zack told her. –“In fact, I’ve been to your house, and I never saw any dog.”

“That’s because I don’t have him at my house. He’s at my grandparents’ farm. Can you imagine me having a St. Bernard living inside that apartment?” –Max explained Zack. –“Chief is mine, but it’s my grandma and grandpa who take care of him.”

“Anyways… are we going to stay here and look at the fish and talk to each other, or are we going to do something else?” –Mark asked.

“Well, that’s kinda the point of us meeting here.” –Barbara said.

“But, where are we going to hang out?” –Cody asked.

“We’re aboard of a cruise ship, a floating city… places to hang out is something we don’t lack.” –Mark affirm the obvious.

“We could go watch a movie.” –Zack suggested.

“Or, we could go take a stroll outside in the poop deck.” –Anastasia suggested.

They all threw suggestions in the air. The problem was they could not reach an agreement. When four of them wanted to do something, the other two did not, or vice-versa. It the end, it was London who ended up suggesting the winning idea.

“How about we all take a tour through the ship’s bridge? I’m sure the captain won’t mind having us around, while explaining us how they command the ship from there. What do you say? Shall I call Moseby and ask him if that would be possible?” –the Asian beauty asked them, as she took her Blackberry from her jeans’ pocket.
The rest of the gang all looked to each other’s and assented with their heads. London immediately began dialling Moseby’s number. It only took a few seconds to answer.

“Moseby? It’s London… look, I was wondering if it was okay if we could visit the bridge right now?”

On the other side of the line, Moseby was a little busy with his work. He was going through his notebook to see if he had delegated every task there was to the right people. Being the Cruise Manager, he was in charge of everything regarding the functioning of the ship, from knowing what each restaurant aboard would be serving, to making sure that every passenger was having a wonderful time. It sure helped when he had numerous assistants who reported back to him, but still, it was hard work.

“London, sweetie, I’m afraid I don’t know. I mean, I suppose he wouldn’t mind, but let me check with the bridge and I’ll call you back in a minute.” –Moseby told her.

It took exactly one minute for him to call her back, saying that the captain and the rest of the bridge’s crew would be delighted to have them aboard, and that he would send someone to their location, who would accompany them to the bridge. London begged Moseby to be him to do that, but he told her that he just had too much work on his hands right then, promising to visit them later before dinner time.

The gang waited a few more minutes when a familiar dace showed up… Arwin. As always he was wearing his jumpsuit, but this one, unlike the one he wore when he was working in the Boston Tipton, was white and had the ship’s logo stamped on it. Around his waist he was carrying a work belt with several tools, like Frearson and Phillips screwdrivers, hex keys, a breaker bar, pincers, and ratchets, among others. Still, it did not matter what he was wearing, because he still wore his hair as he normally did, and was wearing his broken rim-glasses which had been fixed with duct tape. As he stopped in front of them, he saluted them with a big smile.

“Hello, guys! So, Moseby told me that you need someone to accompany you to the bridge, am I right?” –he asked them. –“Well, then, follow me. Esteban was the one who was supposed to accompany you, but Mr. Moseby called him to do something else, so instead of me, you get me.”

“Sorry if we interrupted your work, Arwin.” –Maddie said.

“Oh, don’t worry; Maddie, you haven’t. I was actually on my way to the bridge, or better saying, to a room near the bridge. There’s an air conditioner duct there that seems to have some problems, so, I’m going to check it out, and see if I can fix it. Can you imagine this? A brand new ship and there’s already something that needs to be fixed? Still, if nothing needed fixing, I wouldn’t be needed, am I right?” –Arwin kept talking cheerfully, as they went up to the poop deck.

Through most of the way, it was Arwin who kept talking while Zack, Cody and the rest just listened to him. People who passed by them would think that he was just boring them to death with his nonsenses about his work and about his crazy inventions, but the truth was they actually enjoyed hearing him. It reminded them about the adventures they all had had in the Tipton, back in Boston.

“So, how are you liking the cruise so far? Is it living up to your expectations?” –Arwin asked them.

“Until now, it’s been awesome.” –Zack told him. –“And we haven’t even explored the whole ship. Think you can give us tour of it later, and show us a few hidden secrets, and the best places for us to do a little spying?”
“Zack!!” – Max exclaimed annoyed at her boyfriend, as she punched him on the shoulder. – “What kind of question is that? And I thought you told me that you and your brother had stopped spying on others, because you’re getting to old for it!”

“Hey, I said we didn’t that as often as we did, but that doesn’t mean we won’t do it, once in a while. Besides, you never know when knowing where to hide when you’re snooping around someone might come in handy.”

“I think I’m with Max on that one, Zack. It’s not pretty to do such a thing.” – Maddie told him.

Hearing this, Arwin could not help but to let go a few laughs.

“I’m afraid I can’t help you with that. But even if I wanted to, I couldn’t. You see, the whole has a state of the art security system, which makes it impossible for anything bigger than a rat to walk inside air ducts, and other kinds of passages without being noticed, and you, well, as soon as the system detected you, an alarm would go off, alerting just about every security guard on this ship.”

“In other words, it’s impossible, right?” – Cody asserted.

“Pretty much… except, of course, if you have access to the main computer and deactivate it, and even that takes five different code keys, assigned to five different persons, one for each. Plus, each person only knows its own code, making it impossible to hack the system alone.” – Arwin explained them.

The conversation about the security system went on, as they reached the poop deck. The ocean breeze had become chillier since yesterday, a sign that they had entered the North Atlantic. The air also smelled different. It smelled like those cold winter days next to the sea. Looking around as they moved forward, they saw many other passengers walking around, most of them not bothered by the icy wind which began to blow.

“And well, if we may ask, who are those five persons who have the codes?” – Mark asked him.

“Well, you’re looking at one of them.”

“You mean, you’re one of the five?” – Barbara asked, a little surprised about that fact.

“Yep, that’s right. The other four are Mr. Moseby, the captain, the first officer, and last, but not least, London’s dad, Mr. Wilfred Tipton.”

“So, if there was an emergency of some sorts that needed the alarm to be temporarily shut down, the five of you would need to insert your codes in a console or a terminal, right?” – Anastasia asked him.

“That is correct. Oh, look, we’re almost there.” – Arwin said, as he pointed out a small written sign which said “Bridge”.

Following it, they climbed down a small staircase and saw themselves in a well-lighted white corridor. Mini-cameras had been installed in it. The only door that existed was a double-door with matching portholes at the end of it, with the word Bridge written on it. On the left side there was a key-card reader. When they reached it, Arwin took his ID card and slid it, thus opening the door. As soon as these opened, everyone saw just how big the bridge really was. Used to seeing ship bridges in movies, they all felt that those they saw in fiction were nothing, compared to what they had in front of them. The room itself was entirely white, with a huge scenic window with a view to the
ocean, and every last bit of equipment in it was state-of-the-art technology. In fact, the closest thing
to what that bridge looked like was the communication room of Zion, in the Matrix trilogy, and
needless to say, that did not even existed. Still, there were still two ship’s wheels, which was
anything but common to have, after all, they were inside a ship.

The number of people inside the bridge was quite high. There were various officers, a navigator and
of course, the captain. They had all seen him the previous night, but he was almost unrecognizable
wearing his white suit and captain’s hat. On his lapel you could see a tag with his name and title:
“Captain A. Andrews, the “A” was short for Alistair. The only thing that had not change in him was
his face. He was a man of his early 70’s, but he had the appearance of being in his early 60’s. He
wore his grey hair short and sported a full Donegal-style beard on his square jaw. He had thin lips,
and a pale complexion. He also wore spectacles over his blue-greyish eyes. Seeing them, he
immediately smiled and welcomed them.

“Afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the bridge.” –Captain Andrews cheerfully saluted
them with his thick British accent. -“As you know, I’m Captain Andrews, and I and my first officer,
Mr. Wilde here will be your guides.”

Physically, First Officer Wilde was quite different from Captain Andrews. Not only he was a lot
younger, in his mid-30’s, he had a tanned complexion, black eyes, matching black hair, clean shave
and was a little taller than the captain. He also had a very nice smile; the kind you expect to see on a
Hollywood star.

“Afternoon, everyone. Just like the captain said, we’re here to answer all your questions regarding
the bridge and its functions.”

When he saw that the gang would be okay, Arwin waved them goodbye, telling them that he would
see them later, and exited the bridge.

After a brief explanation of what were the responsibilities and jobs of just about everyone on the
bridge, the captain and the first officer showed them how they manoeuvred the ship and made sure
that everything was alright with the various parts of the ship. Naturally, the Tipton gang asked them
the kinds of questions one would ask on that situation; the most hilarious of all came from Zack who
asked if he could pilot the ship for a couple of minutes.

“Of course, lad, but before I let you do that, do you happen to have your driver’s license or your
navy diploma with you?” –the captain joked about it, making everyone else laugh about it. Once
again, Zack had been made the laughing stock of the group.

“That was a very good one, captain, if I do say so myself.” –First Officer Wilde declared.

“Why, thank you, and as for you, my lad, don’t take it too personal. I always make a small joke
about it whenever a young lad such as you asks me that.” –the captain told him.

“It’s alright, captain, Zack’s used to it.” –Max told him. –“Still, I also have a question for you. Let’s
say, in theory, that this ship capsized, just like in Poseidon’s Adventure, what would be the
emergency protocol in such case?”

“Well, to tell you the truth, young lady, the emergency protocol would be the same as it is in most
cases. I mean, there would be a few things we would do that we don’t do on other cases, but the
emergency protocol on most catastrophe cases is virtually the same. Still, the chances of such as
event occurring are one in a million, if not more, so you don’t have anything to worry about.”
“Well, I also have a question. I’ve read that the ship is powered by an experimental reactor, which uses a new kind of environment-friendly energy source, but I was wondering, does the ship also has other ways to produce energy and if so, is the bridge powered by just one of them, or both?” –Cody asked.

“I see you’ve been doing your homework, young man. And the answer is yes; apart from the experimental reactor, which powers up the engines and most of the ship, there are also solar panels which capture the sun’s light and turn it into energy. As for the bridge, she’s powered up by both the reactor and the solar panels.”

Next, they showed the gang that the bridge’s main computer’s software had been programmed to take control of the ship, in case something happened to the crew, or if in any case the ship exited its course, it would rectify it immediately.

“I can assure you all that the ship’s equipped with the most advanced technology, which provides us the perfect tools for us to assure everyone’s safety. In fact, I don’t even know what I’m actually doing here, since this ship could pilot itself without any of us here.” –Captain Andrews joked about it. –“Now, are there any more questions remaining you would like me to answer?”

A few moments of silence followed, and then the gang waved their heads; every question they could think of had been answered, so there was no point in keep the captain busy. They could easily imagine he had more things to do.

“Well, if not, then I must thank you for your visit and for all the questions you asked. Always happy to be of service.”

“Thank you, you, captain, for showing us around, captain, we appreciate it. Just the fact of knowing you and your crew are the ones in charge of the ship, it makes me feel a lot safer.” –Mark told him.

“Happy to be of service, young man. If there’s anything you need, don’t be shy about it, my door is always open.” –Captain Andrews assured them, as he and First Officer Wilde accompanied them to the Bridge’s exit door.

They all exited, with London staying behind; she told the rest of the gang that she had a private message for the captain from her dad. As she left, Maddie thought it strange, because the heiress did not tell her anything about it; still, if it was a private message for the captain from her dad, London was not exactly at will to tell it, or felt that there was no need to worry Maddie about it. Not wanting to think about it anymore, she just put it all behind her back, and quickly forgot about it.

Already back on the poop deck, they decided to take a seat on some of the deck’s reclining chairs so as to wait for London, who was taking a little longer than they expected her to take. Still, about two minutes later, she emerged from the staircase and into the poop deck, smiling.

“ Took you long enough.” –Anastasia shot at her.

“Sorry, but my dad’s message to the captain was really important and couldn’t wait. Still, I was thinking on what we were going to do next, and I believe I just had a really wonderful idea.” –the heiress told them.

“And what would that be?” –Maddie asked her, as London took a seat next to her, placing her left arm around Maddie’s waist, and gently pulling her closer to her.
“I was thinking about an afternoon playing bowling. What do you think? It’s been ages since I play it, and I’m in the mood for some friendly competition.” –London declared smiling at them.

“I think that’s a great idea.” –Anastasia said.

“I’m all forth it.” –Barbara admitted.

“It’ll be a new opportunity for me to clobber you all in bowling, especially you, bro.” –Zack stated, as he looked at Cody. Everyone in the gang, with the exception of Mark and Anastasia knew that Zack was an ace when it came to bowling, while Cody on the other hand was not.

“Still, Arwin is still better than you, so there.” –Cody pointed out.

“Yeah, but he’s an adult, so it doesn’t count. You’ll always be number two… no, number two thousand when compared to me.” –Zack bragged about it.

“Well, maybe, but at least when I get a job as a teacher in a prestiged university thanks to my intelligence and brilliant grades, you’ll be working in a restaurant, flipping greasy burgers.” –Cody replied back.

“Guys, guys, guys!!! Stop it!!!” –Barbara yelled at them.

“ Aren’t you ashamed of yourselves?!” –Max asked them both, absolutely furious. –“What are you, five?”

“She’s right, you know? You shouldn’t mistreat your brother like that, Zack, and you Cody, you shouldn’t do the same thing either.” –Maddie told them in a rather serious tone. It was times like that the blonde remembered that even though they were two kids who were wiser to their age, sometimes they still acted like little kids. –“I mean, come on, you two are brothers and you shouldn’t argue like that for such a trivial thing like who’s better at something, or which one of you is smarter than the other. Now, apologize to each other and bury the hatchet. And when I ask you to apologize to one another, I mean a serious apology, and then, you’ll apologize to the rest of us.”

“Alright, alright… I’m sorry for what I said, Cody. I shouldn’t have said it… and I also ask you guys to forgive me. Sometimes I have a big mouth.”

“Sometimes?” –Maddie said, sarcastically.

“Okay, most of the time. There, I said it!” –Zack exclaimed, admitting his guilt.

“Now you, Cody.” –Barbara told her boyfriend.

“Okay… I guess I also got a little carried away. I’m sorry for what I said, Zack.” –Cody admitted. –“And, of course, I apologize to all of you for my behaviour.”

“I think I speak for us all when I say that we accept your apologies.” –Maddie said with a radiant smile on her face. She, better than anyone else in that group knew that brothers and sisters tend to get on each other’s nerves, because they know which buttons to push, when it comes to insult, annoy and tease. Still, right then she would give anything to have her sister and her brother there with her. Making a mental note, she told herself, she would call them over the net, just to see their faces and hear their voices.
“Now, do you still want to go bowling, or are we doing something else?” –London asked them.

“We’re still up for it.” –Cody said.

“You know what? I have a suggestion… how about we make things interesting? Boys vs. Girls?” –Mark asked them.

“It’s a nice idea… unfortunately we can’t do that, because we’re five girls, and three boys in this group, so, you guys would be at a disadvantage.” –Barbara stated the obvious.

“If that’s the issue, I’ll play for the boys.” –Max said. –“After all, I play basketball, football, soccer, tennis and even badminton better than most boys. It’s only fair they get the best player around to help them.” –she said with a cocky, yet funny voice.

“Well, if you want to play on their side, I don’t see any trouble with it.” –Maddie said. –“What about you?” –she asked both London, Anastasia and Barbara.

“Be my guest.” –London said.

“I think it’s fair.” –Barbara said.

“I don’t see any problem with either. But just so you know, we’re going to wipe the floor with you.” –Anastasia joked.

“You’re on!” –all the boys exclaimed, accepting the challenge.

Aboard the ship there were six bowling alleys, but the biggest of them all, named “The Stardom” was on H Deck, or the Utopia Deck, which had been designed and decorated bearing in mind the visual aspects of planet Naboo from the movie Star Wars: Episode I. The colours present on it were the reddish pinks, the whites and the oxidized iron green. Still, the bowling alley decoration on the inside had nothing to do with the one on the outside. Its design was similar to the one seen in most bowling alleys, only bigger and grander; after all it had to be in order to receive so many passengers. Playing bowling was one of those things you could do either with your friends or with your family.

When they entered the first thing they heard was the sound of bowling pins being slammed into the ground by one of the countless bowling balls that were being thrown by the people playing. Looking around they saw that the alley also had a dance floor, where a few people, especially couples were dancing to the sound of a relatively quiet song. On their left, right next to the bowling alley counter there was the also a small diner decorated with the 50’s motif, where the waitresses were all sporting uniforms from that period, rolling around on roller-blades. And, on their right was a video arcade with all kinds of videogames, where at least two dozen or more people were. Feeling a little compelled to enter it, not to mention a bit curious about the place, Zack was the first to head in the direction of the arcade, with the rest of the group also following him.

Looking around, they all immediately recognized some of the arcade machines. From old classics like Sega Rally, House of the Dead trilogy, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Sonic Fighters, Space Paranoïds, and Daytona USA, to more recent games like Dance Dance Revolution and Transformers: Human Alliance, Hero’s Duty, just to name a few.

“Look at this place… this is awesome. I mean, we have pinball machines and other consoles in our suite, but this is something else.” –Cody said.
“I think I just died and went to Heaven, bro.” –Zack sighed in pure bliss. –“I could spend the whole trip here, surrounded by all these beautiful machines.”

“This place sure has a 80’s/90’s feelings, you know? I haven’t seen so many arcade games in one place in all my life.” –Maddie said.

“It’s been years since I entered in one of these, and I got to say, it brings back memories.” –Mark declared. –“Plus, I’m with Zack, I could spend some time here.”


“Not just the boys, it seems, look over there.” –Max pointed out to a group of girls who were playing side by side on two pinball machines. –“It looks to me the girls also like to play with the boys’ toys.”

“Well, I admit that there are a couple of games here which aren’t half bad. Like that one over there.” –Anastasia pointed out to an arcade machine not far from where they were.

The machine Mark’s girlfriend was pointing to was a double race car arcade game. It stood out among the rest of the arcade games thanks to its bright pink colour, with several of its characters stamped on its sides, double gaming cabinets, not to mention that the music that came out of it was highly contagious, for a person would see itself whistling the cheerful song almost immediately. Plus, its name was quite catchy and easy to remember… Sugar Rush.

“Sugar Rush… hey, I remember this one. It’s that game from that Disney movie, Wreck-it Ralph.” –London exclaimed.

“You’re right, it is. I didn’t even know they had had created an actual playable version of the game.” –Maddie said, a little surprised to also see it.

“I knew they had created a playable version of Hero’s Duty and of Fix-it Felix Jr., but not one of this.” –Zack said. –“Still, the game looked cool in the film, why wouldn’t they do it, if they did with the other two games?” –he rhetorically asked himself.

Gathering around the machine, they spent a couple of seconds admiring its design, as well as the game graphics on the monitors, which were actually really good. The whole ambience of the game looked like it had come out of a little girl’s wildest dreams, filled with chocolates, candy, whipped cream, lollipops, jawbreakers, cotton candy, liquorish canes, among other things. It definitely made people get cavities just from looking at it.

“Whoa, impressive. Hey, what do you say we play a few rounds?” –Maddie asked them.

“But it’s a girly game.” –Zack told her. –“Can’t we just play another game?”

“Girly game, my aunt Fanny, Zack. It looks like an awesome game. Besides, if it has all the characters that we see in the film, then it will be as fun as playing Super Mario Kart.” –Max told him. She clearly wanted to give it a try.

“Well, yeah, a little… but I still say it’s too girly.”

“Who’s up for a couple of rounds?” –Barbara asked.
“Hmm… what about bowling?” –Mark asked.

“We’ll leave it for another day.” –London answered him. –“I call firsts on the first round!”

“I call seconds! That is, if you guys don’t mind, of course.” –Maddie said, looking at the rest of the group.

“Be our guest, Maddie.” –Cody said.

“Yeah, it will be fun to see which one of you drives best, London, or you.” –Max told her.

Winking her left eye at them, she took a seat on the cabinet next to London’s. Searching in her clothes, she found her wallet, taking out a few coins, which she inserted in the coin slots; London doing the same. On both gaming screens, the game told each of the girls to select one of the players from the daily rooster. On that day the racers that could be chosen were Swizzle Malarkey, Taffyta Muttonfudge, Candlehead, Gloyd Orangeboar, Snowanna Rainbeau, Crumbellina DiCaramello, Vanellope Von Schweetz, Jubileena Bing-Bing and Rancis Fluggerbutter. Quickly, the girls selected their character; Maddie chose Taffyta Muttonfudge and London chose Vanellope Von Schweetz. Next, it was time to select the circuit. From the ones that were given to them, they selected Candy Cane Forest.

“Let’s burn some rubber!” –Maddie exclaimed, as she playfully pretended to put on a pair of imaginary racing goggles.

“You mean, let’s burn some candy, Blondie.” –London said, giggling, as she mimicked her girlfriend’s previous gesture.

The race took only two minutes, and Maddie won the first round; but then, the second one was won by London, and the girls had to settle it on the third race. They had already passed by half of the checkpoints, with Maddie in the lead, when London decides to play dirty. Managing to catch one of the power-ups, which were Sweet Seekers, she tried to obliterate her girlfriend’s kart into next Tuesday.

“You’re going down, Blondie!”

“I’ll see those Sweet Seekers of yours, and raise you a dosage of Syrup Puddle, Princess!” –Maddie laughed maniacally, absolutely focused on the game.

“I bet the one who loses will ask for a rematch, two out of three.” –Zack whispered to Max.

“That’s for sure.”–she agreed with him.

“The way things are right now, either one of them can win.” –Barbara said.

“But only one can win. Here guys, Anastasia and I brought you something.” –Mark said, as he and his girlfriend passed a milkshake to each of their friends. They even had brought one for Maddie and another to London.

And just like they predicted, the girls really went on to two out of three rematch, again, after Maddie won the last race. Changing their characters and choosing another racing circuit. After they had their rematch, and Maddie winning, the girls decided to let the others also try it. Soon, not only were they playing that game, but also others, while having a small crowd watching them. In their minds, the
only thing they could think about was just how cool spending time with your friends like that was. And without even realizing, that had turned out into one of those amazing afternoons… an afternoon which no one wants it to end.
Without them realizing it, the hours passed and before they knew it, it was almost dinner time. It was Barbara, who had gone to buy another round of milkshakes for them all and looked at her watch, seeing what time it really was.

“I don’t believe it. It’s almost 8 o’clock! Guys! It’s almost dinner time!” –Barbara shouted at the others who were busy watching Zack and Cody killing Cy-Bugs on Hero’s Duty.

Of course, the others did not hear her calling them. They were so focused in the game, following every step the twins’ characters did, that a person could try and yell at them the world was ending that they would not hear it.

They had already spent an infinite amount of coins, and still, they were only halfway through the game. The twins had managed to do what many had tried, but had failed, and that was to complete half of the game in just about two hours, while getting the high score in every mini-boss and boss fight they came across. They were now on level 7, in the massive laboratory floor, where the scientists from the game’s planet had begun to twitch with the Cy-Bugs, and the twins were having problems keeping up with all the enemies that kept showing up.

“On your left… no! On your right now!” –Zack exclaimed, as he blew up another pair of Cy-Bugs into oblivion.

“This is madness. For every one of these creatures that we blow up, another two take their place.” – Cody said in exasperation.

“You guys need to find the weapons’ vault and get your hands on some disintegration grenades, otherwise, you’re going to be in some serious trouble.” –Mark warned them.

“And where is that?!” –Cody asked, absolutely frustrated

“You just passed one, on your left.” –Maddie pointed out. –“See? It’s right there!”

“Hurry, before they get you!” –London exclaimed.

Since none of them heard her, Barbara had to walk to them and literally yell to their ears what was going on.

“Guys!!! Snap out of it! It’s almost dinner time!” –Barbara yelled at them.

That yell of hers, snapped them out of their gaming session, making Zack and Cody also lose their focus, and as a result of it, turning into Cy-Bug food.

“Barbara, you made us lose the game.” –Zack said, as he heard Tamora Calhoun saying her game over catchphrase: “It’s game over for you, ladies! Come back when you learn how to shoot!”

“Good thing too, or we would stay here the rest of the day.” –Cody told Zack. –“Glad at least one of us isn’t always with his head in the clouds.”

“Always happy to oblige, Cody.” –Barbara smiled at her boyfriend.
“Time sure flies when we’re having fun.” –Maddie giggled. –“I don’t even remember when it was the last time we all had fun like this.”

“Still, I think it’s safe to say that as long as we’re aboard this ship, we’ll have many more afternoons like this one.” –London said.

“We better. I still want to beat that game over here.” –Zack said.

“The Medal of Heroes will be yours one of these days, snookums’.” –Max told Zack, as she rubbed her nose on his, giving him an Esquimo kiss, making the rest of the gang laugh. Zack loved when Max did that, but he felt so embarrassed right then.

“D-Don’t call me that in front of the others…” –Zack hushed at her, as he became as red as bead.

“Come on, lovebirds, let’s go.” –Anastasia giggled, as she said that to Zack and Max.

Going back to their respective suites, they all got ready to call it a day, right after having dinner. Zack and Cody were both surprised by the fact of finding Carey there when they arrived.

“Hey, kids!”

“Hiya, mom!” –Zack saluted, at the same time his nose picked up a delicious aroma in the air. –“Are you cooking what I think you’re cooking?”

“And what would that be, mister?” –Carey asked him.

“Honey Mustard Mozzarella Chicken, perhaps?” –Zack asked, almost certain he was right.

“That is right, accompanied by fired beans and rice. But you’ll only get a taste of this, after a shower, both of you.”

“Consider it done, mom. By the way, you’ll be eating with us right?” –Cody asked her.

“Tonight I will, sweetie. My show only starts at 21:30, so I have enough time to have a decent meal with my two awesome sons, while also listening to them, as they tell me how they spent their day.” –Carey gave them both a bear hug. They had not seen each other’s for only a few hours, but to her, it had looked like an eternity since she saw them. –“Now, come on, hurry up with the showers. Dinner will be served in about 10 minutes.”

At the same time, in the Plato Suite, Max and Barbara had each decided to talk to their parents by the Internet, before ordering their dinner. They both told their parents what had happened during their first day of school and that they were loving the cruise.

“So, all in all, everything is alright.” –Barbara’s mom asked her daughter.

“Yes, mom. Everything is alright.”

“I hope you don’t plan on spending your classes making little eyes to Zack.” –Max’s dad warned her.

“Don’t worry, dad.” –Max said bluntly. –“I’ll only make little eyes to him, outside the classes.”
Finally, when it came the time for them to order dinner, they could not agree on what to order, so Barbara suggested that they should try and cook something themselves; after all, both of them knew how to cook, and they would not want to always ordering their food, when they could themselves cook it. In the Goth Suite, Felicia had already finished cooking a home-made anchovies, mushroom and peppers pizza for Anastasia when she entered, and in the Hernan Cortez Suite, Stephen had prepared some gumbo for dinner.

At the same time, London and Maddie arrived at the Wonderland Suite, where they were welcomed by FRAN, whom this time was wearing a French maid outfit, giving her an extremely funny look. It just was not enough she looked and talked like Fran Drescher, but now, she also mimicked the actress’s antics.

“So, girls, how was your afternoon? Did you have fun?” –FRAN asked them.

“It was a wonderful afternoon, FRAN.” –London answered her.

“I can’t believe we let it slip this kind of fun we love, and not doing this more often, you know?” –Maddie told London, as she sat on the couch.

“You’re right. I really believe we don’t deserve these friends we have. They’ve been our pillar of strength, who were always there for us.” –London declared. –“I know that they’re always saying that inviting them to come with us on this trip is beyond amazing and all, but I want to do more for them; they deserve it.”

“You’ll think of something, Princess. You always have such great ideas. Plus, if you need any help, my brain and my ideas are all yours… not to mention the rest of me.” –Maddie whispered the last part to London’s ear, in a very sensual tone. Licking her earlobe, it made the heiress giggle.

“S-Stop it, Maddie, that t-tickles.” –

“If you girls want me to turn off, so you can have more privacy, I can do that.” –FRAN warned them.

“No need for that, FRAN.” –Maddie said. –“Besides, we got to go and make dinner, and tonight, London, you’ll be the one to cook it. I’ll only supervise, and help you out a little.”

“I don’t know, Blondie. Something tells me that it’s going to be a disaster.”

“Disaster, smashster, London.” –Maddie laughed, as she got up and wrapped her arms around London’s waist, pulling her against her chest. –“All you need is a little self-confidence. Remember when you told me that you didn’t understand anything about The Raven form Poe, and then I helped you out? It’ll be the same thing with this. Trust yourself and me, and everything will turn out alright.”

“You’re so good to me.” –London said, as she slightly turned her head right and kissed Maddie on the lips. –“But, are you sure I won’t just burn our dinner?”

“Trust me, we’ll get you a simple recipe.” –Maddie told her. –“FRAN, do you have any easy dinner recipes in your database?”

“Are you girls kidding?! I have like a cajillion of those in my database, not to mention that I can always surf on the web to find even a few more cajillions if needed.” –FRAN declared to them.
“What exactly do you want to cook? A soup? A salad? Maybe a sandwich, or perhaps a quiche?”

“Something hot but that doesn’t take too long to prepare. And has to have eggs. An omelette maybe?” –Maddie suggested.

“Excellent idea, dearie. You go right into the kitchen that I’ll be there in a few seconds, with a delicious recipe, for your soul-mate to cook.” –FRAN said, as she disappeared in front of their eyes.

“I know I’ve said it before, but I’ll never get used to seeing her disappear in front of us like that.” –Maddie said.

“Ditto on that.” –London giggled.

When they reached the kitchen, FRAN’s holographic persona was already there, waiting for them. This time, she was fully dressed in a chef’s attire. Smiling at them, she said:

“I think I found the perfect omelette for beginners… a cheese, ham and mushrooms omelette. And to accompany it, a little bit of white rice.” –she emphasized, as she showed a holographic version of the plate.

“It looks simple, and with the right seasoning, it will taste even better, Princess. Ready to start?”

“I guess so… so, what do I have to do first? Break the eggs?”

“No, silly, the first thing you do is curl up your sleeves, wash your hands, pick your ingredients and only then, do you start to prepare them and cook them.” –Maddie explained her with a heart-warming smile.

Following Maddie’s instructions, as well as the recipe, London began to cook their dinner. Whenever she made a mistake, Maddie would tell her, and then proceeded to teach her. When it came to mix the eggs, the heiress could not help but to laugh… she had never thought that cooking could be so easy and funny at the same moment.

“Okay, I think they’re good. Now, we pour the ham and the cheese inside.” –Maddie said, as she handed the plate with the ingredients to her girlfriend.

“I’m starting to believe that this will actually be edible.” –London giggled.

“Of course it will, silly.” –the blonde kissed London. –“It will be delicious, and it will look beautiful… which reminds me, I think the plate needs a little colour. I think I’ll make a salad to go along with it.”

Saying that, Maddie went to the fridge and grabbed a lettuce, four cherry tomatoes, a can of sweet corn and a cucumber.

Finally, the only thing that was left was to wait a little bit for the rice to finish cooking, before making the omelette. While waiting for it, they set the table. To make it look more like a romantic dinner, London went to one of the cabinets on the room next to the kitchen and brought two candles. Placing them on a candlestick and lighting them, it gave the table a nice touch. Maddie smiled silently at the vision.

“I guess the rice is ready.” –London declared, as she tasted it.
“Then, let’s do the last part… or better, you’re going to do it. I want to see you accomplish this on your own.”

“I don’t know if I can do it… I’ll probably ruin it, Maddie.”

“Nonsense, you’ll do just fine.” –Maddie assured London; still, seeing in her eyes that she was a little afraid, she felt that she should help her a bit. –“But if it makes you feel better, I’ll help you, but just a bit.”

Placing herself behind London, she then placed her hands on top of hers, and whispered to her ear:

“Close your eyes, and let your instincts take control. You’ll be my hands, and I’ll be your hands. Remember, you can do this; just believe in it.” –Maddie said, making London smile, as she took a deep breath and closed her eyes. If there was something that London had learned was to trust in Maddie. If she told her that she could do it, then she could… still, sometimes she needed to hear that to remind herself that she can accomplish anything she puts her mind to it.

When the omelette was finished, Maddie told London to open her eyes, which she did. Seeing the perfect that they had cooked together, London almost exploded with joy. Slicing it into two, they placed them on the plates along with the rice. The smell was just delicious.

“See what you can do when you put your mind to it?” –Maddie chuckled.

“Yes, and it still amazes me.” –London admitted.

“Oh, it really looks delicious, girls. If I wasn’t a computer who doesn’t need to eat, I would totally steal both plates and eat them myself.” –FRAN joked. –“Well, I’m going to leave you girls alone now. Bon apettit.” –she said, as she once again disappeared.

Taking a seat, the girls took their time to gaze upon on each other’s eyes, like they used to do on their first months of dating. It’s not that they did not do that any longer, but it had been some time since the last time they took time to do that.

“You know what I love about your hazelnut eyes, Maddie? They’re absolutely perfect… I love it when the light is reflected on them. It gives you an aura of mystery.” –London sighed.

“And you know what I love about your almond-shaped eyes, London? The exoticness that they gave you. I could very well keep looking at them all day long, never getting tired.” –Maddie sighed.

“Oh, you always say the sweetest of things to me.” –London blushed, never taking her eyes off Maddie.

“Just because you also do that to me.” –Maddie told her. Looking into her eyes, she saw everything that London was to her. You could say that to her, London’s eyes were like an open book. –“But we shouldn’t be here complimenting on each other’s looks, while our food gets cold.”

“You’re right. We have time to flirt later.” –London said.

They kept talking as they savoured the dinner, which tasted better than any of them could have anticipated. The omelette was practically melting in their mouths; being an explosion of flavours.
“I know I already told you this, but I must congratulate you for this dinner, London. If I didn’t know you had never cooked an omelette before, I would say that you had been doing it your whole life.” – Maddie said, praising the Asian beauty’s culinary abilities.

“Oh, you’re just being nice to me, that’s all.”

“No, I’m not just being nice to you, Princess. You know me; I’m many things, but I’m not a liar. You are a wonderful cook, don’t think otherwise.”

“Well, I do admit that I’m impressed with myself… of course, I had a little help from you. But you know what? I was really nervous about cooking dinner, but in the end, I felt relaxed.” – she said, as she took a bite out of the omelette.

“My mom always told me that cooking is a wonderful way to relax and to find new ways to practice your creativity. Maybe in your case, cooking relaxes you.” – Maddie told her.

“Well, it’s not the spa, that’s for sure… but it certainly is the next best thing. Still, I think I was only able to relax because you were by my side, while I was cooking.” – London told her, refusing to take full credit for that dinner, which in Maddie’s opinion was absolutely divine.

After they finished, they took the plates to the kitchen and London told Maddie she would take care of their desserts; she wanted to prepare something special for her girlfriend. Leaving her alone, Maddie went to the living room, and sat on one of the couches, waiting for the heiress to bring her the dessert.

London felt like they deserved a treat which was both hot and cold. Opening the fridge’s icebox, she grabbed a box of Rocky Road ice cream and placed two big scoops each in two bowls, and then poured hot fudge on them.

“Hey, London! Are you making the ice cream or what?” – Maddie shouted in a playful tone.

“Patience, Maddie, putting ice cream in a bowl is an art.” – London shouted playfully.

Finally, after a few more seconds, she appeared with two bowls of delicious ice cream with chocolate fudge, whipped cream and a cherry on top. Upon seeing them, Maddie licked her lips in a very wicked manner. London seeing it, could not help but to ask her the lamest, yet funniest question one can ask in those situation.

“Do you see anything you like?” – she winked her eye at Maddie.

“I don’t know… I’m really not sure what to choose.” – Maddie said, as she looked at London, with a mischievously smile on her face. – “I don’t know if I’ll choose the ice cream, or if I’ll choose the gorgeous looking girl who’s holding it.”

“Why not both? I’m sure the ice cream won’t mind.” – London said playfully, as she sat on the couch, snuggling next to Maddie.

An ice cream never tasted so good to them, especially because they were sharing it with one another. They both left the cherry to be eaten last, and since they both had chocolate on their lips, the silently told each other by just looking into each other’s eyes that the only way to clean them, was with a kiss. Placing the bowls on the coffee table in front of them, the girls then began kissing, making sure that not a drop of chocolate or ice cream would be wasted.
“Can your lips get any sweeter?” –London asked Maddie innocently.

“And can your jokes get any cornier?” –Maddie giggled.

Too tired to go and wash the dishes, the girls decided to just stay right there, snuggling against each other. Eventually, Maddie began to yawn, while trying to keep her eyes open.

“What’s the matter, Blondie? Feeling sleepy?” –London asked her.

“A little… (yawn)… It’s strange, I wasn’t sleepy a few minutes ago.”

“If you want to, you can just close your eyes, while rock you a little, so you can take a little nap.” –London suggested.

“I don’t know, I’m afraid if I do it, I won’t be able to sleep later… besides, you told me you wanted to go for a walk.” –Maddie told her, as she tried to keep her eyes open.

“It won’t hurt you to sleep just a few minutes. Go on, close your eyes and sleep. I’ll wake you in half an hour.” –London told her, as she began to hum a little lullaby song to help Maddie fall asleep faster. –“Hush, little Maddie, don't say a word, London's gonna buy you a mockingbird. If that mockingbird won't sing, London's gonna buy you a diamond ring. If that diamond ring turns brass, London's gonna buy you a looking glass. If that looking glass gets broke, London's gonna buy you a billy goat, If that billy goat don't pull, London's gonna buy you a cart and bull. If that cart and bull turn over, London's gonna buy you a dog named Rover. If that dog named Rover won't bark, London's gonna buy you a horse and cart. If that horse and cart fall down, you'll be the sweetest little baby in town.”

London’s singing voice was ever so beautiful, and it did not take long for Maddie to surrender to her sleepiness, as she entered in the world of dreams.

Maddie kept dreaming, until she began to hear voices around her, but these voices seemed like they were muffled and the sound of multiple things beeping at the same time. Plus, she could hear what sounded like a kind of a loud gurgle. With her eyes still closed, she noticed she was not leaning against London. Still, she could hear her next to her. Slowly opening her eyes, she could not believe where she was.

Moving her eyes around, she tried to grasp what was going on. She was inside of what looked like a sci-fi machine. Analyzing the situation better, she assumed that she was either inside a spaceship, or a submarine. Looking outside through the glass front, the only thing she saw outside was absolute darkness. London was there with her, but still, when she fell asleep they were in their suite, and now they were somewhere else. All of a sudden, Maddie thought about the hypothesis of still being asleep and all of that being nothing more than a dream she was having. In order to find out if that was a dream, she pinched herself.

“Ouch!” –she cried, finding out that all of that was not a dream and that she was not asleep.

“Oh, you’re awake, sleepyhead!” –London exclaimed, smiling at her.

“London, where are we, and how did we end up here?”
“Oh, don’t worry, Maddie, it’s okay, we’re just in a submarine.”

“A submarine?!! And how in the blue blazes did we get inside a submarine? For any matters, where did you get a submarine?!” –Maddie asked her, with a sarcastic tone, expecting an answer.

“Oh, that’s easy, silly. The ship is equipped with a fleet of mini subs, a fleet of 26 mini subs to be exact. When I said that this cruise was going to revolutionize the way of learning and teaching I really meant it. With these people will be able to explore the sea first hand.”

“I see… but that doesn’t explain what I’m doing inside one, or how I got inside it!” –Maddie said.

“Well, we’re the ones responsible for that.” –a voice was heard, coming from the radio-communicator. It was Cody’s voice.

“Was that Cody I just heard?”

“Yes, it was. We’re on the other submarine.” –he replied.

“O-kay, now this is getting stranger by the minute. What is going on here, and who else is here?”

“That would be us, candy-girl.” –another voiced was heard from the radio communicator. This time it was Anastasia’s voice. –“Mark and I are also here.”

“Hey, there!” –Mark said.

Looking out through both hatchways and saw three other mini submarines. These were white and orange, with the Tipton Industries logo painted on the sides; of course, she was only able to know this, because of the powerful flashlights that had been installed all around the submarines, making them glow on that everlasting darkness. And looking out through the hatchways, were the twins, Max, Barbara, Mark and Anastasia.

“Alright, London; you and every last tone of you owes me an explanation, and I want it now. How I ended up here, and where are we going?”

“Okay, okay, okay, I’ll explain everything to you, but you have to promise that you won’t get mad at me or the others.”

“I promise.” –Maddie said with a neutral tone.

“I don’t believe you.” –London told her. –“Say that you promise you won’t get mad at me or the others, with sprinkles and sugar plums on top.” –the heiress asked her, while using her baby voice.

Sighing deeply, Maddie did as her girlfriend asked her.

“Alright, I promise that I won’t get mad, with sprinkles and sugar plums on top.” –Maddie told her, this time with a more casual and friendly tone.

“I believe you… well, this all started…”

(Flashback sequence)

As all of them exited the ship’s bridge, London stayed behind in order to tell the captain a message
from her dad, or at least that’s what she wanted the rest of the gang to think.

“So, Miss Tipton, what is the message?”

“Actually, captain, it’s not a message from my father. It’s a request I want to make you.” –London said, as she took a small piece of paper, along with a small sealed envelope from her jeans’ back pocket.

When he looked at the piece of paper she handed him, the captain raised his brow, not understanding what she wanted. In the paper there were a bunch of numbers. Looking at it better, he noticed that they were not just a bunch of numbers; they were coordinates: 41°43′57″N 49°56′49″W.

“These are coordinates.” –he said.

“Yes, I want to know when will we arrive to those specific coordinates, and if it’s possible for you to stop the ship for a few hours? The reason why you need to do it is explained in that envelope.”

Looking at London with a very serious look in his eyes, then looking at the piece of paper with the coordinates once again, he smiled. He did not know London, but being the daughter of his boss, and also being the one who organized that cruise, he knew that she would not ask him something like that unless it was something really important. Opening the envelope, he smiled as he found out what her intent was. Looking at her once again, he said.

“Well, if this is really important, you don’t have to worry about it. We’ll be at this particular location in just a few hours. You can count on our discretion too, and I’ll give the orders for the technicians to have everything set for when the time comes.”

“Thank you ever so much, captain. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to go. My friends are expecting me.”

“Very well, miss Tipton, and don’t worry, everything will be done as you specified it.”

Heading outside, she was greeted by Anastasia who was the first one to see her.

“ Took you long enough.” –Anastasia shot at her.

“Sorry, but my dad’s message to the captain was really important and couldn’t wait. Still, I was thinking on what we were going to do next, and I believe I just had a really wonderful idea.” –the heiress told them.

(End of flashback sequence)

“So you lied to us about the message.” –Maddie glared down at her.

“Well, yes and no… I really had to give the captain a message, just not from my dad.” .London told her, as she looked at her making sad puppy eyes, just like a little girl. –“But the story ain’t over yet.”

“She’s right. There’s still more to be told.” –Max said over the radio-communicator.

(Flashback sequence)
Maddie had fallen asleep faster than London had expected her to. Her light snoring, and the peaceful look on her face made her look like an angel to the heiress’s eyes.

“Maybe I overdid with the crushed sleeping pills on her ice cream.” –she thought to herself. –“Now, it’s time for me to call the guys.” –she said, as she grabbed her cellphone.

A few minutes later, the gang was knocking at the door. She answered the door, and told to come in. None of them actually knew why she had called them. The only thing they knew was that London told them that it was really super important, and they needed to come quickly. To the twins and their girlfriends it had been easy, and the same could be said for Mark, but Anastasia, she had to convince her mother that she would come back in a jiffy.

“Hey, don’t tell me Maddie’s already asleep?” –Barbara asked London, after seeing the blonde sound asleep on the sofa.

“Be quiet.” –London hushed, begging them all to be really quiet. –“She can’t wake up, or it will spoil the surprise.”

“What surprise?” –Cody asked her.

“The surprise that I’ve been preparing for her and for you guys.” –London whispered at them. –“I’ll tell you everything when we’re aboard the mini-submarines.”

“Mini-submarines?!” –Mark asked her. –“London, what are you planning.”

“I’ll tell you everything when we get to Deck M, the Mermaid Deck. Now, help me get Maddie there. I can’t get her there by myself.” –London signalled them. –“Come on, Mark, she can piggyback on you.”

“Why me?”

“Because you’re stronger than either Zack or Cody; I mean, they could carry her together, but then she might wake up.” –the heiress told him.

“Okay, okay, I’ll do it... you two, give me a hand with her.” –Mark said, as he approached the sleeping blonde and crouched next to her. –“Come on, gently grab Sleeping Beauty by her arms and wrapped them around my neck.”

(End of flashback sequence)

“So, you’re all into this?” –Maddie asked, knowing they were all listening.

“Pretty much, but she only revealed us what this was all about when we were already aboard these things.” –Anastasia said.

“And where exactly are we going?”

Suddenly, a siren was heard, as well as the voice of a man Maddie did not know, over the radio.

“3827 meters. You’re about to reach the ocean’s floor; Miss Tipton. And then, after 13 meters you should see her.”
“Understood.” –London answered the man.

“But what exactly you should be seeing here, in the bottom of North Atlantic, at this depth, in the middle of the darkness, London?”

“Oh, come now, Maddie, by now you should have pieced this puzzle together.” –London giggled. She was personally amazed of just how oblivious Maddie still was about where they were going to.

“Yeah, I mean, even I could have figured it out, sweet thang… eventually.” –Zack told her.

“Maybe it’s best if she sees it with her own eyes.” –Mark suggested.

“You’re right. Computer, activate outside lights, full power.”

Obeying London’s orders, all mini-submarines’ lights turned on and illuminated everything around them. And just like that, they all saw what they had come to see… the wreckage of one of the world’s most famous accidents; a sacred place that many believed should not be disturbed… the wreckage of the most famous vessel of all time, the Titanic, which now appeared to them, coming out of the darkness like a ghost ship.
Revival of a Legend

Maddie could not believe her eyes. In fact, almost all of them could not believe what their eyes were seeing. In front of them was the most famous ship of all time, and even though the place they were was considered by many to be sacred, given it was the final resting place of more than 1500 souls, who met their end on the night of April 14, 1912, they were extremely excited to be there. The wreck looked like something taken out of a horror flick, all rusty and decayed, showing the signs of time itself, but at the same time, it looked majestically wonderful.

“I can’t believe my eyes!” – Maddie said in ecstasy.

“You better believe it, Maddie. It’s the Titanic. Isn’t she a beauty?” – London smiled at her.

“100 years without seeing the sunlight and it still takes your breath away.” – Cody said, as his eyes observed every last detail from the bow.

“Seeing her coming out of the darkness like a ghost ship, it gets you every time. I mean, I’d seen pictures and films with it, but seeing it with my own eyes… it’s just like the difference between watching black and white television, and watching television in colour.” – Mark said over the radio.

“I know I said I was not going to say this, but, I’m going to say it… this rocks!” – Zack exclaimed.

Looking at Maddie’s face, London knew she was loving what was happening. She had once told her that one of her dreams was to actually see the wreck of the Titanic with her own eyes, and now, that dream had just been fulfilled. She looked like a little girl who had been given a brand new doll, and that made London super happy. Once again, she had managed to give her girlfriend a present she would remember forever and ever.

“So, do you like it?”

Maddie did not utter a single word. Instead, she held her left hand near London’s face, caressing the heiress’s chin with her fingertips, and then, planted a huge kiss on her lips. London quickly kissed her back, letting their tongues play with each other.

“I loved it, Princess.” – Maddie whispered to London’s ear, as she playfully nibbled her earlobe.

“Save that for another time, Blondie… I don’t want our friends to hear us having an orgasm.” – London whispered back to Maddie’s ear.

“Okay, later then.” – Maddie told her. Clearing her voice, she then asked her. –“But, did you just brought us all down here to see it, or does this deep submerge trip have any hidden meaning we don’t know about?”

“Well, there is another reason why we’re here, and you’re about to see it, after I press this little button here.” – London said, as she pressed a green button on the dashboard.

When she pressed the button, nothing seemed to happen. Then, a strange robotic sound echoed through the whole mini-sub, and outside, a robotic arm began to come out of the underwater vehicle, holding what looked like a metal tablet with something carved on it. Moving it closer to the bow of the ship, the robotic arm began to descend the tablet very slowly, as if everything was happening in
slow-motion, placing it on top of the bow, where other ceremonial objects had been placed before, like pendants, other metal tablets, among other things.

“What does it say?” –Maddie asked.

“Yeah, what does the tablet say anyway, London? You told us that it meant something, and that it had something to do with our trip and all, but you didn’t tell what it was, so go on, and start spilling the beans.” –Barbara asked over the radio.

“Okay, okay… when I was doing a little research about good luck charms and nautical traditions people did in order to protect a ship and all, I came across a few articles that said that it is seen as a token of good luck to place an offer to the gods of the sea next to a wreck of an old ship, not only to grant us a safe trip, but also to appease the souls of those who died in the sea.” –London explained.

“And since the Titanic was the first wrecked ship to cross our route, I thought it would be nice to choose it to place our offer, and also to fulfil the dream of a very special girl.” –she smiled at Maddie.

Needless to say words were not needed to identify who was the girl she was talking about with such passion. Still, they did not know what was carved on the tablet; but before any of them could ask again what it was, the heiress revealed the content.

“Take a look at it yourselves… zoom in on the cameras, and turn up the lighting and you’ll see…”

Doing as she told them, soon the message carved in the metal was as clear as day. It said: “To those who were taken by the sea; you, whose souls slumber in the waves, we beg you and all of the gods and goddesses of the eternal sea for a safe passage in our journey. In the words of Virgil “From one learn all” and “Come what may, all bad fortune is to be conquered by endurance”, and that is exactly what we all, students of the Tipton High Seas School want to do. By facing our fears and every obstacle in our way, we will gather the knowledge to make this world a better place for us and for the future generations.”

“That’s so pretty…” –Anastasia said. –“You wrote that, London?”

“No, I can’t say I have. I asked someone my mom knows to write something pretty to carve on a tablet for such an effect.” –London said.

“It’s really special… I bet everyone who died in the sea would love to know that even though they are gone, people still remember them.” –Barbara said.

“Plus, those quotes from Virgil, the damned poet; that was a nice touch. When you see the person who wrote it, give him my regards, because it is awesome.” –Mark said.

“So, now what? Do we go up now?” –Zack asked.

“Nope… not just yet.” –London said. –“I know this is a sacred place, but, coming down here and not explore such a sight, it’s like visiting Rome and not seeing the Pope. Besides, we still have enough oxygen for at least one hour of exploration… that’s why I thought we could explore the wreck with the help of these babies.”

Pressing another button on the dashboard, from each of the mini-submarine came out two ROV, short for “Remotely Operated Vehicle”. These were very little; in fact, each one of them was smaller than a sea turtle. Painted light-green and with the Tipton Industries logo stamped on them, they were stat-of-the-art, and London had spent no expenses ordering a fleet of them for all of the deep submerge
mini-subs that were on board.

“With these babies, we’ll be able to search the whole ship and see what’s in there. Their controls are on a box on your left, if I’m not mistaken.” –she said, as she also looked for them. When she and Maddie found them, they were similar to a joystick. Giving it a try, they all quickly learned to control them with ease. –“Okay, now, let’s go, remember, we only have an hour, so synchronize your watches to have them here back on time.”

“Just one question… what happens if we do get lost?” –Zack asked her.

“It’s not like you’ll be the one to get lost, Zack, only your ROV, but try not to lose it, because they were extremely expensive.” –London told him, giggling. –“Plus, they will be recording everything, including your comments, so check out cool places and say even cooler things about them… oh, and I almost forgot, we’re not taking souvenirs with us. I know it’s tempting to take a piece of the ship with us, but don’t do it, okay? Remember don’t try and catch anything that’s on the ship, or the sea bed around it. Have fun!”

Not having anything else to say, London and Maddie were the first ones to move their ROVs toward the bow, they wanted to get a good look at it; after all it was the most famous section of the ship. Mark and Anastasia decided to go inside, and search one of the interior decks. They were curious to see the state of things inside. Zack and Max decided to investigate the poop deck, while Cody and Barbara went on a little further to investigate the stern, or what was left of it.

On the bow, London and Maddie’s ROVs were now looking back at the mini-subs, as the heiress and the candy-counter girl waved at them.

“Hey, there it’s us.” –London waved back at the machines who were filming them right then. –“Come on, Maddie, wave back at ourselves.”

“You do realize that this is a little childish, don’t you?” –Maddie giggled softly.

“Oh, and don’t tell me that you’re afraid of looking childish?” –London chuckled at her.

“I am not… I just think that, we’re supposed to behave like people our age.” –Maddie chuckled, trying to sound serious, but being betrayed by her own voice tone.

“As if…” –London laughed her ass off. –“Come on, pretend that you’re five years old again, Maddie; it’s not that hard.”

“Okay… hey there me! How are you?” –Maddie laughed as she waved

“See? That wasn’t so hard, now was it?” –London asked her.

“I guess not… I’m trying to behave like a young adult, but you just don’t let me.” –Maddie laughed.

“You’re right, I’m not letting you, and you know why? Because you’re my girl, and I love you when you behave like this now… besides, you and I both have time to act like young adults when we’re like 20 or 21; so try and relax, and act like a little kid, because a few years from now, you’ll be wishing you were still this age.” –London giggled.

Hearing her say that, Maddie turned her head to the right and planted a kiss on London’s lips, smiling at her.
“You’re probably right once again, London… how do you come up with those philosophical statements I’ll never know.”

“Spending so much time with you has its benefits.” –London chuckled, as she hugged Maddie by the waist. –“That’s just one of the main reasons why I love you so much.”

“Well, you can tell me the remaining reasons when we’re back in our bedroom, you minx.” –Maddie playfully whispered at London’s right ear, making the brunette giggle.

“Okay, as you wish… but, since we’re alone, and the radio can be turned off, I guess we can flirt for a little, with this song.” –London said, as she switched off the radio communicator, and then pressed another button. Immediately a song they both knew echoed through the mini-sub.

Every night in my dreams
I see you, I feel you
That is how I know you go on

Far across the distance
And spaces between us
You have come to show you go on

“This is one cheesy-ass song.” –Maddie whispered to London’s ear. –“But it’s also very romantic.”

“Completely agree with you on the fact that it’s really cheesy, but there’s no other song I would rather hear down here, with you by my side.” –London told Maddie, as she snuggled beside her.

Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more you open the door
And you’re here in my heart
And my heart will go on and on

Love can touch us one time
And last for a lifetime
And never let go till we’re gone

Love was when I loved you
One true time I hold to
In my life we’ll always go on

“I know I said this like a thousand times by now, but even if say it another thousand, it still won’t be enough. Thanks for everything, Princess.”

“Oh, it was nothing… getting the permits to visit the Titanic was easy, I just needed to ask my dad to talk with the director of the RMS Titanic Inc., who happens to be one of his poker game buddies, and voilá.” –London told her

“No, not that… well, that too, but not that exactly. I meant, for everything… for your friendship, for your love, for the understanding, for your infinite patience…” –Maddie sighed.

“For the presents, for the kisses… for the sex…” –London giggled, saying the last part of the in a low and sexy voice.
“That too, you naughty minx…” –Maddie smiled with a naughty smile on her face, as she passed her right hand by London’s butt. –“In sum, for being my soul mate, my Rarity.”

“You’re right… no matter how many times you say it, it will never be enough, because I will never get tired of hearing it; that, and I’ll never get tired of saying the same to you.” –London told her. –“At least, until you keep kissing me with those lips of yours, and before you call me minx, I’ll call myself that.”

Near, far, wherever you are  
I believe that the heart does go on  
Once more you open the door  
And you’re here in my heart  
And my heart will go on and on

You’re here, there’s nothing I fear  
And I know that my heart will go on  
We’ll stay forever this way  
You are safe in my heart  
And my heart will go on and on

At the same time, already inside the ship, Mark and Anastasia’s ROV’s were slowly descending through what was once the First Class Grand Staircase… now, only an open shaft. As they reached deck B, both ROV’s entered in through the cavernous interior. The remains of the ornate hand-carved woodwork which gave the ship its elegance move through the floodlights, the lines blurred by slow dissolution and descending rusticle formations. Stalactites of rust hang down from the ceiling; in a way, giving it a look like a natural grotto; plus, the dim-light provided by the ROV’s make the environment look as if taken from a ghostly nightmare. Proceeding, they soon enter a corridor which is much better preserved. Here and there, they can see a door still hanging on its rusted hinges. On the walls they could still see some kind of ornamented pieces, thus shadowing a little bit of the kind of luxury the ship had.

“This is amazing.” –Mark said,

“It’s more than that… it’s mind-blowing. Can you imagine that no human being has entered this ship in more than 100 years? The whole ship is like a huge time-capsule, waiting for people to unravel its secrets.” –Anastasia said, feeling breathless, as her eyes tried to grasp every last detail of the images they were watching right then.

“That one was very deep, you know?”

“You think?” –she asked him playfully, knowing he was exaggerating.

“I do. Worthy of a literary award, really.” –Mark said, as he tilted the joystick, making his ROV go into one of the many suites that existed on that deck, with Anastasia’s following it as well.

“Oh, that’s so sweet of you… but you’re exaggerating.”

“Maybe, but you do love when I exaggerate.” –Mark told Anastasia, as he kissed her.

“Indeed I do… oh, look at that.”
Seeing it through the eyes of Anastasia’s ROV, was something neither he nor she would ever believe to still exist… a piano. Both of them knew about the story regarding the five pianos’ that had been ordered for the ship, the most famous of them all being the one that was at the Dining Saloon, on deck D, two floors above them. But this one was not like them, it was a different model. This one was an upright piano, leaning against a wall. The years, and the fact that it had been underwater for about a century, had not been kind to it. Still, you could still say the black and white ivory keys, as if they were ready to be played by anyone who would enter there. At its base, two albino crabs were crawling their way to the other side of the room.

“It’s ghastly beautiful. But you know what? It’s strange… I don’t remember ever reading about an upright piano aboard the ship.” –Anastasia said. –“I know there were five grand pianos aboard the Titanic, but this one is an upright piano… wonder what’s doing here?”

“I don’t know either… but, if I had to take a guess, I would say that this one here was probably the piano of the passengers who stayed in this suite.” –Mark told her. –“Imagine, being rich enough to carry your own piano to the other side of the Atlantic, just because you did not want to part with it… people back then sure loved to show just how rich they really were.”

“Not just then… even today everyone loves to do that.” –Anastasia said. –“Still, I kinda imagine the people who brought it with them… having to leave it behind, as the ship sank… it’s sad, really.”

“A little. But let’s not waste our time thinking about those things, okay?” –Mark told her. –“Look at it… I bet we could play a little symphony in it.” –he joked.

“Yeah, right.” –Anastasia scoffed him. –“If we touched it right now, I bet it would crumble into dust.”

“Probably right… still, it would be amazing to play a piano underwater. The acoustics would rock.” –Mark smiled at her. –“Now let’s see what other treasures we can find around here.”

As Anastasia and Mark kept discovering the marvels of the whip’s interior, a few meters above them were Zack and Max’s ROV’s filming the poop deck. Right then, they were on the port side of the ship, and trying to imagine the chaos that happened there a century ago. First class passengers all wrapped up in mink and fur coats, tuxedos and long coats, not to mention that they would be wearing the iconic white life-vests, trying to keep warm on such a cold and moonless night, while waiting to get into the lifeboats, as the Second and Third class passengers were all below, locked like caged animals, awaiting for either the ship’s crew to let them climb up to the poop deck, or the freezing water to catch them.

“Whoa… can you imagine this place crowded with people, trying to save themselves from certain death?” –Max asked Zack, as she tilted her ROV a little to the left.

“Yeah, it would be more crowded than a can of sardines. Everyone trying to get into a lifeboat, as if those lifeboats were the last Twinkie available.” –Zack told her.

“Zack… you really have a talent to turn a tragedy into a comedy, unnecessarily.” –Max sighed, waving her head in annoyance.

“What did I do this time?!” –Zack asked her.

“It’s not what you did, is what you said. People died in this place, and you start cracking jokes about it!” –Max told him, annoyed about her boyfriend’s lame jokes and lack of respect towards the souls
of those who died there a century ago.

“It’s my way to see things, Max, and by now you should know that I like to see the bright side of the dark side.” –Zack told her, also a little annoyed with her, for not taking the joke.

“I do know that, but you do know there are times when it’s best not to tell jokes. By now you should have learned that.” –Max told him, absolutely angry about it.

For about a minute, none of them said a word. Both of them said things they did not want to one another, and now, they wanted to apologize for what they said, but it was like a wall of silence prevented them from communicating with one another.

Still, it was Zack’s softer side that told him to tell Max that he was sorry. He had to apologize to her, not only because he knew he had done something bad, but also because he knew Max would never apologize first… he knew her too well to know he had to apologize first.

“Oh, okay, I’m sorry.” –Zack sighed. –“I admit I shouldn’t have said those stupid jokes, but you know how I am. I tend to make things look like they’re fun, even when they’re not. It’s just that… it’s just the way I am, and, it’s hard for me to change.”

Hearing that, Max just smiled, and hugged Zack.

“You’re such a dweeb!” –Max sighed in relief. –“But you’re my dweeb, Zack.”

“Does that mean I’m forgiven?”

“Yes, that means you’re forgiven.” –Max told Zack, kissing him, making him blush a little. –“Sometimes I wonder why I put up with you.”

“Maybe because I put up with you.” –Zack grinned.

“Point taken.” –Max sighed, smiling back at her boyfriend. –“Plus, you do know that this has been recording every last word we said so far, right?”

“Every time we’ll watch this and hear this argument of ours, we’ll be laughing like crazy, because we argued over such a trivial thing.” –Zack told her. –“We make the best couple I know… well, maybe not the best, but definitely the craziest.” –the twin laughed.

A couple of hundred meters from the main section of the wreck, Cody and Barbara piloted their ROV’s to the ship’s stern. For many decades, many believed the Titanic had sank in one piece, but there were others that believed the stern split from the rest of the ship, bobbled like a cork for about five minutes and finally went down, along with the rest of the ship. When they discovered the wreck in 1985, the answer was found out; the stern had really split from the rest of the ship, and landed 600 meters away from the rest of it.

Unlike the rest of the wreck, which was fairly well preserved, given what had happened, the stern was more like a pile of twisted metal, lying on the ocean’s floor, looking more like a freaky piece of art created by one of those

“Fascinating.” –Cody declared.

“What? What’s fascinating, Cody?”
“The power of Mother Nature, Barbara. Can you imagine the amount of pressure that was needed to crush this section of the ship? Now there’s a kind of power I wouldn’t like to mess with.”

“Neither I, Cody.” –Barbara told him. –“Still, even if it’s kinda creepy, this scenery is kinda romantic, you know? To be here, where only a handful of people have been… there’s a kinda of romantic feeling, because it’s a place that is special, you know?!

“Yeah, I guess… I’m glad you’re romantic enough for the both of us, because I wouldn’t remember of such a thing in a thousand years.” –Cody told her.

“Oh, don’t be so modest, Cody; you can be romantic when you want to.” –Barbara told her boyfriend.

“No, I can’t… I mean, I can quote a few poems from famous authors, and even tell you how much I love you by writing you a letter, and but, I’m not really the romantic type.”

“Sure you are… you’re a gentleman. Besides, if you weren’t romantic, do you think I would have asked you to be my boyfriend?” –Barbara giggled, as she asked him that.

“I thought I had been the one to ask you to be my girlfriend, and not the opposite.” –Cody laughed.

“See? By asking me first, you wouldn’t be a romantic person.” –Barbara declared.

“You really are something, you know?” –Cody told her. –“Now come on, I still want to explore the propellers.” –he said as he tilted the joystick of his ROV to the right.

It took them about the same time to get back to the surface that took them to get to the bottom of the ocean. During that time, they had the chance to rest and sleep. They knew that they would have to attend classes, whether they felt like it or not. Still, as they left the wreck to be engulfed once again by the darkness, they all had the same thought in their minds: this had been an awesome night, and they had the film and the photos to prove that had had not been a dream.

When they finally reached the surface, the team of technicians in charge of the mini-sub dock used special cranes to take the underwater vehicles out of the water, placing them in what looked like a reservoir. Helping them out of the mini-sub, when the hatches opened, their ears began to buzz, just like when you have a mosquito flying around them. The nap had really helped them regaining their strength for the day that would start in about an hour, when the clock stroke 7:30, plus, it felt good to breath the fresh air of the ocean.

“That one, was one for our book of memoirs.” –Anastasia said, as she exited the mini-sub.

“It feels good to be back on the surface!” –Cody exclaimed, as he stretched his arms.

“Am I the only one who thinks we should go to bed, instead of preparing for classes?” –Zack asked the others, as he yawned.

“No, you’re not.” –Mark said. –“But you’re definitely the only one who’s even considering that as a real option, you slacker.” –he mocked Zack, letting out an amusing laugh.
“Well, forgive me, if I’m tired as Hell, after such a long voyage.” –Zack laughed, as he yawned once more.

“You can sleep after classes, dummy.” –Max told her boyfriend, as she jumped on him, and playfully applied a noogie on his head.

“Ouch, ouch… not a noogie, not a noogie not that, please!” –Zack playfully begged his girlfriend to stop.

“Mark’s right, Zack, you can sleep later.” –Maddie also yawned.

“I just hope I don’t fall asleep in class.”

“Don’t worry, if you’re about to fall asleep, I’ll just kick you on the shins.” –Max giggled, making the others laugh.

“How thoughtful.” –Zack said bluntly, always with a smile, knowing of course she would not do that… at least, not if he kept his eyes open.

The day went by faster than they all expected. Before they noticed, night had fallen, and they were having dinner together. It had been Barbara’s idea, since Carey would not join Zack and Cody for dinner, and it was a good excuse to be with her boyfriend a little longer.

After dinner, they all went back to their suites and got ready for bed. In the Wonderland Suite, Maddie was seated by the bed, brushing her hair and getting ready for bed, waiting for London to come out of the bathroom, so they could snuggle together beneath the sheets.

“Maddie…” –London said, standing in the doorway of their bedroom, with a naughty smile on her face, which seemed even naughtier because of the black lace nightshirt she was wearing.

“Hey sexy… ready for bed?” –the blonde asked her.

“Almost… before that, I have something for you.” –London approached her, holding something behind her back. Sating next to her, she handed Maddie a large black velvet jewel case.

“What’s this?”

“Well, I was saving this for our anniversary in November, since it’s a very special present and there’s no one in this world I think deserves it more than you do; but… I thought that tonight would make it even more special.” –the heiress smiled, as Maddie opened the jewel case.

Upon opening it, Maddie was blown away by the case’s content. Resting on the velvety interior were two beautiful rainbow gemstones; their colour was like a rainbow; the centre was blood-red, and as it grew to the outside, the gem assumed a different colour, mirroring the rainbow effect. One cut in the shape of a Crescent Moon, and the other one cut in the shape of a shooting star. They were both so beautiful and magnificent, the blonde immediately understood why London was saving them for their anniversary.

“Good gracious… are these…”
“Diamonds? Yeah, they are. 75 carats each to be more precise” –London said with a childish voice, as she picked the one shaped like a shooting star. Placing it around Maddie’s neck, London kept looking at the blonde’s expression. She was just marvelled with the gem, but not because it was valuable: it was because of its beauty. The Asian-beauty smiled, knowing she had hit the jackpot with those gifts.

“I… I don’t even know what to say… they’re both overwhelming.” –Maddie declared.

“I know, right? They’re called the Zvezda nadezhdy and the Polumesyats mechty.”

“Say what?!?” –Maddie asked London, not understanding what she had just said.

“Oh, sorry, I forgot, you don’t speak Russian.” –London apologized to Maddie. –“They’re called the Star of Hope and the Crescent of Dreams.”

“Star of Hope and Crescent of Dreams… they do justice to their names, I can tell you that.” –Maddie said, as her right fingers touched the magnificently polished gem around her neck.

“They really do, when I saw them for the first time I had a face just like yours right now, and you know that I’m used to see some of the most beautiful things in the world with my eyes… starting with you, of course.” –London said, with the last part of her sentence being whispered in an impish tone.

“Oh, thanks.” –Maddie smiled at her, as she looked more closely to the necklace that was now around her neck, and the other that was still in the jewel case. –“And you’re right, they are truly beautiful. They look like a piece of something so beautiful that it fell from the sky. But, which one is yours, and which one is mine?”

“Oh, I thought we could share them both, you know? And, now that you say that, there is a story about it regarding them.”

“What story?”

“The story regarding how these gems came to be, of course, silly. All grand diamonds and jewels have a history behind them.” –London chuckled. –“But let me tell you about it. When I acquired these two beauties, the jeweller who sold them, told me their history, which I confirmed to be absolute true, thanks to my mom, who helped me with the research, as well as a Russian History professor she knows, not to mention of course, a test that confirmed that these diamonds are not from this planet.”

“Whoa, I’m not even going to ask you how much they cost, because they can’t have been cheap.” –Maddie declared. –“But go on, what is the story behind them?”

“Okay, okay, let me start it… According to historical documents, in 1906, a meteorite crashed onto Earth on the region Novosibirsk Oblast, which was pretty much a deserted region back then. But, luckily there was a shepherd with his flock who saw it falling form the sky, who decided to investigate. When he got to the crater he saw this smoking rock, a little bigger than a human fist, and had to wait until it was safe to grab it. When it was finally cold enough to hold, he grabbed it and he saw it was different from all rocks he had seen until then… it looked like a piece of a rainbow. Now, after seeing such a pretty stone, a man would obviously think about keeping it to himself, but not him… instead, he decided that only one person in Russia could have a stone like that one, and that
person, was the Tsar. So, he left his sheep to a friend and begin a journey of almost 9 years to San Petersburg, where he presented the precious stone to Tsar Nicholas II. The Tsar rewarded the shepherd and had plans to use the stone, which as you might have guessed, was a rainbow diamond, in a new sceptre… of course, he did not have time to do it, thanks to the February Revolution, which led to the end of monarchy in Russia. As for the diamond, it was taken to Moscow, then stored in one of the many vaults in the Kremlin for decades, until the end of the USSR, when most contents of the Kremlin were either returned to their owners, or sold over the years. The diamond was sold a year ago to one of the most prestigious jewellers in Russia, who decided to cut the diamond into two, and shaped them into the beautiful necklaces we have right here.”

“That’s quite the history regarding these wonderful stones.” – Maddie admitted, a little surprised with the whole story. – “To imagine that the original stone has drifted in space for what could have been millions of years, and now, they are here, shaped like a crescent Moon and a shooting star… it’s kind of romantic, because diamonds are said to be the stuff that dreams are made of.”

“It is, isn’t it?” – London asked her, as she hugged Maddie with all her strength, kissing her on the lips. – “Only the best for my very special girl.”

“You’re the sweetest girl in the world, Maddie… no, not in the world; in the whole universe.” – London sighed, as she hugged Maddie, even tighter, as if she was a big teddy bear.

Sugar Rush Sexiness

Two days went by after the gang’s trip to the bottom of the ocean. Everything was going smoothly with the trip and in about two days they would be in Ireland, their first stop. The gang had already started doing their homework about the country, gathering information about it, its culture, its history and other things, courtesy of their teachers, who ordered all students a three page report on Ireland, and more importantly, on the city of Dublin; after all, if they were going to explore the city, they needed to know at least where the most important landmarks were located.

Still, the gang also had other things to worry about, other than their homework. Like they had previously agreed, all of them were going to try it for the different sport teams. Zack, Mark and Max managed to get into the Tipton Tridents basketball team, while Cody and Barbara got into the Artic Breakers hockey team, but they were all really lucky. The amount of students who wanted to be on the team was so great that they had to do the tryouts in two separate days; which was a good thing, because they had completely forgotten about them on their first afternoon aboard the ship. As for Anastasia, London and Maddie, they were hand-picked by Coach Little himself, along with his two assistants.

The reaction of every last member of the Tipton gang was the one expected by someone who had achieved something they wanted. They jumped out of happiness, they began to yell, and even cry. Unfortunately, in order to maintain your place in the teams and the cheerleading squads, you had to earn it in sweat. And Coach Little, who was responsible for the Tipton Tridents was going to make sure that he had chosen the right persons for the job. It was late in the afternoon, and everyone just wanted the practice to be over, so they could hit the showers.

The only ones from the gang who had managed to escape practice had been Cody and Barbara, because their team would only practice on the following day. They had gone to support their friends, knowing that their trainer, Coach Rebecca, three time Olympic triathlete, would be as merciless as Coach Little, if not even more. But they were not the only ones on the stands. Many others had come to watch the practice, and besides, Coach Little did not mind having an audience as he worked.

“Come on, slowpokes! You can do a lot better than that!” –Coach Little yelled to the whole team, who were about to practically go into cardiac arrest.

“Coach, please, can’t we just call it a day?” –Zack asked him, panting really hard.

“Yeah, please coach.” –another of his teammates begged.

Looking at them, Little knew that they were all completely bushed. Even Zack, who he knew was a kid filled with energy and a high stamina, was absolutely worn-out. Still, if the team really wanted to have a chance to go up against the other basketball teams, they had to train really hard.

“The kids really need to rest… still, they can still push themselves a little harder before the practice is over.” –he thought to himself. –“Well, I think we can call it a day… after you give me five laps to the arena.” –he said, with an evil smile on his face.

“Five?!”

“You don’t think it’s enough? Then maybe you should run ten laps to the arena.”
“N-No, no, no! Five is plenty!”

“Stop talking and start running, you blabbermouth, before he orders us to run twenty laps to this place.” –Mark told the guy, whispering to him, so Coach Little would not hear it.

As the team began their last five laps of the practice, Coach Little went to where the cheerleading squad was practicing, under the close supervision of his two assistants. These two were two young women, named Christine Mason and Violet Ryan. From the two of them Christine was the smallest. She had blonde hair tied in a ponytail, brown almond-shaped eyes and tanned skin. She was wearing a blue and white jumping-suit, with matching tennis shoes. Violet on the other hand had raven black hair with two orange locks of hair on the left side of her hair, she had penetrating eyes like a cat and fair skin. She was wearing a red and orange jumping-suit, and black tennis shoes.

“Come on, gals! You can do better than that!” –Violet exclaimed, trying to encourage the whole squad.

“Just a few more minutes, come on. Start jumping on the tip of your toes… fifty times!” –Christine insisted on them.

Just like the basketball team, the girls were also dead tired and just wanted to fall to one’s side out of exhaustion. Some of them were not as tired as the rest, but even they were almost getting to their physical limit. Among this restricted group was Anastasia, who despite her tiredness, kept encouraging her colleagues, especially London and Maddie, who were about to drop dead on the floor.

“Hang in there, girls. Just a little more.”

“You said that… (pant)… ten minutes ago.” –London panted.

“I’m going to faint…” –Maddie gasped, trying to regain her breath, but to no avail. No matter how hard she tried, the air that entered her lungs was not enough.

“You can do it, Madeline. Take deep breaths.” –one of the other cheerleaders, a girl named Susan whispered to her.

“How are they holding out?” –Coach Little asked Christine and Violet.

“They’re good… I mean, they definitely need more training, but we chose them well, all of them, especially that Fontaine girl there.” –Violet declared. –“The others are good, but from what I’ve seen until now, she’s got everything to be the squad’s captain.”

“Is that so?” –Coach Little asked, intrigued.

“Yes, but, I think it’s too early to choose who’ll be the captain of this squad. Maybe in a week or two, we might be absolutely sure, but for the time being, there won’t be a captain, so as not to arise any kind of trouble in the squad.” –Christine declared.

“Indeed… if the girl really has what it takes to be the captain, we will soon find out.” –Violet agreed.

“I see that you have everything under control here.” –Coach Little stated. –“Still, it’s almost 6 o’clock. Better tell them to hit the showers.” –he told them. –“Alright, everyone! That’s enough for today! Hit the showers and get some sleep! I want to see you all back here tomorrow afternoon!” –he
shouted at them all.

Hearing those words made everyone let out a sigh of relief.

“About time…” –Maddie said, as she fell on her knees.

“Maddie?! Are you alright?” –London kneeled next to her, worried that she might be hurt.

“It’s okay… I’m okay, I’m just super tired that’s all.”

Seeing this, Christine also approached the two of them, to see if everything was alright with Maddie.

“Madeline, is everything alright?” –she asked her. You could see she was worried about her, by the tone of her voice.

“It’s alright, Miss Mason. I’m just tired.”

“I’ll help her, don’t worry. All she needs is a little rest.” –London said, as she placed her arm around Maddie’s waist and helped her to get on her feet. Anastasia also approached them and helped.

“If you say so… and girls, call me Christine. I’m not just your teacher, I’m also someone you can always count on.” –she told them.

As they headed for the locker room, Maddie had a hard time walking, worrying London and Anastasia.

“Are you sure, it’s just tiredness?” –London asked her.

“What did you eat before the training, Maddie?”

“Actually, just a glass of water… we were already late, so I thought I could keep up, even without eating.” –Maddie told them, with London looking her in the eyes, giving her a disapproving look.

“I know… I know what you’re going to say, and you’re right. I should’ve eaten something.”

“Yes, you should have.” –Anastasia said. –“Rule number in sports… never forget to eat something light before practice.”

The rest of the gang, including Cody and Barbara who came down from the stands, quickly caught up with them.

“Is she alright?” –Mark asked Anastasia.

“She’s fine… she’s just tired, and she didn’t eat anything before practice.” –she told him.

“You got to be careful, sweet thang. I think speak for us all when I say that we don’t want to see you fainting because you’re on an empty stomach.” –Zack said.

“Here, you can have it.” –Barbara said, as she handed Maddie a Twinkie.

“Thanks.” –Maddie said, taking a bite of the delicious yellow spongy cake.

“Next time, you better have something to eat in your bag, before and after practicing.” –Cody told
her.

“Don’t worry, if she forgets to eat again, I’ll bring a piece of fruit or a couple of candy bars on my bag.” –London assured them all. –“Now, come on, I need to take a shower.”

After dinner, London and Maddie decided to finish their homework, and then chose a movie to spend the rest of the night cuddled against one another. It was not an easy choice. They had so many movies to choose from, and while London was in the mood for a romantic comedy, Maddie was in the mood for a horror movie. In the end, not being able to decide, they opted for something completely different, a sci-fi movie. The choice was obvious, Star Wars. It was one of those film series both of them loved. Choosing the first one that showed up in the rental menu, they laid themselves on the couch, clinging to one another, with a huge bowl of popcorn, and prepared for a dreamy evening.

“Ready?” –Maddie asked.

“Let’s see, popcorn, check… movie chosen, check… remote control, check… hot sexy girlfriend, clinging on me, check… we can’t be more ready than this.” –London smiled, as she rested her head against Maddie’s chest.

For almost two hours, the only thing that was heard was the sound of the movie, mixed with the chewing of popcorn, with the occasional whispering to one’s ears. After a long day, that was exactly what the doctor ordered for the girls.

When the film ended, they dragged themselves to the bedroom for some well-deserved sleep. Their bodies still ached from all that workout; London asked herself why she did not make an appointment on one of the various massage parlours for everyone in the gang after their practice. If she had done it, they would have all been pampered and relaxed.

“Remind me to make an appointment on one of the massage parlours for after our practice.” –London said, as she put on her pyjamas.

“Okay, will do.” –Maddie said, as she finished brushing her teeth. –“Although, I don’t think just one session isn’t going to do much. After that much workout, I think an entire day at the spa is what we need, not just a few hours.”

“Well, I’ll content myself with snuggling next to you for a couple of hours, before we have to go back to our usual torture… it’s moments like these that I hate having created this school… stupid sea school!” –London whined about it.

“Oh, you say that, but you don’t mean it. This whole cruise and everything in it is your baby, and you’re proud of it. You whining about it is just fatigue talking.” –Maddie said, coming out of the bathroom. Placing her arms around London’s shoulders, she nibbled London’s neck, inhaling the sweet smell of peaches from the heiress’s shower gel. –“Come on, London… (kiss)… let’s make love… (kiss)… until we fall asleep.” –she kept kissing her.

“Maddie… (kiss)… not tonight… (kiss)… mon amour.” –London told her, as she gently pushed her away. –“I’m so wasted I think I will fall asleep while we’re making out.” –she told Maddie. She felt bad about it, because she loved making out with the blonde, but she was so tired.
“It’s okay.” –Maddie told her with a neutral tone. She did not like that, but she knew London was as tired as her, if not more, so she did not take it personally. –“Let’s just cuddle and get some sleep, Rarity.” –the blonde told her, calling her by her My Little Pony nickname.

Just like she said, a few minutes later, London was already sound asleep. But the same could not be said about Maddie. She could not sleep, even though she was tired as hell, her eyes felt heavy and her body ached, begging for a good night’s sleep. She turned around, facing London, thinking that maybe looking at her beautiful face would help her go to dreamland. Still, not even the face of the prettiest girl in the world was enough to help her sleep. Minutes went on, and after a while, she threw the sheets to one side, and really gently she slid out of bed. So as to not awake London, she gently placed her pillow between London’s arms, so she would not notice her absence.

Heading to the kitchen, she decided that she needed a glass of warm milk. Opening the fridge, she poured milk into the glass and the placed it in the microwave, when something scared her. It was FRAN, and she looked like the Bride of Frankenstein, dressed in a lavender night robe, her hair all caught up in hair rollers, and wearing a greyish green mud mask all over her face. Seeing that, a person would ask herself if FRAN was not malfunctioning. Still, she had been programmed to act just like Fran Drescher, so it did not surprise her… just scared her.

“FRAN! You scared the daylights out of me!” –Maddie hushed her voice.

“Oh, sorry, sweetie, I didn’t mean it!” –she exclaimed

“Don’t talk so loud! I don’t want to wake up London!” –she warned the AI, hushing her voice so as to not wake up the heiress.

“Sorry.” –FRAN said. –“But why aren’t you asleep?”

“I can’t sleep.” – Maddie said.

“Now that’s strange… if you are as tired as she is, and she’s already sleeping like a rock, why aren’t sleeping by her side?”

“I don’t know… I’m dead tired, but I can’t sleep. It’s like I have something on the back of my head that prevents me from sleeping.” –Maddie said, as she grabbed the glass of milk and sipped it.


“I know it sounds strange, but I’m not exactly in the mood to read… I could call the ship’s animal care centre and ask them to bring Scampy to spend the night here in the suite, but he’s probably already asleep.” –Maddie declared. –“I think I’ll just plug myself to the Internet and surf in it for a little.”

“I may be just a computer, but, that little something on the back of your head might be a repressed feeling or something like that… did London do something that hurt you?” –FRAN suggested, as Maddie grabbed her laptop that was on her backpack. Taking a seat on one of the living room’s couches, she turned it on.

“Of course not. She’s been a sweet to me ever since I got back from Yellowstone. She organized this cruise so we could spend time together, she took me and the rest of the gang to see the Titanic, she let me win at Sugar Rush a couple of times, she bought two dreamy and ultra-rare rainbow diamond necklaces… and… and…”
“And she did all that for you, and deep inside, you’re probably thinking “She did all this for me, and I haven’t given her anything… I mean, sure I gave her my love, my friendship, but I’m always giving her that. I need something unique to show her that I adored everything she gave me.” But I may be wrong about it.” –FRAN told her.

That whole statement was like a shock to the blonde. She never imagined that an AI computer that had been programmed to keep their suite cleaned up, and running everything when they are not around, would have been programmed to also deal with personal issues and such.

“Have you been programmed to also be a psychologist?” –Maddie asked her, who was still digesting what had happened a few seconds earlier.

“Well, basic psychology is one of the extras in my basic programming package.” –FRAN answered her. –“So, why don’t you search for something on the Internet and give it to her?”

Following FRAN’s advice, Maddie began searching on the Internet for something special. At first she thought about jewellery, but it was a bad idea, because she could not see with her own eyes what she was buying it, and besides, there aren’t many jewel websites with jewels a girl like London would call pretty. Then, she thought that maybe a car would be a nice present. But then, she remembered that London had tons of cars already, in the cargo hold of the ship. Then, it hit her… size doesn’t always mean quality. As her grandmother would say: “Good things in life come in small packages… except if it’s a check, which in that case, it comes in an envelope.” This last thought made her laugh. Her grandmother always has something useful to say.

“Hmm… lingerie… but what kind of lingerie?” –she asked herself, as she browsed the Internet, when a pop-up showed up with one of those advertises of nude women. It was then that everything became clear to her. She knew exactly what she was going to offer London.

“I know London bought all those amazing and sexy dominatrix outfits for the both of us, along with those toys, but… if there’s one thing I know about good things, is that you never have enough of them.” –Maddie thought to herself. –“And I know where I will find the best suites for such an occasion.”

Pressing the keys, she entered a website from a fetish store established in Newark, where she and London had ordered a few things in the past. The last time she accessed it, she noticed they had a huge collection of dominatrix outfits, most of them custom made. Browsing the website, she found what she was looking for and was surprised to see that they had expanded their stock. That weekend’s highlight was their new line; outfits, catsuits, thongs and accessories inspired in Disney characters, especially Disney princesses.

“Oh, those look like nice things… I bet she would super sexy in any of those.” –FRAN told her, surprising her again. How could she know about it? –“Come on, don’t give me that face, dearie, I run this giant suite and I know about every section of it, including your playroom. Don’t worry, I won’t say a thing about it.”

The more she heard FRAN, the more Maddie thought to herself that she would have someone to confide with, whenever London was not around.

Looking at the all the great stuff she had, she immediately decided what she wanted to order, and the best part was that they could make them and ship them overnight, that by morning you would have them in your doorstep. All she had to do was choose the items and give them their measures and
make the purchase. Unfortunately, in her case it would take a couple of days until those presents arrived. She would have to order them, and wait for them to be delivered to the ship when they arrived in Dublin… but she wanted them so hard… she really wanted to surprise London the following night.

“Go on, make the purchase.”

“But I won’t have them by tomorrow… and I really wanted them. I wanted London to have the best night of BDSM of her life, and because we’re on high seas, that will be impossible.” –Maddie sighed sadly, knowing there was nothing she could do.

“It’s not impossible, believe me.” –FRAN assured her. –“I can make sure of it.”

“How?” –Maddie asked.

“Trust me, Maddie. If I say I can have it here by tomorrow, then it will be.” –FRAN once again assured her. –“Now, give them your measures and London’s and chose the sexiest and most provocative outfits and accessories you can find in their inventory, insert the address of the Manhattan Tipton with your name in it, make the purchase and leave the rest to me.”

The following morning, Maddie woke up refreshed and ready for another day, as did London. In fact, London was the one who woke up Maddie, by kissing her repeatedly all over her face and neck.

“Mmm… that feels nice.” –Maddie as she opened her eyes. –“Mmm… can you keep doing it? I don’t think I’m fully awaken yet.”

“As much as I would like to keep doing it, mon amour… (kiss)... we have to go to school.” –London told her.

“Okay, I’m going, I’m going.” –Maddie said, as she got out of the bed. -“You better call room service and order breakfast, London. I’m not in the mood for cooking.”

“Oh, I will. You go ahead and take a shower. I’ll join you in a minute.” –London said. –“Oh, I wanted to ask you… do you want to come to the spa with me this afternoon? I’m going to mark an appointment for after lunch for me, and I wanted to know if you want to come. After that last cheerleading practice, I think we really need to be pampered.”

“Thanks, Princess, but I’m not in the mood for that today.” –Maddie said as she headed to the bathroom. –“I think I’ll just go to the pool with Zack and Cody and spend the rest of the afternoon with them.”

“Alright… but if you change your mind, let me know.” –London told her, as she picked the suite’s phone and called room service. –“Do you want Eggs Benedict or just scrambled eggs with your sausages?”

“Hmmm… scrambled eggs, please.” –Maddie told her. –“And don’t take too long. I want you wash my back.” –she said, as she unbuttoned her pyjama’s shirt, revealing her beautiful nude breasts to her girlfriend.
After lunch, London went to the spa, leaving Maddie with the suite all to herself. As the heiress exited, the two shared a kiss, and London told her to have fun, promising to come back before dinner.

“I’ll be back before dinner, and tonight we’ll dine with Moseby, okay? I already made a reservation for the three of us at the Chez Tipton.” –London warned her. –“Have a nice time on the swimming pool.”

“You too, Princess. And by the way, if you don’t mind, I’ll choose what we’ll wear tonight at dinner.”

“You’ve got just as good taste as I do, so I know you will surprise me. Say hi to Zack and Cody for me, okay?” –London said, kissing her goodbye once again.

“I will, don’t worry.” –Maddie smiled at her.

As the elevator doors closed, Maddie immediately called for FRAN.

“FRAN?”

“Yes sweetie?” –FRAN said, as her holographic projection appeared in front of her. This time, she was wearing a light-green shirt, a pair of light brown jeans and purple heel shoes, mirroring Lois Griffin from Family Guy. –“Do you like my new style?”

“I think you look like Lois Griffin.” –Maddie said, with a smirk on her face. –“So, tell me, has my special present for London? And if so, how did you manage to do it?”

“It’s about to arrive… right now.”

As FRAN said that, someone rang at the door. Maddie immediately went to the suite’s control panel and turned on the elevator, authorizing the person who was carrying her order. When the doors opened, she saw a delivery man dressed in full white, with the Tipton logo on his shirt and pants, carrying it on a cart. The order was a large package, more or less the size of one of those old television sets from the 80’s. After the blonde signed in for the order, he placed it on the floor, after which she gave him a five dollar tip.

When he left, Maddie dragged it over to the sofa. Going to the kitchen, she grabbed a knife and opened it; she really wanted to see what she had bought for the two of them, but most importantly, for London. Inside were several pink and black boxes with the store’s logo, wrapped up in a pretty black lacy ribbon.

“Still… how did you manage to get these things here? You still haven’t told me that…” –Maddie asked, as she grabbed the first of the boxes.

“Simple actually… you see, the ship has its own private helicopter. All I had to do was redirect your order from the Manhattan Tipton to the S.S. Tipton, via helicopter.”

“You mean, you gave the orders to the ship’s private helicopter crew to go back to New York City, grab this and come back?” –Maddie asked FRAN, not believing what she heard.

“Pretty much, yes, and you don’t have to thank me. It was my pleasure to see you and London
“ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?!!!! Or in your case, out of your CPU?!! You can’t do that… heck, I can’t just order you to send a helicopter to pick up something I want, even if it’s something really important!” –Maddie shouted at the suite’s computer.

“But why not? If you have the things, why not use them to your advantage?”

“But because I don’t own that helicopter or this ship! London owns it. She can do that because she’s the owner’s daughter, but I…”

“You’re what? Not the owner’s daughter?” –FRAN asked her, with Maddie silently waving her head in compliance. –“I know I’m just a machine and all, but as I see it, you’re London’s girlfriend, and you have the same rights as her because you’re in a relation, and a couple shares both responsibilities and rights, am I right?”

“It’s not as simple as that. Sure I can do a few things that I wouldn’t be able to do if I wasn’t dating London… but that doesn’t mean I’ll take advantage of my position to do those things. It’s just not in me… I just wasn’t raised that way.” –Maddie told her.

“Well, what’s done is done, and you have what you wanted. In the end, that’s all that matters, right?”

In a way, FRAN was right… that’s all that mattered right then. Trying not to think about it, she concentrated on the task at hand. Taking them out one by one, she then opened them and was just amazed by what her eyes were seeing. It was hard for her to believe that the store had managed to make those things over night and send them on such short notice. Every last one of the items was amazing. Feeling the touch of leather and wet look vinyl on her hands just sent shivers up her spine. Putting everything back in its rightful box, she then grabbed the complimentary can of spray lubricant and sprayed a little into the air, smelling it.

“Does it smell good?” –FRAN asked her.

“It smells wonderfully… it smells like vanilla and cherry.” –Maddie said, as she placed it back on the big box. –“There’s only one thing left I need to buy… contact lenses.”

“Contact lenses? Why do you need contact lenses?”

“Because, in order for the fantasy to be complete, I’m going to need to have blue eyes. I better go and buy a pair, before heading to the swimming pool with the guys.” –Maddie said. –“But before that, I need to put these things to their proper places.” –she said, as she imagined what

During the dinner with Moseby, Maddie had to come up with the excuse that she was not feeling so well, in order to give the finishing touches on her surprise for London. She told London that there was no need for her to come, and that she could stay.

As for London, after dessert, she thanked Moseby for the wonderful time, and bid him farewell, as she went back to the Wonderland Suite. As she walked, London did not even imagine what her girlfriend had in store for her. All could she think about was if she was better or not from that sudden indisposition, not knowing she was just pretending.
Entering in their suite, London immediately felt that there was something wrong. Everything was pitch black. She immediately called FRAN, but nothing happened; Maddie had asked her to turn itself off until morning, for she wanted to be alone with London, just the two of them. Clapping her hands the lights went on and she saw on floor a trail of rose petals and what looked like jelly beans. Crouching, she picked up one of them and saw that it was a really jelly bean. Instantly, she understood what was going on… Maddie was fine, and had planned something special for the two of them. The only thing left to do was to follow the trail left by Maddie and find out what exactly she had planned for them.

“What are you up to, Maddie?” –London thought, as she followed the trail, grabbing every last jelly bean.

As expected, the trail lead her into their bondage playroom, located behind a fake wall in their wardrobe. When she opened the door, she immediately felt in the air the intense smell of leather and vinyl mixed with the aroma of burned incense. The room was dimly lit, giving it a dark and mysterious, although romantic atmosphere.

“Maddie? Where are you?” –London asked.

Then, all of a sudden, a pair of hands came from behind her and covered the heiress’s eyes. As soon as it touched her, London felt the smooth touch of vinyl on her skin. She would recognize those hands anywhere; they were Maddie’s hands and they smelled like vanilla and cherries, mixed with the unmistakable smell of vinyl.

Before saying anything, Maddie pressed her body against London’s back, and playfully nibbled her neck.

“Behind you, watashi no ai.” –Maddie whispered to her in Japanese. The blonde knew London became horny every time she spoke or heard her speak in Japanese.

“Mmm… I love it when you talk in Japanese.” –London said, as Maddie removed her hands from the brunette’s eyes, letting her see once again.

Adjusting the room’s lighting to a point where it was still a little dark, but you could see everything, Maddie revealed to London just how she was dressed for that special occasion. She was wearing a Hot magenta vinyl lace corset, a vinyl thong of the same colour, a matching pair of also Hot magenta and white fingerless long vinyl gloves, a pair of 5 inch heel go-go boots with the same colours in a candy cane pattern, and finally a bright pink choker around her neck. Her hair was being worn in a loose ponytail, giving her a somehow bad girl look. Needless to say that she was hot; in fact, she was smoking hot. Smiling with an impish smile, she asked her girlfriend:

“So, how do I look?” –she asked the heiress, but before London could answer her, she grabbed London by the arm, and then kissed her passionately, just before breaking the kiss, leaving her breathless. –“Sexy? Kinky? Bold? Daring? Delicious? Yummy? Or all those things combined?” – she said, smiling.

“I would say… you look like a delicious lollipop.” –London answered her with a sexy tone.

“Really? You really think so?” –Maddie asked her, breaking out of character. –“I mean, you think so?” –this time talking with the same sexy voice tone as before, entering into character once again. –“Just like this lollipop here?” –she asked, making a lollipop appear out of the blue.
Moving her head left to right like a snake, she wrapped her right arm around London’s waist, pulling the Asian-beauty to her, as her left arm lifted London’s skirt, sliding her fingers into her panties, which by now were already completely soggy. Moving the tips of her fingers gently, she began stimulating London’s clit, making her roll her eyes. Then, she kneeled in front of her, and with her other hand she began sliding London’s panties, never letting go of the lollipop. Admiring the beauty of the heiress’s pussy, she gently inserted the lollipop into it, making London gasp.

“You’re wet down here. Is it because of me?” –Maddie asked her rhetorically, in a super sexy tone of voice.

Covering the delicious lollipop in London’s love juices, she then placed it into her mouth. Maddie moaned in ecstasy, as her tongue savoured the delicious treat. Getting herself up, she removed the lollipop from her mouth and let London have a taste of it.

“You really are the most delicious of treats, London.” –Maddie said, now speaking with her usual voice.

“Well, I always said that I was sweet… and you’re right, I really do taste sweet.” –London declared, as she licked the lollipop savouring the incredible taste of Maddie’s saliva and her own pussy, mixed with the sweetness of the lollipop.

“So, are enjoying it?”

“So far, so good. I take it that I’m going to be your slave tonight, right?” –London giggled, as she continued to lick the lollipop.

“Actually, no. I’m going to be your slave.” –Maddie said, as she went to grab two boxes that had been left behind one of the numerous devices that were in that room. Handing them over to London, she smiled. –“This is for you.”

London smiled as she opened the boxes and saw the amazing presents Maddie had bought for her. Inside the first box was a beautiful dark minty green vinyl cupless teddy, along with matching long vinyl gloves. On the second box, there was a dark mint green garter belt, a pair of 5 inch heel thigh-high platform boots mirroring the same pattern as Maddie’s boots and a spike collar with the word “Mistress” engraved on it.

“Oh, it’s so lovely… and absolutely sexy and kinky.” –London said, planting a kiss on Maddie’s lips. –“It’s the first time anyone offers me sexy lingerie.”

“I’m glad you like it… I really wanted this to be special.”

“But every time we’re together it’s special, Maddie.”

“I know, but, today I want you to be the life of the party, per say.” –Maddie told her. –“You’ve been giving me such beautiful and fantastic gifts these last few weeks, and I haven’t been able to properly thank you… I know this doesn’t hold a candle to all of the things you did, but still, I want you to know that I arranged all this from the bottom of my heart.” –the blonde declared with a simple yet heart-warming smile. A small part of her still did not believe that she gave that kind of lingerie to a person, but that was quickly put behind her back, as she watched London’s beautiful smile.

“Oh, Maddie, you don’t have to give me expensive gifts.” –London told her. –“You can pay me back in kisses, smooches and cuddles.”
“So does that mean, you don’t want those clothes?” –Maddie playfully asked her, pretending that she was going to take them away.

“Are you kidding?!” –London laughed. –“No way. Let me just get changed, and we can start the fun!” –she said with a bubbly voice.

“Wait, let me do that for you… after all, I am your slave, mistress London.” –Maddie said, blinking her left eye, telling the heiress to get into the game, as she bowed down to her in subservience.

London smiled and signalled Maddie to help her with the clothes.

“Very well, slave, you will help your mistress dressing to the occasion. Do that properly, and I may consider on letting you eat my pussy.” –London demanded, talking with an authoritarian voice, already getting into character.

Maddie immediately began to undress her, occasionally kissing her arms, belly or breasts. After every last piece of clothing was removed, Maddie sprayed her with the lubricant, to be easier to get into those clothes. First, she helped her putting on the cupless teddy, which ended up being a bit tighter than Maddie thought it would be, but was happy to see that not only London fitted in it, but being a little tighter than it was needed contributed to accentuate London’s curves. Then it was time for the gloves. Beginning with the left one, and then the right one, she slid them into London’s arms as if they were a silk pyjama; and the same thing happened with the boots, which looked incredibly sexy on her, not to mention making her taller.

The last items Maddie dressed her were the garter belt and finally, the spike collar. When she finished it, the blonde could not help but to kiss London… she knew it was against the rules, but London did not mind. After all that work, she deserved a little treat. As they broke the kiss and smiled to each other, Maddie said:

“Now, from this point on, I’ll be your humble slave. You can do whatever you want with me. There’s no limit to the kind of kinky stuff you might want to do.” –the blonde explained her. –“The safe word is pancake, alright?”

“Okay… by the way, just before we start, these suits, why do I feel they look familiar?”

"That's because they are based on two Disney characters. Mine's based on Taffyta Muttonfudge's outfit, and yours is based on Vanellope Von Schweetz's outfit, you know? Why do you think I'm wearing contact lenses that make my eyes blue? I really wanted to look as close as possible to her.”

"I love them, and you give out a delicious Taffyta Muttonfudge." –London kissed Maddie, wrapping her arms around her. Then suddenly, London broke the kiss and threw Maddie to the ground with a little bit of strength, making her fall on top of pillows. She looked as Maddie as if she despised her. It was then that Maddie understood that London had already entered character and it was up to her keep going.

“Mistress?” –Maddie said, as she bowed down her head.

London walked to her and slapped her in the face.

“Did I give you permission to talk, slave?!” –London asked her with a cold and distant voice.
“No.” –Maddie whispered.

London slapped her once again, this time a little harder, but not enough to really hurt her. She was taking her time, plus she would never hurt Maddie’s beautiful face for real.

“You don’t speak unless I say so!!! As a punishment you will lick my boots!” –London said as she held her left foot in front of Maddie’s face. –“Now, you little bitch!!!” –she roared this time.

Doing as she was ordered, Maddie gently picked London’s foot with her hands and began to lick it, occasionally kissing it. This went on for at least 30 seconds, when London ordered her to lick the other foot. The blonde did as she was told, and became surprisingly turned on by what she was doing.

“That’s it. Lick it well, you disgusting whore!”

“Shes really getting into it.” –Maddie thought to herself. –“She usually isn’t this rough when we’re just getting started.”

When she saw that Maddie had performed her punishment, she kneeled in front of her, and with her right hand, she caressed Maddie’s face and then kissed her lips. It was just a small peck, but it was enough for them both to taste each other’s lip gloss.

“You see, my slave? If you obey me, I’ll be good to you… but if you disobey me, or play smartass, I’ll punish you really hard!” –the last part was spoken with an angry voice. –“Now, answer me, are you going to be a good slave and please your mistress?”

“Yes, mistress.” –Maddie answered. Her response was obviously not the one London wanted and Maddie knew it, forcing the heiress to slap her face again. The blonde really wanted to give the Asian-beauty full control of what was going on.

“Yes, what?” –London roared at Maddie.

“Yes, mistress London, I will please you.” –Maddie said.

“Indeed you will, slave, and you’ll start by pleasing me the following way.” –London said as she got to her feet. Grabbing Maddie’s choker, she pulled the blonde, forcing her to walk on all fours. Sating on the spanking bench, she pulled the lower part of her teddy to the side, revealing her shaved pussy, which by now was oozing with love juices. –“You will eat my cunt, and you will like it!” –the heiress held Maddie’s head with her left hand. –“Use your tongue and make me cum, bitch!”

The smell of London’s pussy was just intoxicating, and so was its taste. As her tongue began licking the outer lips, Maddie felt like she was in heaven. Using her hands, she grasped London’s buttocks for better support, making the girl squeal.

London quickly began to moan in ecstasy but tried to restrain herself, so as to not getting out of character. She was now breathing heavily, trying not to scream out of delight and pleasure.

“Maddie’s doing such a great job… nobody eats my pussy like she does… then again, she’s the only one who I let eat my pussy.” –she thought, giggling to herself. “Oh, man… if she keeps it like this, I’m going to cum super hard on her face! I can’t let that happen! Got to think about disgusting things!”
“London’s pussy is just overflowing with her juices… they’re so sweet and salty.” Maddie said, as she kissed London’s clit repeatedly. –“I’m so going to make you cum, Princess!”

“Lick faster, you bitch!” –London yelled at Maddie, raising her voice.

It did not take long for Maddie to make London cum like hell, but it sure gave her a run for her money, for the heiress had concentrated on disgusting thoughts just to not cum before she wanted to. Rolling her eyes as she screamed on top of her lungs, she squirted her juices on Maddie’s face, panting really hard. With the adrenaline still rushing in her veins, and still panting, she smiled at Maddie, who also smiled at her. Grabbing a nearby towel, she gave it to Maddie to wipe her face.

“You did good Maddie… I mean, slave. You have pleased your mistress, and for that, your mistress will show you just how generous she can be with those who obey her.” –London said as she got up, and helped Maddie get on her feet. –“Sit and spread your legs open.”

Doing as she was told, Maddie folded the towel London had given her, sat down on the spanking bench, where the heiress had been seated a few moments prior, and then spread her legs open. Positioning herself in front of her, London leaned against the blonde’s face, showing off her voluptuous D-cup breasts, whose nipples were rock-hard and were now just a few centimetres from Maddie’s face.

“Tell me, slave, so you like your mistress’s tits?” –London asked her with an incredibly sexy voice. –“Do you think they’re big, soft and squishy? Do you think they’re big enough to make a pornstar with silicon tits jealous with envy?”

“I-I do mistress. They’re the most beautiful tits I’ve ever seen.” –Maddie answered.

“Would you like me to titty fuck your face?” –London asked her, with Maddie waving her head.

London immediately grabbed Maddie’s head and pulled it to her, sticking the blonde’s face onto her boobs. Maddie immediately began to kiss them as London softly squeezed them onto the blonde’s face. She had never done that before, but she had seen porn videos of women doing it to men, so she thought that instead of trying to fuck a dick, she would fuck a face, which she admitted, was extremely

“That’s it, bite those nipples hard, my slave!” –London said in a low and sexy tone. –“Use those pearly-whites of yours to do it… fuck that feels so good!!!!”

Maddie kept nibbling London’s boobs for a about another minute or two, when London leaned back, and looked the blonde in the eyes with a loving gaze, turning her head slightly to the right.

“And now, for the next course. I’ll be right back.” –London told her, as Maddie did what she ordered.

When she came back, London had in her hands four things: a pair of hand cuffs, a paddle, a bottle of baby oil and a vibrator. Not even giving time for the blonde to think about it, she told her to turn around, then cuffed her hands behind her back. After she checked the handcuffs were secure, she slapped Maddie’s ass, leaving the mark of the hand on it. This made Maddie grit her teeth; it had hurt a little more than she was used to withstand, whenever the heiress and her played those games. Still, she did not budge or uttered a single sound, because she knew the best part was still to come.

“Well, my slave, tell me, do you think you deserve some relief from the pain that I just caused you
when I slapped you in that big, round and delicious ass of yours?” –London asked her with a cold voice.

“No, I don’t mistress London.”

“That’s right, my beautiful slave, you don’t deserve it yet.” –London told her. –“And you know why? Because you’ve been a very dirty girl, and I need to punish you.”

Grabbing the paddle where you could see the word “bitch” written embossed, she massaged Maddie’s left butt cheek with its flat surface for a few seconds, before turning it around and hit her with it. This time, Maddie did yelp, and that was exactly what London wanted, because that would mean she would get to spank her again.

“You’re not allowed to utter a single syllable, you hear me? You will not talk, scream or moan!” –London whispered to her ears. –“Every time you do it, I’ll hit you even harder, you hear me?! Wave your head in compliance!!!” –the heiress roared the last part of the sentence, as she held Maddie’s chin in her hand.

Then, in order to difficult things, London took off Maddie’s thong, grabbed the vibrator, spat on it to lube it, and slowly she inserted it on Maddie’s pussy, before turning it on maximum.

“Let’s see how much time it will take you to say anything.” –London said with a sadistic voice. This voice not only scared Maddie, but London also; she did not even know she could produce such a scary voice.

Still, she did not have much time to think about it, because soon Maddie began to moan. She tried not to but the vibrator inside her pussy was just too much for her. Hearing her moan, London slapped her on the ass with the paddle, and then massaged her a little, just before hitting her again, this time with less strength.

“You love this, don’t you, you whore?” –London asked her. –“Then moan even harder… moan for me!”

London crouched beside her and with her left hand, she began to slide the vibrator in and out of Maddie’s cunt faster and faster, making her even hornier than before. Not caring if London was going to slap with the paddle or her bare hands, she began to moan like crazy. It did not take much for her to cum like crazy. Smiling, London turned off the vibrator and removed it from Maddie’s pussy; this one was oozing with her juices. Licking it, she slid it back again, just to make Maddie squeal once more, before removing it again.

“Sorry, couldn’t help it.” –London chuckled, making Maddie also chuckle a little.

“You’re so evil!” –Maddie told her.

“I know, right?” –London smiled at her, as she slowly licked the vibrator. –“I wasn’t too rough on you, was I?”

“A little… my ass is all sore, but I think I’ll survive.” –the blonde smiled at the Asian-beauty.

“Especially, after I rub it with a little baby oil.” –London declared, as she took off her gloves and grabbed the bottle of baby oil. –“You’ll feel as good as new in a minute, mon amour.”
Putting a little baby oil in her hands, she began to massage Maddie’s butt, applying a little pressure on the reddest areas. When she finished it, she dried the excessive baby oil with the towel, and then kissing the reddest areas, as if Maddie was a new-born baby.

“Better now?” –London asked her.

“Yes… but I’ll be better when you get these handcuffs of my wrists.”

“Oh, sorry, Maddie.” –London immediately unlocked the handcuffs, releasing her girlfriend.

“So…” –Maddie said, as she got out of the spanking bench and stretched her arms.–“Did you like my surprise?” –she asked, as she wrapped her arms around London, kissing her.

"Did I like it? I loved it! And I thought it was really sweet of you to buy me a bondage outfit inspired on my favourite racer in Sugar Rush." –London squealed like a little girl. –"And I'm just sad we can't play more, because we have school in the morning."

"It's okay. We still have lots of time to do whatever we want in this room." –Maddie whispered to her ear. –"Now, come on, I think we both need a shower before getting beneath the sheets, not to mention that I have to get these contact lenses out. I like being a blue-eyes blonde, but I prefer to be brown-eyes blonde, you know?” –she said as they exited the room.

"Blue-eyed, brown-eyed, I don't really care. All I know is that no matter what you look like, I love you, Maddie." -London told her, as she kissed her on the cheek.
On the day before arriving to Dublin, the whole gang got together after classes and began to plan what they were going to do when they disembarked.

Thanks to the three-page long report about the city of Ireland that they had been assigned to do by the teachers, they all had a pretty good idea of where to go, when to go, how to get there and what to see when you got there. Zack, as he wrote the report, thought to himself that that was probably the very first time doing homework paid off entirely.

“So, we have everything set for the first day.” –Mark stated.

“Indeed.” –Max said.

“Timing is everything, at least when it comes to getting out of the ship. I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to get stuck on the ship more than I have to.” –Anastasia declared. –“That’s why we need to get up early and be ready for when the ship docks.”

“Okay, the ship docks at 8 a.m., and according to what Moseby told me, the doors will open at exactly 30 minutes after the ship docks. So, synchronize your watches, because we have to be on the main hall of Luna Deck at exactly 8 o’clock.” –London explained them.

“By the way, will we be dining in the city, or do we come back to the ship to have dinner?” –Cody asked.

“Well, we can try and find a place to have dinner in town.” –Maddie suggested. –“That way we’ll have the chance to taste the local gastronomy, and we can explore a little longer. I’m sure your parents won’t mind if you skip dinner and come back a little later.” –she referred to the twins’ mom and of course, to Mark’s dad and Anastasia’s mom.

“Are you kidding? My dad will probably spend tomorrow writing the last chapter of his new novel… he’ll be so busy, he’ll hardly notice I’m gone.” –Mark laughed.

“My mom will probably spend her time calling me, trying to know where I am and all that, but I’ll deal with that.” –Anastasia said.

“As long as we’re with you, our mom won’t worry about us.” –Cody told them.

“After all, you are our favourite babysitter.” –Zack laughed, remembering the times she babysit them and the troubles they got her on.

“Favourite, and probably only, because you two managed to drive people crazy.” –Maddie also laughed. Even though they got her into trouble, they had had good times too.

The S.S. Tipton spotted the coast of Ireland during dawn, and by the time Maddie and London woke up, they were standing a few miles from the mouth of the River Liffey, awaiting for the captaincy to send someone who knew the mouth of the river, in order to pilot the ship safely until the docking harbour. The sun had already risen on the horizon, lifting the covers of the night, but morning was
anything but beautiful on that particular day. The sky was cloudy and it looked like it was windy too.

“We’ll be lucky if it doesn’t start raining.” –Maddie sighed, as she looked out the window and saw the weather outside.

“Don’t worry, I checked the weather forecast last night, it’s not going to rain. But we’re going to need clothes that protect us from the wind.” –London told Maddie.

“Indeed.” –Maddie said, as she placed herself behind London, wrapping her arms around the heiress’s chest, gently squeezing it. This made London let out a slight moan, as the blonde started to kiss her on the neck. –“But let’s worry about it after our shower. You coming?” –she asked playfully, as she dragged London with her to the bathroom.

“Would I miss taking a shower with you?” –the heiress said in a low, playful tone, as they entered the bathroom and closed the door behind them.

As Blondie and Princess woke up, the same happened with the rest of the gang and pretty much everyone that was sleeping on the ship. On the Roman suite, Zack and Cody were being woken up by their mom.

“Come on, guys, time to wake up.” –Carey knocked at their bedroom door.

As always none of them answered back, so Carey knocked once again and called them. Once more, they did not answer. They were sleeping like rocks. Opening their door, she turned on the light switch, and called them both, this time waking them up.

“Guys, come on, wake up. We’re reaching Dublin.” –Carey said, insisting on them waking up. They made her promise on the previous night to wake them up on time to meet the rest of the gang, and now, they refused to get out of their beds.

“Go away, mom… just five more minutes.” –Zack begged her, putting his pillow over his head.

“Not even a single second, Zack. You don’t want to be late, now do you?” –Carey asked him, signalling Cody, who was now rubbing out his eyes, trying to wake up, that she was going to need a little help. –“If you don’t get out of bed, Cody and I will just force you.”

“You wouldn’t dare, mom.” –Zack said with a sleepy and groggy voice.

“Wrong, young man… Cody, you know what to do.”

Hearing that, Cody grabbed the covers and pulled them back, leaving Zack trembling with cold. Their room was actually warm, but having three blankets a sheet covering you; once removed, it feels like everything else is cold.

“Okay, okay, I’ll get up… you didn’t need to do that, you know?”

“On the contrary, if I hadn’t told your brother to do this, you would sleep until noon.” –Carey told him. –“Now, you too hurry up. Take a shower and get dressed, while I make you breakfast.”

“Yes, mom.” –Zack told, as she exited the room and went to the kitchen. –“You go first, Cody, I
need a couple more minutes to wake up.

“Alright, but remember what will happen if you fall asleep….”

“I know, I know, mom will dump a bucket of cold water on my head.” –Zack said, remembering the last time that happened.

After a nice and refreshing shower, not mentioning some playtime between them, London and Maddie exited the bathroom, ready for just about anything. Drying themselves, soon after, London called room service and ordered breakfast:

“I think I’m going to order croissants, toasts, fruit and juice. You okay with that?”

“Sure, but tell them this time to put some sugar on the juice, because last time it was a little bitter, sweetie.” –Maddie warned London, as the heiress pressed the numbers on the phone.

Once that was done, it was time to choose what clothes they would be wearing on their first day in Dublin. It was then that Maddie had one of those brilliant ideas she usually has.

“I was wondering, what if we both wear something green? You know, in honour of Ireland?”

“You really love this country, don’t you?” –London asked her, taking a seat on the bed next to Maddie, as she dried her hair with a towel.

“I sure do, I mean, let’s face it, this is the country where my ancestors travelled from to America. I just wish we had more time to get to know the country itself.” –Maddie sighed, as she moved in closer to London.

“Well, three days may not be much time, but we can still see some pretty cool things, and of course, get to know the famous Irish hospitality.” –London stated.

“Indeed… you know, I haven’t told the rest of our group, but there’s a place I want to visit on our third day here. I was thinking of taking a train to Cork, and then head to Blarney, so we can visit the castle and the famous Blarney Stone. What do you think? Do you think they will like to tag along?”

“I don’t see why. Sightseeing is always nice, and I’ve read somewhere that when visiting a town, you should always check the outskirts, for it’s there that lie the best surprises for the tourists.” –London declared. –“And even if they don’t want to come, I’ll go with you.”

“Thanks, sweetie.” –Maddie said, as she planted a peck on the Asian-brunette’s lips. –“By the way, who’s turn it is to choose our clothes?”

“Well, yesterday was yours, so today it’s my turn. Do you trust my good taste in fashion to guide me through that enormous wardrobe to find you the perfect clothes for such an autumnal day, milady Madeline?” –London giggled, while talking just as if she was a lady from the 14th century.

“Why, of course, milady London. I trust in your fine taste and good judgement.” –Maddie told London, also supporting a similar accent to the one the heiress used before.

Entering in the wardrobe, London already had a pretty good idea of what she was going to choose
for them to wear on that particular day. For her, she chose a cream long-sleeved shirt, a Jade-green jacket, a mini-skirt from the same colour as the jacket, a pair of black high-heel boots and a green scarf. When it came to Maddie, the heiress chose for her a nice Shamrock-green t-shirt, a pair of jeans, a black leather jacket, a pair of shamrock-green Converse-All’s. When it came to accessories, London chose a belt with an emerald and diamond incrusted four-leaf clover for Maddie, and for her, she chose a pair of emerald hairpins.

They had a light breakfast, since they planned on having a small brunch when they got to Dublin with the others. Grabbing their messenger bags, where in the previous night they put their cameras, their cell phones, their wallets, and of course the maps where they had flagged with a marker the places they were visiting, they entered the elevator.

“Hope we’re not late.” –Maddie said, a little worried with the hours.

“Nope, we’re on schedule here. Let’s see if the others aren’t late either.” –London said, as the elevator stopped and its doors opened.

When the elevator doors opened, the first thing the girls saw was their friends seated on a nearby bench, waiting for them. And to their great surprise, they had all decided to do the same thing the girls had agreed to do while in Ireland; they had decided to wear something green.

Waving at them, both the heiress and the candy-counter girl quickly looked at them from top to bottom.

Zack and Cody were wearing different clothes from one another. Zack was wearing a white t-shirt under a bottle-green hoodie, grey jeans and a pair of bottle-green tennis shoes. Cody on the other hand was wearing a light-green long-sleeve shirt under a navy-blue and Forest-green sleeveless pullover, black trousers and a pair of Oxford shoes.

Max and Barbara’s styles contrasted against one another. Like Zack, Max decided to wear something more casual. She was wearing a Myrtle-green sweater, a pair of orange gym pants and a pair of black sneakers. As for Barbara, her style matched Cody’s, with her wearing a Harlequin-green cardigan over a black shirt, a pair of cream Capri pants and black sandals.

Finally, there were Mark and Anastasia. He had decided to wear something casual on that day, so he was wearing a pine-green jersey, a pair of jeans and a pair of grey hiking-boots. As for Anastasia, she had decided to experiment a different style, by mixing her Goth clothes with a few Lolita clothes. She was wearing a black vinyl corset with pink lacing, black elbow-length gloves, a pink frilly mini-skirt, black and emerald-green striped stockings and a pair of stiletto-heel boots. Add the fact that she was wearing her hair in two pigtails and was wearing Goth make-up, and the result was unique to say the least. She looked like a human-size Monster High doll.

“Morning everyone!” –London and Maddie exclaimed in chorus.

“Hey, girls!” –they all exclaimed in unison.

“Looks like you had the same idea as we did.” –Maddie said as she looked at their clothes in detail.

“Or the two of you had the same idea as we did.” –Barbara playfully replied.

“Or perhaps we read each other’s minds.” –Maddie giggled.
“It’s always a hypothesis.” –Barbara playfully suggested.

“So, are we all set to go?” –Zack asked, as he looked at the hours on his wristwatch.

“Yep, we’re as ready as we’ll ever be.” –Maddie said.

“I just I hope I brought enough euros for transportation and other small things.” –London whispered to Maddie. She had withdrew from her safe a little bit more than 1000 euros in small bills of 20 and 50, as well as coins of 1 and 2 euros on the previous night from a safe they had in their suite; a safe that had been a complete secret to Maddie, before London showed it to her.

“I’m sure you did, Princess.” –she whispered back in a playful tone, knowing fully well that whatever amount London had taken from the safe, it would prove more than enough; besides, she never went out without her credit cards. Than it occurred to Maddie if the rest of them had done the same. –“Oh, I almost forgot, did you guys exchanged a couple of dollars for euros?” –Maddie asked them.

“We did, don’t worry.” –Barbara said, pointing also to Max.

“Our mom made sure that we didn’t forget to do that yesterday.” –Cody said.

“Yeah, they don’t accept dollars here, and as long as we stay in Europe, we have to get used to this money, since most of the countries we’re visiting use it.” –Anastasia said, as the elevator doors closed.

As it was expected, everyone, or almost everyone wanted to exit the ship in order to visit the city. Looking out the glass elevator, people on the main hall from K Deck, the Luna Deck, they all looked like a giant living mass that kept growing more and more as people practically squeezed themselves to gain access to it; and the gang found out how difficult that was. When the elevator doors opened, they had to literally push the persons in front of them, in order to get out of the elevator.

As they waited, the passengers felt a light tremor, signalling the ship had docked. Over the speakers, they heard that the ship was now immobilized, and that passengers could expect to disembark as soon as the doors opened, which would be in about fifteen minutes… fifteen long minutes.

“It’s going to take us forever to get out of here. London, can’t you do something, like letting us go to the front of the line, just because you’re the owner’s daughter?” –Zack asked her. –“I mean, what’s the use of being the heiress of the Tipton Empire, if you don’t take advantage of your status?”

“Sorry, smarty pants, but that’s not going to happen. We’ll just have to wait like everybody else. Besides, it wouldn’t be fair.”

“To whom?! The others?” –Zack asked.

“For starters, yeah, but also to you guys… I mean, I’m a billionaire, but none of my friends is. Let’s suppose you were the billionaire around here and you had the opportunity to jump to the front of the line, but in order to do that, your friends would have to stay behind. You wouldn’t like that, now would you.”

“Well… maybe. Still, that’s a what-if situation. You wouldn’t let us stay here, while you went to the front of the line.” –Zack told her.
“You’re right I wouldn’t, but I still won’t take advantage of my social status.”

“Well, I think that just sucks…”

“And I think it’s a really noble thing to do. People shouldn’t take advantage of others just because they’re rich or powerful, Zack.” – Maddie declared, proud of what London had just said to Zack. – “The world would be a better place, if there were more people like you, Princess.”

“I guess you’ve just been served, bro.” – Cody told his brother, smiling inwardly to himself. Zack was just asking for someone to teach him a lesson in good manners, and London did the job perfectly.

“Yeah, well, you can’t always win.” – Zack grumbled, upset with the fact that he lost the argument. Still, he would not hold a grudge against London; he was many things, but if there was one thing he was not, was being vindictive. He quickly winked its left eye at London and Maddie, and smirked, showing everything was alright between them.

Finally, after waiting fifteen minutes, plus an extra ten minutes, the gang exited the cruiser. Looking at the time, they quickened their pace, as they climbed down the gangway. Already on dry land, they knew they had to walk even faster in order to keep up with their schedule.

Sighting a bus stop, they quickly crossed the street to the other side and were now waiting for a bus to take them to their first stop, Trinity College. A few minutes later the bus appeared. Just like the London red double-decker busses, Dublin’s were similar, except instead of being completely red, these were yellow, with the bottom navy-blue, separated by a baby-blue stripe.

Waiting for their turn, they boarded the bus, paying their tickets to the bus driver. Climbing the stairs, they each took a seat on the upper decker. Taking out their cameras, Cody and Max instantly began to snap photos of both the gang, as well as everything they felt it was pretty or interesting enough to be photographed. At the same time, Mark opened his messenger bag, grabbed a guide book of the city of Dublin he bought a few days before and began to flip through its pages. As for Maddie, she took her camcorder from her messenger bag and got ready to start shooting what she would later name as her “Travel Diary”. She wanted to show her family where she had been, not to mention to be able to relive those moments by watching the videos herself. Pointing the camera to herself, she pushed the record button and began to record.

“Hello there, Maddie here! We just arrived in Dublin, and although it’s a rather cloudy and windy day, but other than that, it’s okay. We are all super excited because we’re on our away to our first stop in Dublin, Trinity College!” – Maddie exclaimed, as she turned the camera and pointed it to Mark, zooming in on him. – “Mark, does that book have anything on Trinity College?”

“Hey, there!” – Mark waved happily at the camera. – “And to answer your question, yes, there are a few pages dedicated exclusively to Trinity College.”

“And what do they say?” – Maddie asked him.

“Let’s see… Trinity College was, and I quote, formally known as the College of the Holy and Undivided Trinity of Queen Elizabeth near Dublin. It is the sole constituent college of the University of Dublin in Ireland. The college was founded in 1592 as the “mother” of a new university, modelled after the collegiate universities of Oxford and of Cambridge, but, unlike these, only one college was
ever established; as such, the designations "Trinity College" and "University of Dublin" are usually
synonymous for practical purposes. It is one of the seven ancient universities of Britain and Ireland,
as well as Ireland's oldest university.” –Mark told them. –“Not only that, but it was originally
established outside the city walls of Dublin in the buildings of the dissolved Augustinian Priory of
All Hallows. The university was set up in part to consolidate the rule of the Tudor monarchy in
Ireland, and it was seen as the University of the Protestant Ascendancy for much of its history.
Although Catholics and Dissenters had been permitted to enter as early as 1793, certain restrictions
on their membership of the college remained until 1873, and the Catholic Church in Ireland forbade
its adherents, without permission from their bishop, from attending until 1970, and get this to those of
you who are fully feminists, according to this guide, women were first admitted to the college as full
members only in 1904.”

“You sounded like a tour guide or a History teacher just about now.” –Zack laughed at him.

“Come on, Zack, no mocking or laughing at the others.” –Maddie said, as she zoomed in on the
twin’s face. –“Now, give me a smile and say what you like more about Ireland?”

“How should I know? I never came here before!” –Zack laughed, shooting one of his usual lame
jokes, making them all giggle.

Between laughs and jokes, none of the friends saw the time passing, and soon, they were arriving at
their destination. Climbing out of the bus, they saw themselves in the interior of the college campus.
Things looked a little crazy with students walking around the place. Most of them were carrying
pamphlets and schedules, no doubt freshmen, because sophomores did not need those anymore,
given they already knew where to go and how to get there. You could really smell the excitement of
the new students in the air; being there for the first time, starting a new chapter in their lives that
involved both freedom and responsibility. It was the beginning of something new to them.

As they looked around, almost every member of the Tipton gang allowed itself a moment to think
about how their lives would be when they went to college. They all thought how cool it would be to
be on their own, while pursuing a future career, hanging out with people who shared not only their
tastes and opinions, but also their vision of the world... and even though each one of them would
most likely follow a path different from the rest, they knew that it would be an adventure as big as
the one they were having right then, if not even bigger and more extraordinary.

“This is so... so... so phenomenal!” –Cody said. –“The perfect place for someone like me to expand
my qualities and academic studies.” –he stated out loud.

“It is different.” –Maddie said. –“Imagine that one year from now we’ll be heading to a college like
this one, thus leaving high school behind us.”

“Yeah, but until then we still have plenty of time to enjoy ourselves.” –Anastasia said.
There was an awkward moment of silence between them, which was broken by Zack, who like
always felt the need to be the class prankster/ funny kid.

“Okay, so we’re here, but what exactly are we here to see? A college is just like any other school,
just bigger... if I wanted to see another school, I would have stayed in Boston and visited another of
the hundreds of identical schools to our old one.” –he smirked, sarcastically.

“Have you already forgotten what I said to the camera about this college, while we were on the
bus?” –Mark asked him.
Zack did not answer right away. He tried to remember what Mark said while they were on the bus, but it was no use. He had completely forgotten about it, and the fact Mark was looking at him with a suspicious look did not help either. Stuttering a little, he said:
“I k-kinda –f-forgot about it.” –Zack said, as everyone looked at him with an accusatory look in their eyes. –“You know that when it comes to remembering things I don’t consider interesting my brain isn’t able to assimilate things, much less remember them.”

“You’re absolutely incorrigible, Zack Martin…” –Max told her boyfriend in a rather serious tone. –“… but we wouldn’t want you any other way.” –she stated, this time with a friendlier tone, as she kissed on the cheek.

“Come on, don’t do that… you’re making me blush…” –Zack laughed, feeling a little embarrassed by that, making the others also laugh.

“Okay, okay, okay…” –Mark said, as he stopped laughing. –“Back on the bus I was talking about this university’s history, and, being the oldest university in Ireland, not only is a cool place to visit, but it is also a place where you can see cool things, like that!” –he pointed out to a building West of them.

The building he was pointing to was on the far side of the place they were. It was the Trinity College Library, more precisely the Old Library, which owed its name due to the fact it had been the original building. A huge golden with its name adorned the right wall near the entrance. The building was built by Thomas Burgh, and even today it stood as imposing as ever, surrounded by similar buildings.

“What’s so important about a Library?” –Zack asked, as they walked to it.

“Well, let’s see.” –Mark said as he consulted his travel guide book. As soon as he saw him doing that, Zack cursed himself for opening his big mouth, knowing that Mark was going to lecture him, and with some luck, the others would help him. –“It says here that the library occupies four different buildings in the campus, being that one there the original building. It has more than six million volumes in its collection and it was founded in 1562. It’s also home to one of the most important texts in Irish literature, the Book of Kells.”

“And what is the Book of Kells exactly?” –London asked, not having heard about it before.


“So, it’s a very old Bible, right?”

“No, London.” –Maddie let out a small giggle. –“A Bible is the collected texts from both the Old Testament and the New Testament… this one only has the New Testament.”

“And it’s incredibly beautiful according to the images I saw on the net.” –Barbara said, as they all stopped right in front of the entrance, where there was a long line of people assembled there. Among the people, they recognized some of them as students of Tipton’ High Sea School, for they were either wearing a scarf or a cap with the school’s insignia, or were wearing their school uniforms, which was not a requirement, but there was no rule against using it once outside the ship.

“I wonder if we can take guided tour…”
“I think so, look!” – Cody pointed to a directional board, where it was written: “Guided Visits”, with an arrow beneath it.

The line was quite long already, so in order to not wait more than they wanted to, they all went to the back of the line and waited for their turn. While waiting they heard that a new group of 10 people entered in the library escorted by a tour guide every fifteen minutes. Looking at the people that were ahead of them, the gang counted 47 persons, which meant they would stay there for at least 45 minutes, until they could enter.

“Forty-five minutes? Man, this is going to take forever.” – Zack grumbled.

“It’s only forty-five minutes, not a full day.” – Cody told him.

“Don’t you know that time seems to slow down when you’re waiting for something to happen?” – Zack said tartly. – “Besides, I thought we were going to have breakfast around here.”

“Oh, right, we completely forgot about it!” – Anastasia exclaimed.

“But if we get out of the line, we will have to go to the back of the line.” – Mark said, as he looked at the amount of people who were already behind them, at least another 20 or 30.

“I know! We’ll order!” – London said, as she grabbed her cell phone and accessed the Internet. – “There’s got be a coffee shop to delivers around here, we just need to find it.”

In no time, London found a bakery which delivered, so she immediately called them and ordered their breakfast, telling them to deliver it to her, and if they hurried, there would be a 200 euros tip. When the person on the phone asked her if that was a prank, she said that it was no prank, that she was really London Tipton.

While they waited, a few people that passed them recognized both Maddie and London. Immediately they approached them and asked them if they could have an autograph or take a photo with them. The girls both smiled as the people praised them for their courage in assuming their relation, saying they were both beautiful and extraordinary. To London that was quite common; she was used to people coming to her to ask for an autograph or a photo, but to Maddie, the blonde was still finding it hard to be the centre of attentions. She liked it; she would be lying if she said it otherwise, but at the same time, It was still so new, even though this had already happened both in New York and a couple of times aboard the S.S. Tipton. It would certainly take a little more time to get used to it, and she knew that this was going to become like a ritual in every town they stopped.

A few minutes later a girl in her early twenties dressed in an uniform from the bakery London had ordered breakfast showed up with a box of donuts, three cappuccinos, and five milkshakes. The girl could not believe that it had been London, the real London Tipton to make the order. Giving them the donuts, the cappuccinos and the milkshakes, London then paid for everything, and just like she promised over the phone, she gave the girl a 200 euros tip.

“Oh, thank you so much.” – the girl said. It was the biggest tip she had ever received in her life. – “I must get back to work, but before I go, do you think I could take a photo with you two?”

“Sure, it will be our pleasure, right Maddie?” – London said, as she looked at Maddie who smiled back at her. – “Cody, would you do the honours?” – the heiress asked, as the girl gave the twin her cell phone, who promptly snapped the photo.
After that, the gang enjoyed their breakfast as they waited for their turn to enter the library. The amount and variety of donuts London ordered was immense. From simple to jelly ones, the hard thing was to decide which ones they should try first. As for the drinks, that was an easier task. London, Maddie and Barbara went for the cappuccinos, while the rest of the gang all went for the milkshakes, which were all strawberry flavoured.

“Bwest… breakfwast ever!” –Zack exclaimed with his mouth full.

“Chew your food, Zack!” –Cody said, as he took a bite out of a chocolate covered donut. –“Or else, you’re going to choke.”

“You’re not the bwoss of me…” –Zack replied, as he drank a sip of his milkshake, when he felt a spank on the head. It had been Max who did it.

“You better start chewing your food, not to mention eating slower, because if you start choking, none of us knows how to perform the Heimlich manoeuvre… at least, I don’t, so watch it.” –Max scolded him.

“Alright, alright, I’ll eat slower.” –Zack sighed. It was incredible just how Max managed to force Zack do whatever she wanted. The only question remaining was if he did it because he knew he was wrong, or because he did not want hear her complain about it.

While eating her donut Maddie, she got a powdered-sugar moustache, which made London giggle when looking at her.

“What’s so funny?” –Maddie asked, not knowing why the heiress was laughing about.

“You.” –London said, taking a deep breath, trying not to laugh even harder. –“You got a powdered-sugar moustache from that donut.” –the heiress ran her finger over Maddie’s upper lip, wiping the powdered sugar, than letting Maddie lick it.

“Well, you’re no better. Wipe that milk moustache from your upper lip, because it looks funny on you.” –Maddie giggled, as London licked her upper lip and wiped the milk moustache.

While eating their breakfast, they all lost track of time, which was a good thing. When they finished it, it was their turn to enter the library. When they entered, they bought their tickets and were then greeted by an elderly woman, dressed in a white and purple dress, with matching shoes, who introduced herself as their guide.

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls of all ages. My name is Alice and I’ll be your guide. If you have any doubts please save them until the end of the tour, and always remember to stick behind me.” –she said. –“Let me welcome you all to the Trinity College Library, Dublin and Ireland’s largest library. The library first began with the founding of Trinity College in 1592. In 1661, Henry Jones presented it with the famous Book of Kells, which is our most famous manuscript… you’ll have the chance to see it a little later. One of our greatest contributors was James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh between 1625 and 1656, whose most important works were Veterum Epistolarum Hibernicarum Sylloge and Britanicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates, left his valuable library, which comprised several thousand printed books and manuscripts, to the Library. Additionally, his complete works were published by the Library in twenty-four volumes.” –she continued to explain, as they went on. –“Then, in 1801, the Library was given legal deposit rights, making it the only library in Ireland to have such rights for the United Kingdom.”
As Alice spoke, cameras and cell phones snapped photos of just about everything. Maddie had turned on her camcorder and was recording everything. When they finally reached the library itself, everyone was amazed by what surrounded them. You could say that if they could, everyone’s eyes would pop out of their orbits. The double doors opened to reveal the Long Room, the Old Library’s main chamber. Just looking at it and all the books that were stored in the bookshelves gave the ones who entered there that that place was no ordinary library, but the ultimate library, a library where all the books in the world were being kept for safekeeping. Mark himself, whispered to Anastasia that the place looked a bit like the Jedi Archive of the Jedi Temple on Star Wars.

“Now that you mention it, it really looks like it.” –Anastasia whispered back.

Although there were several people in the room, quietly consulting numerous books that were in the shelves, most of the people inside were tourists, possibly because classes had not started, and so there was no big reason for students to be in there.

“We now enter the Long Room… this room was built between 1712 and 1732 and houses 200,000 of the Library’s oldest books. The Long Room is measured at almost 65 metres long, but because of its unique architectural style it seems longer than it is. After it was first built The Long Room had a flat ceiling, shelving for books only on the lower level, and an open gallery. Of course, as you might imagine, in the 1850s the room needed to be expanded as the shelves were filled due to the fact that the Library had been given permission to obtain a free copy of every book that had been published in Ireland and Britain.” –Alice explained. –“Finally, in 1860, The Long Room's roof was raised to accommodate an upper gallery. The Long Room is lined with marble busts. This collection of marble busts was formed when 14 busts from the famous sculptor Pieter Scheemakers were acquired by the college.”

Pointing to the busts, Alice made everyone turn their heads from left to right and vice-versa, and gaze upon them.

“Many of the busts created are of great philosophers, writers, and men who supported the college. The most popular of all the busts in the collection is of the writer Jonathan Swift, which most of you probably know for his famous novel Gulliver’s Travels.” –she pointed to the bust in question. –“Oh, and before I forget, the Library also holds one of the last remaining copies of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic, which was read by Patrick Pearse near the General Post Office on 24 April 1916.”

As they advanced, the group saw a beautiful harp on display. Maddie immediately recognized it as being the Trinity College Harp, also known as the Brian Boru’s Harp.

“Oh, I see you have an eye for pretty things. Does anyone know what this is?” –Alice asked them.

“It’s the Brian Boru’s Harp.” –Maddie promptly answered, feeling proud of herself for knowing what it was. London was about to tease her, by calling her “know-it-all”, but instead, she just smiled.

“That is correct, it’s the Brian Boru’s Harp, although most people know it as the Trinity College Harp. You probably already saw it represented on the obverse of the Irish one euro coin, or perhaps in the Guinness logo.” –the tour guide asserted. –“It is an early Irish harp or wire strung cláirseach. It is dated to the 14th or 15th century and, along with the Queen Mary Harp and the Lamont Harp, it is one of the only three surviving medieval Gaelic harps, which makes it very rare and very valuable.” –she explained as everyone snapped photos of it. –“It is uncertain who commissioned it, although structural evidence suggests it was made in the 15th century. It is similar in construction and design to the Queen Mary Clarsach in Scotland. It is likely, however, that the harp was made for a member
of an important family, for it is skilfully constructed and intricately ornamented. There is also the
legend that it once belonged to Brian Boru, High King of Ireland, but it’s nothing more than legend,
for Brian Boru lived between the 10th and the 11th century. Even so, it is a splendid piece of art and
a testament to its magnificent craftsmanship.”

The Brian Boru’s Harp was quite impressive, but the best was still to come. When they reached the
opposite end of the room, there it stood, protected by a glass case, the most valuable, unique, and to
some extent, priceless object of that library, the famous Book of Kells. The book itself was
composed by four different volumes. Usually only two were on display, but on that particular day,
for an unknown reason, the four volumes were on display, two showing a major illustration, while
the other two showing typical text pages. It took some cunningness for the whole gang to get in front
of the glass case, because everyone wanted to get a good view of the Book of Kells.

“And here it is, the Book of Kells, also known as the Book of Columbia, ladies and gentlemen.” –
Alice began what was to be a long speech about it. –“It takes its name from the Abbey of Kells,
which was its home for centuries. As you can see, the book is an illuminated manuscript Gospel
book in Latin, containing the four Gospels of the New Testament together with various prefatory
texts and tables, all done in the ancient art of the insular art. It is believed to have been created in a
Columban monastery in either Britain or Ireland, although some scholars believe it may have had
contributions from various Columban institutions from both Britain and Ireland. It is believed to have
been created ca. 800 AD. The text of the Gospels is largely drawn from the Vulgate, although it also
includes several passages drawn from the earlier versions of the Bible known as the Vetus Latina. It
is a masterwork of Western calligraphy and represents the pinnacle of Insular illumination. It is also
widely regarded as Ireland's finest national treasure.”

It was then that someone lift its hand to ask a question. Like before, Alice decided to let the person
ask the question.

“Excuse me, but what exactly is insular art?”

“That is a good question. The expression derives from the Latin word insula, which means island,
referring to both Ireland and England, and it is mainly used to describe the style of decoration of
illuminated manuscripts, which are the most numerous type of major surviving objects using the
style.”

“This woman seems to know just about everything.” –Zack whispered to Max with a mocking voice.
–“I wonder if I ask her how many pages the books have, if she’ll know the answer.”

“Why don’t you do it? I bet she knows it by heart.” –Max challenged him.

“I’ll do it… you think I can’t? And you know what? I bet she doesn’t!” –Zack told her, forgetting
about the fact the two of them were now dating, lighting up the flame of their everlasting rivalry.
–“Just watch… excuse me! I have a question, how many pages does the Book of Kells have?”

“That is a good question, young man, and the answer is quite simple actually. The book itself is
comprised of vellum leaves or folios, which were part of folios folded in half, called bifolios. It has
340 folios, or 680 bifolios if you prefer…”

“This woman knows everything…” –Zack thought to himself, knowing that Max was probably going
to make him do something for her, and he probably was not going to like it. –“She’s like a walking
encyclopedia.”
“Guess I win… and you owe me something.”

“And what is that you want…” –Zack asked her. He had not finished that last sentence, when Max kissed him on the lips.

“A simple kiss is enough.” –Max giggled, making Zack smile.

Seeing that, Maddie sighed in happiness. She was really happy that Max was making Zack as happy as she was making London. To imagine that the little guy who was always hitting on her, was now in love with a girl who was initially his rival, then turned into one of his best friends, and was now his girlfriend. Shedding a small tear, she once again felt amazed by how quickly things changed.
History and Trick Lesson

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After they exited the library, they went on to their next destination. London was determined to keep up with the schedule they had made the previous day.

"Okay, visit the Trinity College Library, check." –she said, as if she was crossing out something from a written list. –"What's our next stop?"

"Let's see... oh, I remember now, it's St. Patrick's Cathedral." –Maddie answered, as they head south. –"But I was thinking that maybe we could stop at St. Stephen's Green before heading there. After all, everything we're going to visit today is located right here in the centre. What do you say?"

"I don't see any problem with it." –Anastasia said.

"Me neither..." –Zack said. –"Wherever sweet thang thinks she wants to go, we'll just follow her." –Zack stated, with the others also waving affirmatively.

Heading down Dawson Street and before reaching their newest destination, they had the chance to visit St. Ann's Church, which was located at the eastern end of Anne Street. The Church was built in the 18th century and it was built in a baroque style, still, Anastasia, who knew her art quite well, immediately noticed that the style of the church's facade did not match the rest of the monument.

"You're right, it doesn't match." –Mark said, as he consulted his travelling guide on Dublin. –"According to this guide, St. Ann's original façade was never completed above the first floor. And, in 1868, a competition was held for a new façade, with the architectural firm of Lanyon, Lynn & Lanyon losing the commission to the Deanes, Thomas Newenham Deane and his father, who designed a neo-Romanesque front. As for its interior it was built in a Georgian style." –he quoted the book, as Maddie and Cody snapped photos of the church's front.

Entering in it, they soon found the church's interior to be most welcoming, with its serene yet warm style. The walls were all painted in a serene cramy colour, while most of the decorative motifs were all wood carved, giving the church an even more earthly warm feeling. Immediately, the gang began to snap photos, making sure they photographed each and every corner of that church.

"It's absolutely different from that church we visited on top of Montmartre." -London whispered to Maddie's ear, remembering their first trip to Paris as a couple; the same trip where Mark had seen Anastasia for the first time, before she moved to Boston.

"You're right. It's nothing like the Basilica Sacré-Coeur, inside or outside. But all the same, it's beautiful." -Madde whispered to London's ear.

"I'm just surprised there aren't any vampiric motifs around here." -Mark joked about it, but with a semi-serious voice.

"What do you mean vampiric motifs?" -Cody asked Mark, not understanding what he thought was a joke. -"Why would one put things related with vampires in a church?"
"Yeah, doesn't that contradict itself? I mean, vampires can't enter churches, face a crucifix or a holy-cross, and they definitely hate holy water, even I know that." –Zack said with a slightly braggish voice, bragging himself about his pseudo-knowledge about vampires.

"Not on Blade, True Blood or the Vampire Diaries... and I think we could say the same thing about Twilight, but I don't really consider them true vampires." –Mark said, proving to Zack that he knew more about vampires and and films and series revolving around them. -"But I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about the fact that this place itself has a little connection with that fantasy genre."

"What kind of connection? Come on, you're killing us here with all that mystery!" –Barbara exclaimed, gorgetting for an instant that they were in a church. Looking back at the other people inside the church, who were now staring at her, as if she had comitted one of the seven deadliest sins, she just smiled and said in a very low tone: "Sorry..."

"I was talking about the fact that Bram Stoker, the author of the most famous vampire novel of all times, Dracula. According to my travel guide, he got married in 1878 in this very place."

"Oh, so that's the connection." –London said. -"You could've said it from the beggining."

"And ruinning the fun of telling you something I found for myself, while reading this book? Where's the fun in that?" –he laughed a little.

About a quarter of an hour later, they finally arrived at St. Stephen's Green, just when the sun decided to appear from behind all the clouds that were in the sky. Feeling the warmth of the sun in their faces made them all even more eager to enter that garden and enjoy it. Crossing the street, they entered through the Fusiliers Arch. Taking his travel guide book off of his messenger's bag, Mark immediately began looking for information regarding the arch and the garden, but this time, Anastasia was faster than him, with her cell-phone. Linked to the internet, it was only a matter of seconds for her to find out everything she needed to know about both.

"Here we are, Fusiliers Arch... it was built in 1907, dedicated to the officers, non-comissioned officers and enlisted men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who fought and died in the Second Boer War." –Anastasia read out the article she had found on the web.

"You mean Second World War or World War II, right?"

"No, Zack, that one would only take place almost half a century later." –Maddie corrected him. -"This is another war. The Second Boer War was a war fought in Africa, where the United Kingdom went up against the South African Republic, also known ans the Transvaal Republic, and the Orange Free State."

Everyone looked at her in awe, because none of them, not even Cody or Barbara, who were A+ students knew about that war.

"What? My grandma loves to watch History Channel, and I got addicted to it too." -Maddie declared, as if it was no big deal. -"Anyway, all you need to know is that the outcome of the war ended with the two african nations being incorporated into a new state a few years later, called Union of South Africa."

"But what about that word, "Boer", what does it mean, Maddie?" -Cody asked, curious about its
"Well, if my memory isn't playing tricks on me, it was the common term for Afrikaans-speaking settlers in southern Africa at the time." -the blonde told the twin.

"And what about the park?" -Max asked, trying to change subject. Discussing wars and similar subjects always made her feel queasy.

"Let me see..." -Mark said, as he flipped the pages from his guide book. -"... here we are. It says here that the park was first built in 1880, acting as a public park. It should be noted that after the death of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria suggested that the park should be renamed after her late husband with a statue of the same in the middle of the park, which never happened. The park itself is adjacent to Grafton Street, making it one of the most well-known parks in Dublin... and that's pretty much what it says about it."

"Who cares about the park's history? I don't need to know about it. All I want now is to find a place where I can just lay on the grass and rest." -London said, as they entered the park, followed by the others.

Quickly, they separated into three groups. The twins and their girlfriends went one way, Mark and Anastasia went another, and London and Maddie went another, agreeing to meet back at the statue they first saw when they entered 45 minutes from then.

Heading to the statue in question, Cody took a photo of it, wondering what it was. It was a rock under a tree, and it had a round iron plaque with the face and a name of someone engraved on it. Surrounding it were two circles, one made out of paving stones and a larger one, made out of red poppies- Approaching it, Cody snapped yet another photo, with his brother and their girlfriends always behind him.

"Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa; that's a mouthful." -Zack laughed about the man's name.

"Don't know who this guy was, but, according to this he was born in 1831, and died in 1915." -Max said.

"I think I read something about him, while doing the report about the city of Dublin..." -Barbara said, as she tried to remember what it was she had read about the man in question. -"...if I could just remember what it was."

"Well, whoever he is, he must have been someone really important to have a monument in his honour." -Max said.

"Now I remember it! Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa was an Irish Fenian leader, as well as a very prominent member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood." -Barbara said.

"A Fenian what?" -Zack asked, not understanding any of it.

"Fenian leader, bro." -Cody told his brother. -"According to what I read about the subject, fenian was a term for the fraternal organizations dedicated to the establishment of an independent Irish Republic back in the 19th and early 20th century. It's thanks to men like him that nowadays the Republic of Ireland is a republic, and not part of the United Kingdom, which answers to the British government."
"Come on, bro, don't start with those explanations of yours, please." –Zack playfully begged him. –"I thought we had come to visit the city, not have a History lesson. If I wanted one, I would have stayed in the ship, watching the History Channel." –he said, making Cody let out a small giggle.

While the twins, Max and Barbara laughed out loud of Zack's jokes, Mark and Anastasia were both walking by the park, snapping photos of just about everything they saw, while being lovey dovey to one another. It felt nice to spend a little time alone, just the two of them, and they had had little opportunity to do it, since classes and trainings started for both of them.

"It's nice to be just the two of us, isn't it?" –Anastasia asked Mark, as she placed her right arm over his waist.

"It sure is… don't get me wrong, I love hanging out with our friends, but sometimes…"

"I know. Sometimes it's just nice to be just the two of us."

As they walked, the passed by a balloon vendor and Mark wanted to buy her heart-shaped balloon saying "I LUV YOU", saying that he had never given her one, but Anastasia quickly told him that he did not need to do it, still he insisted.

"Come on, Mark, you know that if you give it to me, I'll have to be holding it for the rest of the day, until we get back to the ship, and that's not practical." –Anastasia told him. –"I know you want to be romantic, but you can do that another time."

"Alright, alright, if you say so. But next time, I'm buying that balloon, and I'll win a big teddy bear just for you in one of those carny games."

"Make it a stuffed tarantula or unicorn, and you got yourself a deal." –she told him, reminding him that she was not very fond of teddy bears.

About five minutes later, the two lovebirds reached the opposite end of the park, where they saw a fountain adorned with three interesting bronze sculptures; the sculptures of three women dressed in robes, two of them standing, while the third statue was seated. Approaching it, they immediately photographed it.

"The Three Fates." –Anastasia said.

"I think I read something about these statues, here…" –Mark said, as he once again grabbed his travel guide book and looked for the page where he had seen the fountain's picture. –"… found it! The Three Fates is a sculpture from Professor Josef Wackerle, and it was as a gift to the Irish from the German Federal Republic. Its purpose was to show their thanks for the help and generosity the Irish offered the German people after World War II during times of intense distress and hardship. The sculpture itself is representing the Three Fates, Urd (past), Verdandi (present) and Skuld (future) from the Norse mythology." –he read from the book.

"They really are beautiful. And look at this," –she pointed out to a plaque with an inscription. –"This fountain, designed by the sculptor Josef Wackerle, is the gift of the people of the German Federal Republic to mark their gratitude for Ireland's help after the war of 1939-45. The bronze group portrays the three legendary fates spinning and measuring the thread of man's destiny." –Anastasia read aloud. –"The same thing is also written in Gaelic and German."

Looking at them more closely, Mark felt like he was being watched by the statues, as if their eyes
kept following him. A shiver went up his spine, contributing to create a creepy feeling inside of him.

"Is it just me, or did those statues eyes moved?"

"I think you're watching too much Doctor Who. Those statues aren't Angels... if they were we would be dead by now, because I think I blinked my eyes like about 20 times since were standing here." – Anastasia laughed, cracking up a joke.

"And you need to stop watching Vampire Diaries." – he laughed, as he kissed her. -"Now, do me a favour and go place yourself in front of the fountain, please." -Mark told her, as he grabbed a tablet from his backpack.

"You're gonna sketch me? I thought you hated to sketch people in tablets. You said, and I quote "Tablets are only good for two things; to snap photos and watch movies.", remember?"

"I know, but it's hard to bring a sketchbook with you that is the right size, to fit in your backpack." – he explained. –"Besides, I'll do another one on my sketchbook when we get back to ship... I just want to use this as an excuse to make you look pretty."

"Oh, you're something, Mark." – Anastasia laughed.

"I know..." – he giggled, as he opened the sketching program on the tablet. –"Now hold still, while sketch you; this won't take more than 10 minutes tops."

As for London and Maddie, they decided to just lie on the grass, and look at the clouds together. London had never done that before, but for Maddie, that was one of the things she liked the most, when on vacation.

"Look at that one! It looks like the jaws of a dragon." – Maddie giggled, pointing out to a particular set of clouds in the sky.

London squinted her eyes a couple of times, but nothing; she just could not see the dragon Maddie was talking about.

"I can't see it..." –London told her girlfriend, as she moved her head to the sides. -"I'm no good at this game, Maddie." –she pouted, giving up.

"All you need is a little training." – Maddie told her, as she crawled next to London and placed her head right next to hers. –"Here, turn your head just a little bit to the right and then close your left eye." – the blonde instructed her.

And just like magic, the heiress saw the cloud dragon. It looked like an European dragon because it had wings and a spiky tail.

"Now do you see it?"

"I do." –London answered her. Hearing her say that, Maddie giggled. -"You really are enjoying this aren't you? And I'm not just talking about teaching me how to look for imaginary creatures made out fo clouds; I'm talking about this stop in Ireland."

"I sure am, Princess." - Maddie told her, kissing her on her right cheek. -"I can't really explain it, but, I feel like a part of me is finally home."
"It must be that Irish blood of yours, boiling out of happiness because after so many years and so many generations, finally sees itself home." -London smiled at her.

"Maybe. But it wouldn't be the same if you and the rest of the gang weren't here with me to enjoy this moment." -Maddie sighed. -"You know, I wouldn't mind living in Ireland later in my life."

"We can try and make that happen... after we get married, we'll move to this country, and that way, you can be happy." –London joked about it.

"No, not after we get married... maybe when we're old ladies, like 50 or 60 years from now. Can you imagine, us sitting by the porch, drinking tea, while we see our grandkids and even our great-grandkids playing in the garden, filling the air with laughter and joy."

"No way, Blondie!" –London laughed. –"50 or 60 years from now, I plan to be right next to you, by a pool, drinking piña coladas and laughing with our kids, grandkids and great-grandkids... not to mention, wearing skimpy bikinis." –the brunette teased her with a sexy voice.

"You really are impossible, Princess." –Maddie hugged her. -"It really doesn't matter where we end up, as long as we stay together... and for the record, I don't think that when you're 60 or 70, wearing a skimpy bikini is not an option." –she laughed.

"Just leave it to the Tipton Cosmetics and of course Tipton Surgery Clinics... thanks to them, we'll be looking like we're twenty when we reach seventy or eighty." –she smiled. –"You'll see."

"Only you to think about that." –Maddie said as she planted a kiss on London's lips. -"Now, let's get back to cloud gazing."

At the appointed time, all of them met at the entrance. All of them, except London and Maddie, who lost track of time. Instead of waiting for them, the gang decided to go and look for them. They quickly found them, laying on the grass, exchanging smooches, while cloud gazing. Seeing them approach, the girls quickly lift their heads and smiled at them.

"Are you girls enjoying your time alone, sweet thang? If you girls want, we can come back later." –Zack asked her with a mocking smile. At the same time, Cody snapped a photo of the girls laying on the grass.

"No need for that." –Maddie said, as London and her got up on their feet. They quickly whisked away all the grass leaves stuck to their clothes.

"Sorry if we lost track of time, but..."

"We know, we know, London. You just two just can't get your eyes out the other." -Max told her, giggling, as the girls approached them. –"So, where to now?"

"Next stop, St. Patrick's Cathedral." –Maddie told her.

Following York's Street, they quickly arrived at St- Patrick's Cathedral. They quickly recognized the 13th century building from their History books, but even if they could not identify it as being the cathedral, the amount of tourists and visitors around the building and its grounds would quickly give it away. The line to buy tickets was enormous, and so was the line to enter in the cathedral.
"Why don't we play straws to see who's going to stay in line to buy the tickets? That way the rest of us can stay here and enjoy this sun, before it disappears behind the clouds once more." –Max suggested them.

"That ain't a bad idea, but we don't need to do that. I'll go buy the tickets, and you guys can rest for a little while." –Cody told them.

"More like an hour or so. That line is huge, bro." –Zack told Cody.

"Don't worry, I'll go wait in the line with you." –Barbara told her boyfriend. –"That way, at least you'll have some company."

Unlike what Zack said, it only took his brother about fifteen minutes to buy the tickets. But it took them more than an hour to get inside the cathedral. While waiting in line, Mark once again began to spill trivia facts about the cathedral.

"In 1192, John Comyn, first Anglo-Norman Archbishop of Dublin, elevated one of the four Dublin Celtic parish churches, the one dedicated to St. Patrick, beside a holy well of the same name and on an island between two branches of the River Poddle, to the status of a collegiate church, i.e., a church with a body of clergy devoted to both worship and learning. The new collegiate church fell outside the City boundaries, and this move created two new civic territories, one under the Archbishop's temporal jurisdiction. The church was dedicated to "God, our Blessed Lady Mary and St. Patrick" on 17 March 1191. Over time, a whole complex of buildings arose in the vicinity of the cathedral, including the Palace of the St. Sepulchre, which is the seat of the Archbishop, and legal jurisdiction was divided between a Liberty controlled by the Dean, around the cathedral, and a larger one belonging to the Archbishop, adjacent." –Mark read in his guide book.

"That's quite interesting, Mark, but..." -Anastasia said.

"I know, I know, I'm boring you guys with this, ain't I?" –Mark asked them, knowing what the answer was going to be.

"Yeah, a little." –London said. -"When you start talking like that, it almost sounds like your a living, breathing History book."

"Sorry. I think I get a little carried away with this." –Mark admitted.

"Why don't you stop reading that thing for a little while?" –Cody asked him. –"By the time we get inside, there'll be nothing for us to know about, because you'll have already told us everything."

"Okay, I'll stop... after I finish this paragraph." –he laughed, making the others sigh. –"The basis of the present building, as noted, the largest church in Ireland, was built between 1191 and 1270, though little now remains of the earliest work beyond the Baptistry. Much of the work was overseen by the previously mentioned Henry of London, a friend of the King of England and signatory of the Magna Carta, who was also involved in the construction of Dublin's city walls, and Dublin Castle. It should be noted that after the English Reformation between 1536 and 1564, St. Patrick's became an Anglican Church of Ireland Cathedral, although most of the population of the surrounding Pale remained Roman Catholic. During the confiscation process, some images within the cathedral were defaced by soldiers under Thomas Cromwell, and neglect led to collapse of the nave in 1544."

When they finally got inside, it was a tour guide who went on with the explanation, instead of Mark. Still, it did not matter; they were all too focused on the beautiful decor of the cathedral to even pay
attention to what the tour guide was telling them. This one was incredibly beautiful and so different form the other church they visited earlier.

"And in the 19th century, Sir Benjamin Guiness, the owner of the Guiness brewery, whose statue is outside, who aside from being a brewer and a politician, was also a very well known philantropist, paid for the reconstruction of the cathedral. Although it managed to rebuild the cathedral and insure its survival, it also destroyed most medieval decor motifs, the main reason why most of the cathedral has a Victorian era design." -the tour guide explained.

"Even so, it's still a very beautiful building." -Cody thought to himself.

After they exited the cathedral, they all agreed that it was a good time for lunch. Walking through the streets, they all looked for a place where you could have a bite to eat; still, Maddie insisted on not going to a fast-food restaurant.

"I'm in the mood for some good old Irish home cooking." –Maddie told the gang.

A good thing about restaurants its there's always one that serves local gastronomic delicacies around when you need one, whatever country you are in. The one they all picked was one of those restaurants that you look inside and you see that is incredibly old, but it still has something that makes it appealing.

Entering it, they quickly took a seat. A young waitress quickly appeared and showed them the menu, as she placed a small basket with slices of soda bread on the table. The menu was really long and it had some really weird-named dishes written on it, which most of them assumed were written in Irish; the only one who knew what almost all of them were was Maddie. Usually they would ask the waitress what she would recommend them, but having the blonde as their expert in Irish cuisine, they decided to let her choose for them.

"I don't know about you, but I feel like I could eat a horse, you know? The only problem is to know which dish is the horse, you know?" –Zack laughed of his own corny joke.

"Very funny, Zack... but don't worry, I won't let you eat something you don't like because you think it's disgusting." –Maddie told him. –"Or will I?" –she thought to herself. As she looked at the names of the dishes, she thought that she owed Zack a little payback for all the times he played tricks on her. It's not like she had not forgiven him for all that, but the chance to play a trick on him herself was just too good to be thrown away. Looking at the menu, she found the perfect appetizer for him.

Since they agreed to eat a light lunch, since they still had a lot to sightseeing on the afternoon, Maddie ordered them a dish of coddle for main plate, and as for an appetizer, she asked stuffed potatoes with ham and gravy. The only one that was different was Zack’s, which was stuffed with minced pork kidneys and gravy.

As they waited for the coddle, they began with their appetizers. Needless to say they all loved them. It was not only when they were halfway through their stuffed potatoes that Maddie decided to make her move. With an impish smirk on her face, she asked Zack is he was enjoying his stuffed potato.

"So, Zack, how are you enoying your potato?"

"It's not bad, I have to say." –Zack told her.
"Really?" –she kept smiling at him, trying not to burst into laughs. London who was by her side, seeing that, immediately understood that Maddie had played a trick on the twin. Still, she said nothing, and smiled. –"Didn't you notice anything different on yours?"

"Not really." –he said, as he gulped yet another bite. -"I mean, the ham has doesn't taste the same, but I guess it's because of the gravy or something."

"Don't you think it's because what you're eating isn't ham?" –she smirked at him. Hearing that, the rest of the gang understood where she was going with that.

"It's not ham?" –he asked her, puzzled.

"Nope... what you're eating is actually minced pork kidneys, not ham. Same animal, different part." –Maddie laughed out loud. –"I tricked you!"

Hearing that, Zack felt like he was going to throw up. Still, he controlled himself, and tried not to throw up, which was easier said then done.

"Can't believe... you did this to me." –Zack told her, as he tried to think about something else in order to not throw up. –"You know I hate kidneys, no matter which animal it comes from."

"Well, it certainly didn't look like it when you were eating them." –Maddie laughed once more. –"Besides, this is for all the times you placed chili peppers on my food, whenever I was babysitting you and your brother."

"Payback... it's Hell, bro." –Cody told Zack. Even he felt that Zack deserved to be tricked like that.

"I really think I'm going to throw up..." –Zack said once more. The more he tried not to think about it, the more he did. Taking a few deep breaths, he was doing everything he could to not throw up what he ate.

"Hold on, that's only psychological, Zack. Think about something else... try thinking about that delicious sundae we both ate a few months ago, and you were so sweet you let me eat the cherry. Think about that." –Max told him, trying to calm him down.

Doing what his girlfriend told him, Zack quickly calmed himself and his urge to throw up disappeared just as quickly as it appeared.

"Feeling better?" –Max asked him.

"Y-Yeah... I really thought I was going to throw up, you know?" –Zack said, as he took a sip of water.

"Sorry about that, Zack." –Maddie told him, clearly sorry about what she had done. –"If I knew you would react like that, I wouldn't have done that."

"Are you kidding? That was a world-class master prank, sweet thang." –Zack told her. –"I couldn't have done it better."

"So, that means you're not angry with me?" –Maddie asked him.

"You already know that answer, Maddie. I can't stay mad or angry at you." –Zack told her.
"Especially not over something like this... but I think I had ate enough pork kidneys for the rest of my life." –This last statement made everyone laugh a little.

"Oh, you really are a sweet." –Maddie winked her left eye at him. –"Still, I hope you still have enough room for the next plate. Trust me, I think you're going to enjoy it."

"Just as long as it doesn't have kidneys, I'll eat." –Zack said, making everyone laugh once more.

Chapter End Notes

In case some of you don't know what the main dish that Maddie chose for them is, here's what it is:

Coddle - is an Irish dish which is often made to use up leftovers, and therefore without a specific recipe. However, it most commonly consists of layers of roughly sliced pork sausages and rashers (thinly sliced, somewhat fatty back bacon) with sliced potatoes and onions. Traditionally, it can also include barley.
Travels in Ireland

After lunch, the gang picked up a bus and went to visit Dublin Castle, where they were dazzled by its beauty, and furthermore, by its History, and all the myths and stories attached to it. From all the myths they heard the tour guides telling, the one that caught their eye the most was the theft of the Irish Crown Jewels back in 1907.

When they heard the story, immediately they all began to imagine what could have happened to them, since they were never recovered, and the thief was never identified, much less caught. Maddie imagined the jewels being stolen by some thief who stole them in order to bury them somewhere where they would stay hidden until all Ireland was free from British rule. The idea was a little crazy and ideological, but she liked it. Barbara on the other hand came up with the theory that the jewels were actually in possession of a private collector that managed to buy them, years after the heist, probably during the First or Second World War, a theory that was also shared by Zack, but Zack’s version had a lot more gangsters, archaeologists whose favourite weapon is a whiplash and a secret organization bended on world domination.

“That’s a crazy theory, Zack.” –Cody told him.

“Well, it could happen, I think.” –Zack said.

“Yeah, maybe, in your dreams.” –Mark laughed.

“Do all your theories about mysterious robberies and disappearances need to have gangsters, fictional archaeologists, secret agents, mutants, aliens and super secret organizations in them?” –Anastasia asked him.

“Nah, just the craziest ones.” –Zack laughed. –“What can I say? I have a wild imagination.” –he boasted a little, making the rest also laugh.

“What about you London? What do you think it happened to the jewels?” –Max asked her.

“Me? Well, I don’t know... I’m sure that Zack’s theory is quite creative, but I don’t think that’s what happened.” –the heiress giggled, as she ran her left hand through her hair. –“If I had to take a guess, I would go for Maddie’s theory. It’s kinda romantic to do such a thing for the sake and love of a country and its people.”

“You’re a hopeless romantic, you know that?” –Maddie smiled at her, as she placed her right arm around London’s waist.

“If I wasn’t, I probably wouldn’t have fallen in love with you, Blondie.” –London said, placing a peck on the Asian beauty’s lips.

“Girls, come on, we’re here!” –Zack exclaimed, playfully faking a disgusted face. –“If you girls want to kiss, then do it when we’re not around, okay?”

“Why, are you jealous?” –Max asked him, pulling Zack into a very big kiss. –“If you want one, you just need to ask, silly.” –Max joked.

After they exited the castle, it was already 6 pm. The Sun was going to set in the horizon in a matter
of minutes, but they were not yet ready to call it a day. Their bodies and their spirits still had enough energy for one last stop, and that stop was none other than Grafton Street.

Grafton Street was one of the most famous streets in Dublin and it was known for being one of the main stops for tourists and locals alike, not only because of its stores, but also because of its cafés and restaurants, not to mention the street artists that put on a show every day. When they first arrived, a couple of clowns, one dressed in a colourful suit, with big red shoes and a bowl hat, while the other was dressed like a Pierrot with a red nose. While the Pierrot was juggling colourful balls, the other pulled out a few balloon, filled it and proceeded to make balloon animals. First, he did a pink poodle for Barbara, then, a green giraffe for Maddie, a purple porpoise for London and finally, a yellow chameleon for Max. They all applauded and did not even think twice before giving them a few coins. London was so delighted that instead of just giving them a few coins, she pulled a 50 euro bill and gave them. The clowns thanked her, as the gang continued to walk.

Soon, other street artists also showed up. Most of them were jugglers and fire-breathers, while there were also others that were dressed up with clothes either white, or black or golden, and their faces painted in the same colour, playing famous characters like Napoleon, Mozart, Beethoven or Einstein. There was even a group that was posing like the Beatles, all dressed in silver. There were also street singers singing famous tunes, and dancers. The people that passed by them applauded, with some of them handing out a few coins to the artist they most liked.

“This is amazing.” –London said.

“You said it.” –Cody said –“I never thought there would be so many street artists and performers in one place.”

“It’s just like the circus, but without the uncomfortable seats, or the big top or the animals.” –Zack said. –“Check out those fire-eaters! Now that’s what I call hot food.” –Zack laughed of his own gag.

“This is why I love watching these guys. They cheer up a place with so little.” –Mark said. –“And the best part of all this is that we get to see amazing talents live, without the need to go to a circus or a dance show.”

“I wish I could do something like this... it would be fun to do something like this, even if it was for only a day.” –Maddie said.

“Well, you can sing, Blondie. On one of the other cities that were going to visit, you and I can come up with a scheme to perform. Whatever money we can get, we either give it to someone who needs it more than us, or we can keep it to ourselves and buy something to eat as a reward.” –London suggested, romanticizing the idea.

“If you do that, count us in too.” –Zack said, signalling is brother. –“I bet we could find a fun act to put up too, the two of us.”

“I don’t know Zack...” –Cody said, a little hesitant about the idea.

“Come on, we came in this journey to visit places we’ve never been, and to do things we never did. Where’s your sense of adventure?” –Barbara asked him with a teasing voice, trying to convince him to tag along.

“Oh, alright, I’ll think about it, but I’m not doing any juggling or acrobatics, you know I’m terrible at it... and I’m not eating or breathing fire either!” –Cody exclaimed, making the girls laugh.
“Don’t worry, I’ll have that in mind when I chose our act.” – Zack laughed at his brother.

“One thing is for sure. it’ll be something that we have to record for posterity.” – Max laughed.

The vibrancy and animation on the street was so contagious the gang all decided to join in. The beat of the music made them all start dancing right there on the street. The song that was being played was "Whiskey in the Jar" by The Dubliners.

As I was goin' over the Cork and Kerry mountains
I saw Captain Farrell and his money he was countin'
I first produced my pistol and then produced my rapier
I said stand and deliver or the devil he may take ya

I took all of his money and it was a pretty penny
I took all of his money yeah and I brought it home to Molly
She swore that she'd love me, no never would she leave me
But the devil take that woman yeah for you know she tricked me easy

As the song went on, other people also began to dance, clapping their hands to its rhythm, helping out the street musicians too, who kept playing louder and louder.

Musha ring dum a doo dum a da
Whack for my daddy-o
Whack for my daddy-o
There's whiskey in the jar-o

Being drunk and weary I went to Molly's chamber
Takin' my money with me and I never knew the danger
For about six or maybe seven in walked Captain Farrell
I jumped up, fired off my pistols and I shot him with both barrels

Musha ring dum a doo dum a da
Whack for my daddy-o
Whack for my daddy-o
There's whiskey in the jar-o

Now some men like the fishin' and some men like the fowlin'
And some men like ta hear, ta hear cannon ball a roarin'
Me I like sleepin' specially in my Molly's chamber
But here I am in prison, here I am with a ball and chain yeah

Musha ring dum a doo dum a da
Whack for my daddy-o
Whack for my daddy-o
There's whiskey in the jar-o

Whiskey in the jar-o
Musha ring dum a doo dum a da

As the song ended, one of the musicians passed a hat in front of audience, and almost everyone placed either a coin or a bill in it, thanking them for the swell song and for the performance. The
Tipton gang was no exception to the rule, with all of them placing a few coins in the hat; London herself pulled out another 50 Euros bill from her wallet and put it on the hat.

“That’s London, alright, the big spender.” –Cody mused about his friend’s action.

With all that dancing, soon everyone’s stomach was rumbling, begging for something delicious to fill it. Not feeling like waiting to get to the ship, they all decided to eat right there, on the first place they saw. That place turned out to be a fish’n’chips restaurant. Entering it, the delicious smell of fried cod and French fries invaded their nostrils, making them even hungrier than before. The place was packed with costumers, but they did not mind waiting. Barbara even said that food always tastes better when you’re waiting for it. Taking a number, they waited. When it finally reached their number, they all asked three family sized menus with everything they felt they were entitled to.

Already with their dinner in the bags, they looked for a quiet place to eat. Soon, they found an empty park bench big enough for the eight of them. Opening the bags, Maddie handled them all their orders. They all smiled as they grabbed the hot and oily, yet absolutely delicious pieces of fried fish, wrapped in paper and took a bite.

“Mmm... so good.” –Max said, as she ate another bite.

“It sure is.” –Anastasia agreed, as she grabbed her drink and sipped it.

“This is what I like most about travelling.” –Mark said. –“Being with friends and having a meal with them after a crazy day, visiting monuments, museums and such.”

“Couldn’t have said it better myself.” –Cody said, as he watched his brother playing with the French fries, placing two in his mouth, and then pretending to be a blood-sucking vampire.

“I want to suck your blood!” –Zack exclaimed with an accent similar to that of Bela Lugosi.

“Stop that, Zack and give me some of those fries.” –Max told him, as she grabbed a few fries from her boyfriend.

"Hey, you have your own fries. Why do you want mine?” –he playfully asked her.

“Because it’s like they say, the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.” –Max told him, always smiling.

Watching those two, Mark simply looked at Anastasia and said:

“Those two really love to tease each other.” –he whispered, as he took another bite of the fried fish.

“Just like us.” –she whispered back at him.

After finished eating, they looked for a bus to take them back to the cruise ship. While they searched, they decided to buy a sweet treat for dessert. Entering in a bakery, they all saw something that immediately caught their eyes, Irish scones filled with butter cream. Buying a box of 20, they ate them as they walked. In no time, the scones were all gone. Making a mental note, Maddie told herself that they would need to buy more of those on the next day for Carey, Mark’s dad and Anastasia’s mom; plus, she wanted to send a few to her family, that way, they would know what she was doing and what she was experimenting.
An hour later, back on the ship, they were back in their suites, relaxing and chilling, while talking about what they had seen and learned on that day. Zack and Cody told their mom everything, as they showed the photos they had taken.

“Wow, this looks so beautiful. You kids really had a great time today.” –Carey said, as she looked at the photos on the boys’ laptop. –“I wish I could have gone with you, guys.”

“We also wanted you to come with us, mom. But we now you have to work.” –Cody said.

“Still, I promise that when we dock in Edinburgh, I’m taking two days to go with you, okay?”

“In the meantime, we’ll be bringing lots of cool stuff, like those cakes we ate after dinner. You should have tasted them, mom. They’re so good.” –Zack

“And I would have, if you hadn’t eaten them all.” –Carey laughed. –“You better bring me some of those cakes, or you’ll be making your meals from now on, and let me just remind you that you can’t even make scrambled eggs or toast without burning them,” –she said, making a little bit of fun of her son.

“Okay, okay, we won’t forget it.” –Zack assured her, knowing that his mother would fulfil her threats.

At the same time, in the Hernan Cortez suite, Mark was telling his dad what he had seen that day. Joining them were Anastasia and her mom Felicia, who joined them for a coffee.

“And you should have seen just how beautiful the castle is, mom.” –Anastasia told her mother. –“It’s so elegant and so majestic.” –she said, as she petted her cat, Bombalurina.

“I can see it is by the photos, sweetie.” –Felicia said. –“And I’m glad you’re enjoying the trip.”

“Enjoying it? I’m loving it, mom!” –Anastasia exclaimed, sighing out of happiness.

“And what about tomorrow? Where are you kids planning to go tomorrow?” – Stephen asked, as he took a sip from his coffee mug.

“Well, there’s still a few more places we want to visit that we couldn’t go today like the Guinness brewery, the Spire, Mount Jerome Cemetery, St. Michan’s Church, and of course, visit a few shops... you know how girls are with shopping for souvenirs’ and stuff, dad.” –Mark laughed, when Anastasia hit him on the shoulder, making Munkustrap, who was on Mark’s lap to jump into the ground. –“Ouch...”

“That’s for making fun of us women, mister.” –Anastasia told him, smirking, as she kept petting Bombalurina, who was purring, no doubt enjoying herself.

On the Wonderland suite, London and Maddie were also enjoying themselves. When they entered the first thing they did was to drop everything they had been carrying all day long, took off their boots, sat on the couch and let out a relief sigh. They were tired, but they were happy about their first day in Dublin.
After taking a shower, the girls changed to their nightgowns. Feeling refreshed, they went on to enjoy themselves with a random activity until it was time for bed. London decided to organize and edit all the photos they had taken, and later posting the best on the Internet. Maddie on the other hand decided to log herself onto Skype and see how her family was.

Back in Boston it was nearly five in the afternoon. The only ones at home then were Maddie’s mom Miranda, her grandmother and her younger brother Liam. Maddie’s dad, Irving was still at work, and her older sister Gennie had not come back from college Liam, who was on the computer by then, quickly answered her sister’s call.

“Hey sis!” –Liam greeted his sister, happy to see her.

“Hey little bro! So, how are you?” –Maddie waved at him. It still felt strange to her to see her family members through a camera. She was so used to having them around her, that talking them over the Internet was something she felt she would never get used to.

“Came back from school about half an hour ago, and I’m waiting for mom and grandma to make dinner.” –Liam answered here. –“What about you? How’ve you been since yesterday?”

Soon, she began to tell him all about her day. Liam’s laughs soon attracted Maddie’s grandma and mother’s attention. Realizing that he was talking to Maddie, the two women joined in the conversation. Soon, London also joined Maddie, and helped her telling everything that happened.

“I see you’re having a real blast there.” –Miranda said.

“What about the good old Irish beer, honey? Have you tasted it yet?” –grandma Fitzpatrick asked her.

“No, we haven’t, but don’t worry, we’ll try it before we leave.”

“Well, you wouldn’t be a true-blooded Irish if you didn’t do it, sweetie.” –Grandma Fitzpatrick laughed.

“Thanks, grandma. And believe me, if you loved hearing our small adventure, wait until you receive my video-diary in a few minutes.” –Maddie told them.

“Yeah, Maddie here went all Carl Sagan while recording our trip today. –London teased her, leading the blonde to start tickling her as payback for that little joke. –Stop... (laugh)... M-Maddie, that’s... (laugh)... not fair... (laugh)... you little... (laugh)... minx!”

The blonde stopped, not because she was not enjoying it, or because London did not deserved that, but because she did not want to leave her family there, watching her and girlfriend tickling each other to death, trying to see who laughed harder and longer. Clearing their throats and fixing their hairs, the girls apologized, as the conversation went on.

They waited for Liam to finish receiving Maddie’s video-diary before ending the call. Maddie knew they were going to laugh like crazies when they saw and heard all the jokes and gags they did. Saying goodbye Maddie promised she would try and call on the following day a little later in order to also talk with her dad and her sister.

Another hour went by, before the girls called it a day and went to bed. Knowing they had to get up earlier just made it even harder for them to go to sleep. So, in order to help the Sandman to come,
Maddie decided to grab a book she bought that afternoon, and read it with London. The book was a used 1970’s edition of The Blue Lagoon: A Romance from Irish author Henry De Vere Stacpoole, and she had bought it for a mere price of 5 Euros. They had already seen the movie adaptation, but reading it made it ever so magical. Snuggling next to each other, Maddie began to read it:

“Mr. Button was seated on a sea-chest with a fiddle under his left ear. He was playing the "Shan van vaught," and accompanying the tune, punctuating it, with blows of his left heel on the fo'cs'le deck. "O the Frinch are in the bay, Says the Shan van vaught."

He was dressed in dungaree trousers, a striped shirt, and a jacket baize--green in parts from the influence of sun and salt. A typical old shell-back, round-shouldered, hooked of finger; a figure with strong hints of a crab about it.

His face was like a moon, seen red through tropical mists; and as he played it wore an expression of strained attention as though the fiddle were telling him tales much more marvellous than the old bald statement about Bantry Bay.

"Left-handed Pat," was his fo'cs'le name; not because he was left-handed, but simply because everything he did he did wrong--or nearly so. Reefing or furling, or handling a slush tub--if a mistake was to be made, he made it.

He was a Celt, and all the salt seas that had flowed between him and Connaught these forty years and more had not washed the Celtic element from his blood, nor the belief in fairies from his soul. The Celtic nature is a fast dye, and Mr Button's nature was such that though he had been shanghaied by Larry Marr in 'Frisco, though he had got drunk in most ports of the world, though he had sailed with Yankee captains and been man-handled by Yankee mates, he still carried his fairies about with him--they, and a very large stock of original innocence.” —she read, using her Irish accent. If felt right to her that since the author was Irish, the narrator, or whoever was telling the story should talk with an Irish accent.

“You know I’m always saying this, but I’ll never get tired of hearing you read, Blondie.” —London said, as she snuggled in closer to Maddie. She loved whenever their bodies touched, and Maddie’s warm touch was like the touch of an angel. —“Plus, that Irish accent your using when reading, it’s just magical.”

“Thanks, although I think the one thing that is magical here is your eyes. Your eyes sparkle in a lovely way when you hear me read.” —Maddie told her, stroking the brunette’s hair with her fingertips.

“Look at us with all this mushy talk.” —London giggled, making Maddie also smile. —“Whoever hears us, will think that we’re crazy.”

“Well, I don’t know about crazy, but I’m mad, mad in love with you, Princess.” —Maddie smirked, planting a kiss on London’s lips.

“You ain’t the only one, Blondie. I’m head over heels for you… but then again, you already knew that, watashi no utsukushi.

“Oh, I love it when you call me beautiful in Japanese, mo álainn.” —Maddie told her with a lovey-dovey voice.

“And I love it when you call me beautiful in Irish.” —London mimicked Maddie’s voice.

After a few more smooches, the girls snuggled in even closer, with London resting her head on Maddie’s chest. Signalling her, Maddie placed the book in front of the heiress; it was London’s time
Nearly over the musician's head swung a hammock from which hung a leg; other hammocks hanging in the semi-gloom called up suggestions of lemurs and arboreal bats. The swinging kerosene lamp cast its light forward past the heel of the bowsprit to the knibheads, lighting here a naked foot hanging over the side of a bunk, here a face from which protruded a pipe, here a breast covered with dark mossy hair, here an arm tattooed.

It was in the days before double topsail yards had reduced ships' crews, and the fo'cs'le of the Northumberland had a full company: a crowd of packet rats such as often is to be found on a Cape Horners "Dutchmen" [sic] Americans—men who were farm labourers and tending pigs in Ohio three months back, old seasoned sailors like Paddy Button—a mixture of the best and the worst of the earth, such as you find nowhere else in so small a space as in a ship's fo'cs'le.

The Northumberland had experienced a terrible rounding of the Horn. Bound from New Orleans to Frisco she had spent thirty days battling with head-winds and storms—down there, where the seas are so vast that three waves may cover with their amplitude more than a mile of sea space; thirty days she had passed off Cape Stiff, and just now, at the moment of this story, she was locked in a calm south of the line.

Mr Button finished his tune with a sweep of the bow, and drew his right coat sleeve across his forehead. Then he took out a sooty pipe, filled it with tobacco, and lit it.” –London read it, also reading with an Irish accent. –“I wonder when they will get to the island? I always liked in the movie when they arrive at the island, you know?”

“Me too, but they’ll never get there, if you stop reading, silly.” –Maddie told London, kissing her on the head, sniffing London’s hair scent, which smelled like mangos and vanilla.

Their second day in Dublin went smoothly. The gang visited all the places they had on their list and still had time to go shopping for souvenirs. After all that shopping, the girls invited the boys to spend the evening in a pub, enjoying themselves, playing darts and billiards, dancing and singing in karaoke competitions. And they were not alone; some of their colleagues also showed up at the pub they were, like Corrie and Mary-Kate.

When it came to photos and brochures taken from the numerous monuments they visited, they had more than enough to write three or four different books; more than enough to help them on their reports about Dublin and Ireland for the different classes.

And with one last day until they departed to Scotland, Maddie decided that there was still one place they had to visit before leaving the Emerald Island. But in order to visit it, they would have to take a train out of Dublin; and that place was Blarney Castle, home of the Blarney Stone, one of Ireland’s most beloved and iconic landmarks.

When in Dublin, to get to Blarney Castle you need to catch a train to Cork, and that’s just what the Tipton gang did. On the previous night, London called Moseby and told him to arrange eight train tickets to Cork, to depart from Dublin Heuston Station at 6 in the morning. They were going to spend the day there, have a picnic while there and come back to the ship a little after 8, for the ship was leaving at 10 pm sharp.

It was still dark when the gang left the ship. The sun would only rise in about an hour, so it felt to them as if they were sneaking out of the ship in the middle of the night. It was a funny feeling; funny, yet enjoyable to them. Not wanting to wait for a bus and risk missing the train, they all took a taxi to train station.

As the taxis rolled down the streets, they saw just how quiet and serene Dublin was before sunrise.
There was not a soul on the streets. You could almost say that it looked like a ghost town, if it were not for the lighting and other things that make a place habitable. While approaching the train station, they recognized it from the images they saw on the Internet and on their travel guides. The Dublin Heuston Station was designed by Sancton Wood, and opened on 4 August 1846 as the terminus and headquarters of the Great Southern and Western Railway. It was originally called Kingsbridge Station from the nearby Kings Bridge over the Liffey river, but it was renamed in 1966 after Sean Heuston, an Easter Rising leader who had worked in the station offices.

Already aboard the train, they looked for an empty compartment. Since they were eight of them, it would be hard for them to fit into a single compartment; they decided to split themselves into two compartments. The twins and their girlfriends stayed in one, and Mark, Anastasia Maddie and London stayed in another. Since the trip would take about two and a half hours, they decided that after the conductor passed, they would all take a little nap until they arrived to their destination. Soon the conductor appeared and validated their tickets, and with that they all locked the compartment’s doors, closed their eyes and fell asleep; all but Maddie, who decided to stay awake. As the train left Dublin behind and entered the countryside, Maddie felt her Irish blood and spirit ever more restless. Looking at the landscape, she felt like she had seen those fields before. Of course, that was impossible, for she had never been on Ireland before. She thought that perhaps in another life, she had seen those same fields, and lived on them. As the sun rose in the horizon, she looked at her friends, sleeping peacefully, being gently rocked by the train’s movement, and for a brief moment, she wished that that moment could be frozen in time, and that they could stay on that train forever, riding on a never-ending rail, taking them to unimaginable and foreign places.

Smiling with that thought in her head, soon she also fell asleep, joining her friends. When she opened her eyes again, she was awakened by a train whistle and an announcement of having reached the end of the line. Yawning, she gently shook London, trying to wake her up. When she just turned around and told her she was going to sleep five more minutes, the blonde decided to use another method to wake up the heiress. Placing her lips against London’s, she used her tongue to lick them before penetrating them, forcing the heiress to wake up and kiss her back. When they broke the kiss, they smiled at one another.

“Can I have one of those to go?” –London joked about it with a still sleepy voice.

“Maybe later, Princess. Now come on, we better wake up everyone else before the conductor comes and kicks us all out.” –Maddie giggled, as she woke up Mark and Anastasia, and London exited the compartment to go and wake up the twins, Barbara and Max.

Already outside the train station, the gang bought bus tickets to Blarney. The bus was full and it was impossible for them to get a seated place. They all felt like sardines in a can, and needless to say they all counted the minutes to get to Blarney.

Once the bus stopped on the town’s square, every passenger exited it and right then the ritual of taking photographs and discussing where to go from there started among the various groups of tourists that came with the gang on the bus. The gang themselves also began discussing what they were going to do then; they had come to visit Blarney Castle and the Blarney Stone, but it felt like a shame if they did not take a couple of hours to look at the small town. Deciding to see the town, the first thing they did was looking for a place to have some breakfast. Looking around the Square, they soon found a small café that had some delicious cakes on the window. Entering it, they saw that it
was practically full, but one of the waitresses quickly approached them and asked them if they were all together, to which they said yes. Immediately she showed them to an empty table. They all asked for a full Irish breakfast, and while they waited for the food to arrive they decided to organize themselves.

“So, what can we see here in this small village?” –Max asked.

“Well, there isn’t much to see here, but I’m sure it’s still a nice place to visit.” –Cody said. –“I bet the woods that surround the village are beautiful, we could go and check them out.”

“I second that.” –Mark said. –“We could go for a walk, and when it’s lunch time, we could have a picnic under a tree.” –he suggested.

“I’m okay with it.” –Maddie said.

“Me too.” –Zack said.

It took them no longer than a couple of seconds to agree that that was a good idea.

“And then, when it’s about 2 in the afternoon we head to Blarney Castle, we visit it and then we head back to Dublin.” –London said.

“I think it’s official then.” –Barbara declared. –“All we need now is food for the picnic.”

Like one would predict, Barley was not the most interesting village in the world, but they all still visited all the places they thought were worthy of visiting. Of course, the best part was the woods. Barley’s woods were very beautiful, and magical if one chose to believe it. The oak trees that composed the woods were quite old; some of them with hundreds of years, while others were only a few dozen years old. The once green leaves had already begun to change into the most beautiful shade of yellow and golden, falling into the ground, thanks to the gentle wind. Each time they stepped onto the leaves, these made a crunchy noise, similar to when one crack a crispy chip. Enjoying that sound, Zack made sure to stomp on as many as he could, so he could hear it as loud as he could.

While they walked, they met many people who passed by them. Most of them were tourists, but they also met some locals who happily saluted them.

When it was midday they found a place to make their picnic, on the shade of a very old oak tree with large branches, springing them into all directions. The ground around it was practically lined with a quilt of golden leaves. Unfolding a towel they bought on the village, they then placed everything they had bought for the picnic on top of the towel. The wind, which had been blowing gently since they had entered the woods, had stopped; it felt as if knew they were going to stop.

As they ate, they occasionally snapped photos of the place and of themselves making crazy and funny poses, the funniest of them was a photo of Max making a duck face with Pringles.

“That one was priceless!” –Zack exclaimed, laughing of the photo he had taken to his girlfriend.

“Thanks.” –Max said, as she ate the two Pringles, and then grabbed her camera. –“Now it’s your turn. Do a funny face for the camera!” –she smiled evilly.
When they finished eating, they either decided to lie on the ground, or stretch their legs, walking around the enormous oak tree. While walking around it, Anastasia noticed something about the oak tree. It was carved on many places... names and initials, surrounded by a heart. It looked to her that that particular oak tree was a Love Tree, where people came to profess their love by carving their initials on it.

“Hey guys! Come and check this out!” –Anastasia called them out.

Pointing at the different carvings, you could see they all were different from one another, and that they were carved in different decades. The older ones were on the base of the tree, while the newer ones were way up on the tree branches.

“I think it’s romantic.” –Maddie said.

“Well, I don’t... by doing this, they’re hurting this tree.” –Barbara declared. She was all for saving and protecting the trees, the forests, the animals and everything nature-related, being member of various associations for the protection of the forests, the endangered species, among many others.

“Come on, Barbara, it’s not like we’re chopping down a tree.” –London told her.

“I know, but still, how would you like if someone else carved something on your skin? I bet you wouldn’t like that.” –Barbara told London.

“Well, you can always see these carvings like tattoos.” –Mark said. –“In fact, I don’t know about you, but I think I’m going to give this beautiful tree one more carving.” –he said, as he pulled out a pocket knife from his jacket pocket.

“Count me, out. You do whatever you want, but I’m not carving anything on it, and neither are you, right, Cody?” –Barbara looked seriously at her boyfriend.

“O-Of course not.” –Cody agreed. He liked the idea, but he also understood why Barbara did not want to do that. Besides, they did not need to carve their initials on a tree to know their love was true. –“I mean, we don’t need that to know that our love will endure.” –Cody said, as he placed his arm over Barbara’s shoulder and smiling at her.

“Alright, if you don’t want to, I won’t be the one to force you guys to do it, but I’m doing it. I’ll be right back.” –Mark said, as he climbed the tree, looking for a place to make the carving.

In the end, Mark found the perfect spot and he took his time carving his and Anastasia’s initials with a pretty letter on the smooth wood. London and Maddie also did the same thing, but their carving was made in a rather rustic way. Finally, Zack and Max also carved a really small heart. Looking upon their carvings the three couples laughed about it and wondered if they would ever come back to see them a few decades later.

Looking at their friends, Barbara began to wonder if she and Cody were doing the right thing, by not partaking in the ritual.

“Are you sure you don’t want to also carve our initials on the tree?” –Barbara shyly asked him. After a little thinking, she felt that they would not be hurting the tree.

“Nah, I don’t. Like I told them, we don’t need to do that to know our love is true. But thanks for
asking me.” –Cody said, placing a kiss on Barbara’s lips, who returned the kiss.

“You really are the best boyfriend a girl could ask for.” –Barbara whispered to him.

“Only because I got the best girlfriend a boy could ask for.” –he mimicked her response, always smiling at her.

Leaving the woods behind, they made their way to Blarney Castle. As they made their way, they saw numerous signs saying “Visit Blarney Castle” or “When in Blarney visit Blarney Castle and kiss the Blarney Stone”, among others. It was no surprise to them that the town and its economy were firmly based on tourism, regarding the infamous castle and the stone.

“And here we are, Blarney Castle” –Maddie said, as they approached the building itself.

Blarney Castle was a medieval stronghold, originally dating from before 1200, when a wooden structure was believed to have been built on the site, although no evidence remains of it. Around 1210, the wooden structure was replaced by a stone fortification, having been destroyed in 1446, and subsequently rebuilt by Cormac Laidir MacCarthy, Lord of Muscry. Even though the building was partially a ruin, it still looked as imposing as the day it had been built. And on top of the parapet of the castle, the Blarney Stone.

“I still don’t get why that stone up there is so important. It doesn’t look like much.” –Zack said, looking upwards to the Blarney Stone. –“In fact, it looks just like an ordinary rock.”

“And what were you expecting it to be? To be made out of gold? You saw the photos and the images of it, when we decided to search for Ireland’s landmarks.” –Max told him.

“Yeah, but I thought it would be bigger, you know? What’s so important about a stone that looks just like any other rock around here?”

“I think Maddie should be the one explaining you this one, Zack.” –Mark said, as they prepared themselves to enter the castle.

“Sure.” –Maddie said. –“Well, Zack, the Blarney Stone is known to supposedly give the gift of the gab, which means great eloquence or skill at flattery, to those who kiss it.” –she explained.

“And what does that mean, exactly?” –he asked the blonde, puzzled with what he just heard Maddie tell him.

“It means that you would be able to impress every girl you meet, by talking to her without having to lie to her, or on another situation, you would actually be able to convince mom you did something, when you actually did something else.” –Cody explained him, once more not impressed by his twin brother not knowing anything about a subject or concept, like so often happened.

“You mean, being able to lie, without lying?” –Zack asked with a suspicious voice. He was not buying into what his brother had just told him.

“Not exactly, but close enough… for example, if you spent your time playing videogames instead of doing your homework, and someone asked you what had you been doing, what would you answer them?”
“Heck, I would say that I had been playing videogames instead of doing my homework. What else could I say, without lying? –Zack asked.

“Well, you could always that you had been practicing your ability to judge and make the correct decision based upon a certain situation, in a multimedia platform, which in the near future might help you to get out of a tight jam, or decide something which might influence your later life.” –Anastasia told him.

“Whoa. I never would have thought on that answer.” Zack said, impressed. –“I think I really want to kiss that stone now!” –the twin exclaimed, excited with the possibility of after kissing the stone, he would be able to come up with excuses like that one.

“And I think my little cranberry here doesn’t need to kiss it in order to gain that power.” –Mark said, grabbing his girlfriend from behind, wrapping his around her waist, and kissing her neck, making her giggle.
Dublin had been a good hostess and good things happened to those who were travelling aboard the S.S. Tipton while visiting it, but like all good things, their stay had to come to an end. At exactly 10 pm of the seventh day of its maiden voyage, the S.S Tipton blew its horn, signalling her departure to the next stop, Edinburgh, where they would arrive in three days. Until then, the students of the Tipton’s High Seas School had a lot of work to do. The amount of reports for all the subjects was quite big, but since most of them complimented one another, it made it a little easier to write them, because it was like writing one big report.

But, during those three days, the Tipton gang also had training and they all knew that Coach Little would never allow them to slack off; not Coach Little that was for sure. He and his assistants would make them sweat like never before; after all, he expected nothing less than perfection in his trainings.

Still, there would be time to enjoy themselves, for life is not just work. During lunchtime, the Tipton gang decided that after their trainings, they would choose an activity or a fun place to spend the afternoon together. On that Monday, they decided to go to “The Stardom” video arcade on the H Deck, better known as the Utopia Deck, but this time, instead of playing videogames, they decided to play that game of bowling, Boys vs. Girls, with Max playing for the boys. In order to make things interesting they made a bet, the losers would have to pay the winners a round of milkshakes and fries.

The bowling alley was crowding with people, but a few lanes were still free, which meant they would not have to wait to play. Since she was in good spirits, London decided to present her friends with their own bowling balls. Going to the store, they all saw the selection of bowling balls they had for sale, which was quite incredible. They had plain balls, balls decorated with numerous designs like a flaming skull, the American flag, a four-leave clover or a pretty pin-up girl, transparent balls that had been infused with numerous objects in its middle like a rose, a miniature Sun, or a person’s name, among many others. The question a person made was which one to take.

In a matter of minutes, the eight of them picked a ball each. Cody picked one with the design of the Yin Yang symbol. Zack, on the other hand picked a ball which was a giant eyeball. Barbara picked a green one with multiple flowers stamped on it. Max decided to pick a yellow ball with a giant Smiley face painted on it. Mark picked a crystal one which had the head of a Terminator infused in its centre. Anastasia, on the other hand picked a pink one with lightning-shaped stripes stamped around it. Maddie picked a purple ball with a drawing of Disney’s rendition of Tinkerbell. And finally, London picked the most expensive ball there was, a crystal one, with a gold miniature of the Tipton logo surrounded by 50 diamonds, infused in it.

“Expensive, like her owner.” –Maddie shot playfully at London.

“It was either this, or one with my name on it, and they didn’t have the last one.” –London giggled, playing with the situation.

Putting on their bowling sneakers, and shining their bowling balls on the shining machine, they were ready to play.

“Prepare to eat our dust, boys!” –Maddie smirked at them.

“In your dreams, Blondie!” –Zack shot back at her. –“We’re going to mop the floor with you girls.”
“You wished!” –Maddie shot playfully at him.

“You boys better prepare your wallets, because we’re going to order the biggest milkshakes in the menu.” –Anastasia shot at them.

“Not if we have anything to say about it!” –Mark exclaimed.

The first games went on, with both teams evenly balanced. After four games, the teams were both tied. The girls had won the first two games, but the boys had managed to won the following two, so they decided that the team who won the fifth and last game would be the winner.

Without them noticing, a huge crowd had assembled behind their booth to watch the game. This surprised them, because they were not expecting it. Still, with the game tied, they silently agreed to give the people what they wanted, a true final match.

Being the true gentlemen they were, the boys let the girls go first. Grabbing her ball, Anastasia opened the game. Taking a deep breath and closing her eyes, she focused before throwing the ball. With a graceful move, she threw the ball right into the middle, knocking all the pins for a perfect strike.

“Strike! Oh, yeah! I’m good!” –she exclaimed, while jumping into the air. Right then, there was nothing sweeter than seeing and hearing all 10 pins being knocked off in a single play.

“Oh, yeah? We’ll see about that...” –Mark told his girlfriend, as he got out from his seat and grabbed his ball. –“Watch and learn.”

Mark quickly threw the ball and knocked all 10 pins with a single strike. Smirking at Anastasia and the rest of the girls, he said:

“You’re not winning this one... not with me on the job, ladies.”

“Oh yeah? Prepare to eat our dust.” –London said, as Maddie kissed her for good luck.

The heiress grabbed her ball and gently elevated it to the height of her head, and kissed its surface for good luck. Throwing it the ball went a little bit more to the left than she wanted, and ended up only knocking three pins. Huffing in frustration, she waited for her ball to be sent back, to try and knock the rest of the pins. Seeing her upset about it, Maddie decided to go to her and whispered something in her ear.

“Relax, London... remember, be the ball.” –Maddie said, and the kissed her passionately, her tongues playing with each other for a brief moment, just before their lips broke the kiss.

“Another kiss for good luck?” –London asked, with an ear-to-ear smile on her face.

“Nope, not really... I just like the taste of the lipstick you’re wearing on my lips.” –Maddie giggled, making the heiress also giggle.

“Hey, girls, come on, we don’t have all day!” –Zack shot at them.

Doing as Maddie told her, she cleared her mind and then threw the ball. This time, the ball went where it was supposed to, and the remaining pins fell like they were supposed to, with London
scoring a beautiful spare. Jumping out of joy, London wrapped her arms around Maddie and lifted her up in the air.

“I did it, I did it, I did it!!!” – London exclaimed. She knew the game was not over yet, but still, she felt like she had won the Stanley Cup, and she wanted to celebrate it with Maddie, kissing her all over the face. Behind them all, the crowd applauded the Asian-beauty.

As the game went on, the crowd watching it grew bigger and bigger. Even the people playing on the closest lanes stopped playing and just stood there watching it, and applauding it. As for the gang, they kept playing, until they heard a familiar voice.

“You kids are really monopolizing everyone’s attention around here, you know?” – the voice said. It was a familiar, male, kinda of eccentric and joyful voice. Turning around, they saw him wearing his white work jumpsuit, always smiling, as he adjusted his broken rim glasses.


“Hey, guys!” – he waved at them, as went down the small (lance) of stairs and joined them. –“So, who’s in front?”

“We’re both tied. This game will settle who’ll be the winner.” – Zack said.

“I see...” – Arwin told him, as he took a look at the score board. Analysing it with the eyes of an hawk, in his head he forecast that the winner of the game would only be determined on the last play.

Approaching Arwin, Maddie greeted him and asked him what he was doing there.

“Hey Arwin, weren’t you supposed to be on duty right now?”

“Oh, and I am, Maddie. A kid thought he could fool a vending machine by feeding it buttons instead of coins, right here on the arcade, so they called me to take a look at it. When I got here to take a look at it and I saw this crowd, I asked myself what was going on, and that’s when I saw you were playing it.” – Arwin explained, as he adjusted his glasses.

“Buttons? Doesn’t that remind you kids of something?” – London asked the twins.

“Yeah... remember the time we also did that in order to get all the candy in a vending machine?” – Zack looked at his brother. –“But instead of buttons, we used slices of metal.”

“You guys really did that?” – Mark asked them in a shocked voice.

“Oh they did it, alright. I was the one who repaired the machine... it took me a full day to get all the slices metal that got jammed in it.” – Arwin laughed. –“Mr. Moseby was incredibly upset about it.”

“And not just about the vending machine. He was pissed with me, because I was babysitting these two on the night they pulled the stunt.” – Maddie sighed in annoyance, remembering all about that stunt. –“I had to pull a double shift thanks to that.”

“Which went by in a flash, because I kept you company.” – London smiled at her. –“You helped me with my homework, and I helped you choose a dress for a date with Lance, back when you were dating him.”
“True.” –Maddie agreed, the image of the dress she wore to that date coming to her mind. It seemed so long ago, like a lifetime ago, she had dated Lance, before falling in love with London and started dating her. –“But still, you two really are a babysitter’s worst nightmare when you come up with those schemes.”

“Hey, come on, we apologized for it.” –Zack stated.

“Not to mention we got grounded for a month.” –Cody sighed. –“A full month with no TV and no videogames.”

“You guys always managed to surpass yourselves with each new stunt you pulled.” –Barbara laughed. –“It’s a gift you have.”

That last statement from Barbara sent everyone into laughing mode. No matter how many times they were told, the stories surrounding the twins’ misadventures and stunts made whoever heard them laugh like crazies. It took them quite a few seconds to stop laughing, and they would have kept laughing, if they did not need to breathe.

“Well, I’d love to keep talking, but I must get going.”

“Oh, come on, Arwin, stick around. You know we always love to have you around.” –Max said. –“It’s always a barrel of laughs whenever you’re around.”

“I’d love to, but that vending machine won’t fix itself if I don’t do it.”

“Come on, Arwin, I can call Moseby and tell him to call maintenance and send someone else to repair it. You know he never denies me anything I ask him.” –London said with a playful voice, trying to convince him to stay. –“You can even show us again that special move that made us win the bowling tournament against St. Mark’s.

“I can still see that oafish Ilsa’s face after St. Mark’s Hotel team lost to us; she was so mad about it that I swear I saw fume coming out of her ears.” –Zack said.

“Thanks, London, still, I’m sorry, but I really have to go. Maybe another time, guys. See ya.” –he said, as he walked away; but before he disappeared into the crowd he said. –“And for the record, I still remember Ilsa’s face too. The only thing I regret was not having a photo or video of it, so I can laugh even harder of her.” –he shot a laugh into air.

With Arwin gone, the game went on, but it did not take much time before their favourite maintenance guy/inventor became the conversation’s theme once more.

“That Arwin sure is something.” –Mark said, as he grabbed his bowling ball and made his way to the lane. -“But what was that about that bowling tournament?”

“Yeah, you never told us that story.” –Anastasia declared. –“What’s the story?”

“Well, every year in Boston, the Tipton Hotel organizes a bowling tournament against their direct competitor, the St. Mark’s Hotel. Two years ago, Zack was chosen to become a bowler in the hotel’s team which was composed by Moseby, Esteban, London, Maddie and my brother.” –Cody began to tell them the story. –“But, because Zack pulled a mean prank on me, our mom grounded him for a month and forbid him from playing in the tournament.”
“And we got stuck with Cody, who back then couldn’t play squat... no offense, Cody.” –London said.

“None taken.” –Cody smiled at the heiress.

“Ouch, that was harsh.” –Mark said, as he went back to his seat. He had managed to knock seven pins, but had left three standing after two plays. –“But then, what happened?”

“Well, since Carrie was not going to let Zack play, and Cody couldn’t play, the two of them tried to convince Arwin to enter the team. They eventually found out he was an amazing player, but he still did not want to play.” –Maddie continued the story. –“Of course, he didn’t want to thanks to a small accident that happened to him once, when he was playing bowling.”

“But in the end, Zack convinced him to play, and we won, thanks to him. You should have seen him, he played like a pro. In fact, if he wanted to, he could become a pro.” –Cody told him.

“Then, you know what that means... Next time, we’re calling him to play on our side, guys.” –Mark said, to which both the twins agreed.

“And what about me?!” –Max practically yelled at them.

“You can play on the girls’ team.” –Zack told his girlfriend.

“But if I did that, then you would still be one man short, fish brain!” –Max shout at him, clearly annoyed. Still, she was annoyed about the fact that Zack hadn’t figured out that if she went to play for the other team, they would still be one man short, and not about the fact he might not want her on the team.

“Then, we’ll call in another guy. I mean, we have Mark’s dad, Moseby, Esteban, one of them could play for us.” –Zack told her, trying to calm her down. –“And before you ask it, I’d hate to see you playing for the girls’ team.

“Glad you say that, otherwise, I would get even angrier with you, silly.” –Max said, making him blush like a tomato.

In the end, it was the guys who won the last game and crowned themselves as kings of bowling. Still, knowing the girls had played well and gave them a run for their money, they decided they could pay for the milkshakes, if they let them pay for the French fries. When the game ended the crowd that had been watching them quickly scattered allowing them to easily go to the arcade’s bar to order up. On the way there, some of the youngest passengers, complimented on the excellent game they did, gave them high-fives and of course, the most audacious even asked them to take a selfie or a photo with them. For London and Maddie, who were already used to that, it felt normal, even if Maddie sometimes felt really awkward about having people asking her that. But for the rest of the gang, it felt absolutely strange.

After getting what they wanted from the bar, they took a seat on a nearby table, relaxing and enjoying themselves.

“We won fair and square.” –Zack said, as he grabbed a couple of French fries.
“You just got lucky, that’s all.” –Maddie said. –“If I hadn’t missed those last two pins, we would’ve won instead of you guys.” –she said, sipping on her milkshake.

“Don’t feel bad about it, Maddie.” –Barbara told her,

“Yeah, Blondie, besides we all know you’re the best player around here... excluding Zack, of course,” –London said, gently squeezing Maddie’s hand between hers.

“I’m not that good...” –the blonde giggled softly. –“... but thanks for saying that, Princess.” –she winked her eye at London, who smiled.

“Still, we want a rematch.” –Anastasia said, before sipping her milkshake. –“You boys owe us one.”

“Name the day and the hour, ladybug.” –Mark told Anastasia in an amused tone.

“But first, let us make a toast... to this amazing afternoon.” –London said, as she raised her glass. –“To this amazing afternoon... and many more, still to come!” –she exclaimed, as the others raised their glasses and mimicked the Asian-beauty.

Unknown to most of the gang, the bet over which team would pay for the milkshakes, was not the only bet that was made. Of course, this other bet was only known to two members of the gang, mainly, London and Maddie. They made a bet between them; which stipulated that the ne from the two of them who scored the most points would have the privilege to order the other around, and the other would have to do whatever the other wanted her to do, for the rest of the day. The one who won the bet was Maddie and she knew exactly what she was going to do with London.

Maddie waited until they were both alone in their suite, before starting to brag about her winning the bet. You could see an impish smile on her face, and to London that could only mean one thing; either Maddie was going to use her as her sex slave for the rest of the day, or, that she was going to force the heiress to use one of her credit cards in a shopping spree, until it reached its limit. But personally, deep inside her mind, she wished Maddie would choose the first option. With a kinky mind like hers, she knew the blonde could come up with something fun for them to while fucking each other.

“I won... I totally won, Princess!” –Maddie exclaimed. –“And you know what that means, don’t you?” –she said the last sentence in a low seductive voice.

“That you’re going to make me your slave for the rest of the day?” –London asked with an innocent voice, but with an impish smile on her face

“Maybe later... right now, I want to try something I’ve been dying to do ever since the beginning of summer.” –Maddie said, as she took a seat on one of the couches. –“I want you to put on something sexy for me, so I can photograph while you take off your clothes”

“A nude photo session?” –London asked her, surprised with her girlfriend’s request. –“Now, how come I didn’t think about that before?” –she asked, faking a tantrum,

“Don’t know, and don’t care... the only thing I want to know is just how long I’ll have to wait to see that beautiful ass of yours, completely naked on my photos?” –Maddie said in a playful tone.

“Get your camera and give me 10 minutes to slip into something more appropriate for the occasion.”
London playfully purred, as she walked onto the wardrobe.

While London changed into something sexier, the blonde went to fetch her camera and took her time to look for a place she felt was perfect for that photo session. But, after a few minutes, she could not decide where was best, so she decided to use the room first and then see where things would go from there. Adjusting the camera lens, she waited for London to come out of the wardrobe.

Finally, the heiress appeared wrapped in a pink cetin robe. The robe was quite beautiful, for not only was pink, it also had little black and white butterflies stamped on it. Looking at the Asian-beauty, Maddie quickly noticed she had applied a little mascara and red lipstick. She had also brushed her silky hair. Smiling to the blonde, London said.

"Well, where do you want me, Maddie?"

"On the middle of the bed, please." –Maddie ordered her. Obeying her, London did as she was told, really careful so as to not reveal what she was wearing. She wanted it to be a surprise. When she was in position, she waited for the blonde's sign to start undressing herself. –“Okay, now, I want you to undress real slowly, and to keep your eyes on the camera... in fact pretend you’re making love to the camera,” –Maddie smiled, as she said that.

"Okay, but I would much rather make love to you." –London said deadpanned.

"You know what I mean, you silly girl." –Maddie giggled. –“Now... think of sexy thoughts, okay?”

Doing as she was told, London looked into the camera while thinking about the sexiest thing she could think of. Needless to say, that the sexiest thing in her mind was Maddie herself. The beautiful blonde had a smile on her face, while holding the camera and this one was a naughty smile; a naughty smile her girlfriend mimicked.

She swung her head from side to side, as if she was teasing the camera. Little by little, her robe slid down, revealing her figure. She was wearing some very provocative lingerie. Embellishing her body was a red cherry silk corset, a black garter belt and red cherry fishnet stockings. One would say she looked good enough to eat. Rolling on the bed, she attempted to look as sexy as possible for the camera.

“How am I doing, Maddie?”-London asked, as she used her hand to pull her hair over her left shoulder.

“You’re doing great, London. You really have a way to always look good on the pictures.” –the blonde answered her, as she snapped one more photo. –“Did anyone told you told you could be a model?”

“Yeah, once or twice n the past, but I think they told me that because they were just flirting with me, and you know how boys are... when flirting with a girl, instead of using their brains, they think with what’s between their legs.”

“You got that right... then again, we girls sometimes also only think with our pussies.” –Maddie giggled, knowing that was true. –“Why should the guys be the only ones to have dirty thoughts about girls? Can’t girls also have them?”

“Yeah, as if we were pure angels...” –London said, as she blew a kiss and winked her eye to the camera.
“But enough chit-chat... you’re still too dressed to my liking. Start by taking off that corset, real slowly, like slow-motion slow.” –Maddie said, as she positioned herself in one of those incredibly impossible positions to capture London’s best side.

Obeying her, London unzipped the corset as slowly as she could, revealing she was wearing a strapless bra underneath it. For Maddie, having that corset conceal another, only to be revealed when taken off, was just like shedding the petals of a flower, or perhaps, shedding out of a cocoon. When feeling she had teased her girlfriend enough, London unclasped the bra revealing her magnificent D-cup breasts. Grasping them with her hands, she played with them for the camera, using her tongue to lick her rock-hard nipples.

Seeing that, Maddie began to feel wetter and wetter between her legs, and her face was as red as a beat. Her only thought was to just drop the camera, jump into the bed and start ravaging her with kisses. Still, she controlled herself by thinking of unsexy thoughts, if she was going to continue to photograph London.

“I think you’re starting to blush, miss big photographer. I don’t see nature photographers blushing when they are working.”

“Of course not, they photograph landscapes and animals, not girls’ racks... and for the record, I’ve seen your boobs plenty of times, miss smarty-pants.” –Maddie giggled, trying not to think of just how horny she was getting with all that.

Next, London released her garter belt, and one by one, she slipped off her fishnet stockings, starting with her left one. Throwing them in the direction of Maddie, she teased the blonde as hard as she could. She wanted Maddie to have an orgasm while photographing her In order to accomplish that, she was going to have to act even sexier than before. On her knees, she turned her back to the camera, and then slowly turned her head and slapped her ass leaving her palm imprinted on the skin.

“Oh, you want to get naughty? Fine by me. Slap yourself as hard as you want. That big juicy ass of yours looks even better when it’s slapped.” –Maddie teased her.

“You should know it. You love to slap this big ass.” –London said, slapping her buttocks with both her hands, as hard as she could. Soon, the skin on her ass was slightly reddish, indicating she would need to have some cold-cream after they were done.

“Well, you have a lovely ass, I’ll give you that.” –Maddie declared, her eyes following London’s beautiful curves.

“Maddie, please, lovely doesn’t even begin to describe it. Now be a good girlfriend and tell me what you really think about my ass, or I’ll start to tease you by kissing my own nipples over and over.”

“You’re going to do that even if I say what I really think... but okay, you have a big, awesome, gorgeously fucking sexy ass.” –Maddie told her, with an evil smirk on her face.

“See, now was it that hard to tell me what you really think? –London asked her, as she grasped her breasts upwards with both hands, and kissed her nipples, taking her time to use her tongue to wet them properly.

Slapping her ass a couple more times, London slipped her thong off, leaving herself on her birthday suit. All that moving and posing was making her sweat. If Maddie looked closely, she would even see the sweat rolling down her face and neck. Still, that did not mind her. As far as the sexy Asian-
beauty was concerned, it only gave her a more animalistic and wild side. Sitting on the bed, she sprang her legs opened, her pussy fully exposed and with her left hand, touched her clit and began to masturbate for Maddie, first slowly, and then faster.

“You’re giving me quite the show to photograph.” – Maddie smirked, enjoying the erotic show.

“Just for you... (pant)... mon amour. I want... (pant)... you to photograph me... (pant)... as I cum in front... (pant)... of you.” – London said, as she massaged her swollen clit.

Snapping photos as fast as she could, seeing London masturbating in front of her, the blonde began to feel the irresistible urge to masturbate herself. Still, even with her heart beating a million miles per hour, she controlled herself,

“Faster London, faster! I want you to cum into my lense.” – Maddie practically ordered.

“Mmmmm... I’m... (pant)... almost... (pant).. mmmm... (pant)... there!!!” – London moaned, feeling an orgasm building inside of her. She’d wanted to make Maddie cum while photographing her, but it was clear to her that she was the one who was going to cum.

“Tell me when, so I can capture it!” – Maddie exclaimed.

“Fuck... (pant)... fuck... I’m cumming, Maddie... (pant)... I’m cumming, Maddie... (pant)... I?M CUMMIIIIIIING!!!!!!!” – London yelled on top of her lungs, as she arched her back, her love juices sprinkling out of her pussy.

Maddie had captured the whole momentum like a professional. London looked lovely on the photos as she came as hard as she did. Smiling, she felt really well with herself. As for London, she stood there for about ten seconds, panting hard, her beautiful twin peaks moving up and down like crazy, and her whole body burning up as if she’d been in a sauna for about an hour. The adrenaline flowing in her veins would soon be absorbed by her body and she would feel exhausted, but right then, she felt like she could go on forever.

Approaching her, Maddie sat next to London as she dropped onto the bed. Leaning herself, she kissed London hungrily on the lips, taking her time to properly thank the heiress for that wonderful show.

“Did you like it?” – London asked her, licking her lips, trying to savour every last bit of lip gloss Maddie had left on her lips.

“I loved it, Princess. I almost came myself while photographing you.” – Maddie answered her, as she showed her the last photo. London’s face was just priceless. One could see the excitement, the anticipation, the lust and the desire on the photo. Just looking at it, London almost did not recognize herself.

“Is this my face when I cum?” – London asked, still looking at the photo.

“Yes, why?”

“I always thought I had a more, how should I say... cuter face when I came myself.” – London said, handing over the camera to Maddie.

“I think you’re cute when you cum...” – Maddie told her.
“You’re just saying that to make me happy.” –London smiled.

“No, I’m not. Here, let me show you.” –Maddie showed her the photo once more. –“You always close your eyes like this, and you open your mouth like this, as if you’re out of air, but with such grace, that it gives you a regal look. And then, when you close your mouth, you always make the cutest smile, like a little china doll... I should have taken a picture of it too, so you could see it.” –Maddie told her, making London snuggle in closer to her. With the adrenaline rush leaving her body, she was now getting colder, and she loved feeling the warmth from Maddie’s body.

“Okay, if you say so, I’ll believe it... and yes, you should have.” –London mused. –“By the way, that part about you almost cumming while photographing, is it true?”

“You want me to show you just how soaked my panties are?” –Maddie pointed to her a little darker spot a little under the sipper of her jeans.

“Yes, you do.” –London smiled maliciously. –“That could be water for all I know.”

“Fine. I’ll show it to you.” –Maddie said as she unbuttoned her jeans, taking them off. Looking at her panties, London saw that her panties were absolutely soaked. Feeling a little kinky, London slid them off and kissed Maddie in her pubic area, sending shivers up her spine, and making her at the same time. –“No way, Princess. No kissing and no licking my pussy, right now.” –she smiled, as she gently pushed London. –“Let me just get a fresh pair of panties and we’ll go on with this photo session.”

“Ooooh... I thought we were done with it.”

“Not yet... I still want more photos of you, and this time, I want to see you using toys.”

“Yes, milady.” –London took a bow and threw a kiss at Maddie, who caught t and blew another one towards her.

“But before that, I’m going to apply some cold-cream on that amazing booty of yours.”

“Well, my delicious booty is here, waiting for you and your fairy hands.” –London said, as she ran her fingers over the sore reddish skin. That cold-cream would not only ease the soreness, but it would also diminish the hotness caused by the constant slapping.

After applying the cold-cream to London’s buttocks, Maddie decided to stay there, lying on the bed, right beside London, massaging her butt. The scene felt strange to her, not because of what she was doing, but because London was absolutely naked and she was fully clothed. On normal circumstances, when in bed they would both be either fully clothed or absolutely naked, but here they were, one of them fully clothed, and the other butt naked. She giggled, while thinking about it.

“What’s so funny?”

“Nothing really. I was just thinking that usually, when we’re both in bed we’re either both clothed, or both naked, and not one of us clothes and the other naked.” –Maddie giggled. –“It really makes you wonder.”
“About what?”

“About the things we still have to do as a couple and on the things we’ve done... I mean, we’re both 16, but we make love to each other like we’re 23 or 25. We’re into BDSM, even though we’re like too young to even have any kind of experience on that field. I mean, it feels like we’ve jumped various steps which should be crucial to a healthy relationship, but here we are, doing crazy things like this, and we’re cool with it. Isn’t that strange?”

“Not really.” –London told her. –“I think every couple has a unique relationship, and every relationship has a unique pattern that doesn’t necessarily have to follow a common pattern. I mean, love isn’t something that can be easily explained. But if you want my opinion, as long as I’m happy by your side, I don’t care about anything else. You’re my other half, and that’s all I need, Maddie.” – the heiress sighed, feeling rather good about having Maddie massaging her.

Hearing that, Maddie sighed happily. London always knew what to say and how to say it. It had been one of the many things she had learned as their friendship evolved from just basic friendship to absolute and undeniable love for one another. Smiling, she kissed London’s left buttock and kept massaging it.

“You always know what to say to make me feel better, you know that?” –the blonde declared, always smiling –“How’s the sore?”

“Much better, thanks. Those hands of yours are just magical.” –London smiled at her. –“Of course, those kisses also help.” –the heiress giggled

“Glad to know that... of course... (kiss)... it’s always a pleasure to kiss this glorious ass of yours.” – Maddie giggled, kissing London’s sore buttocks once more.

Finally, after almost fifteen minutes lying next to her lover, London felt much better and went to the wardrobe to look for something else to wear. Wanting to make the next part of her photo session to be as memorable as the previous part, Maddie decided to use the indoor swimming pool. Telling that to London, she suggested for her to wear a swimsuit.

When she appeared, the heiress was wearing a beautiful lime green and black one piece swimsuit. This time, she was wearing her hair in two cute and slightly girly pigtails. She had a green handbag over left shoulder, where Maddie knew the beautiful Asian girl had placed the toys she was going to wear on that session. She could only imagine what those toys would be; although she knew that London’s good taste would make sure not to disappoint her.

“So, you like it?” –London asked her, as she placed the handbag on the floor. –“I didn’t know if I should wear the pink one, or the aquamarine one, or the orange one, or this one.”

“It looks pretty.” –Maddie asserted.

“You don’t like it, do you?” –London asked with an insecure voice. In the past, she would have never had doubts about what she was wearing was the right outfit for the right occasion, but ever since she started to date Maddie, who according to the heiress herself, had a fashion taste as good as hers, she sometimes had doubts about her choices. –“I can change into another in a minute, if you want to.”

“No, London, I really like it.” –the blonde assured her. –“It matches your eyes, beautifully. Besides, I’ll be photographing those gorgeous boobs of yours, not to mention your sexy pussy, Rarity” –she said, calling London by her My Little Pony nickname with a low sexy tone.
“Your favourite hobby, right after fucking me, Miss Twilight Sparkle.” –London said bluntly, calling Maddie also by her My Little Pony nickname, making her laugh.

“It’s also yours.” –Maddie giggled –“Now, enter the pool, but don’t dive, I want your hair to look just like that in the photos.”

“Okay.” –London said, as she entered the pool. The water was lovely. Warm, but cool at the same time. She just wanted to take a dive, but that would upset Maddie, and she knew better than not to upset her. –“Now what?”

“Swim around the pool for a few laps, but always with your head above the water. Try to look sexy while you swim, and then get out of the pool and sit by the edge of it.” –Maddie ordered as she grabbed the camera.

Once more, the heiress did as she was told. Swimming around the pool, she tried to look sexy for the camera, even though she did not know how to be sexy swimming on the water. From time to time she stopped swimming and winked her eye to the camera, or threw a kiss, giggling. The water felt so good, London almost forgot about what they were doing. Sensing she had given enough swimming material to Maddie, she swam to the edge and got out, taking a seat, while keeping her beautiful legs on the water. She splashed the water with her feet, sending drops of water into the air.

“That’ll make a nice effect, London. Good work.”

London’s wet skin made her look even more beautiful. The wet swimming suit seemed to have shrunk, and London felt it could hardly contain her beautiful breasts. You could see her nipples pressing through the swimsuit’s fabric, sticking out like pin-missiles. Turning her head to the side, she blinked her eyes and tried to look like a little girl. Pulling the swimming suit neckline a little bit down, she revealed just enough of her cleavage to make her look even sexier, but without losing her innocent looks.

“You look so well in the swimming suit, Princess.” –Maddie complimented her, as she got a close-up of her face. –“Now, slide one of the straps of it. I think it’s way time for us to get an even better look at your boobs again.”

“You and your fondness for my boobs.” –London giggled, as she slid the swimming suit left strap. Letting Maddie take a few snap shots, she then slid the right one, revealing her bare breasts in their full glory.

“No teasing this time?” –Maddie pouted, feeling she deserved a proper striptease.

“Nope... Not feeling like teasing you, right now. But don’t worry, you’re going to love what you’re about to see.” –London said as she stretched her arm and grabbed the handbag she had brought with her. Opening it, she grabbed a beautiful pink dildo. Caressing its tip with her nose, she then proceeded to kiss it, wrapping her tongue and slowly and hungrily licking it like a tasty strawberry lollipop. She made sure to lick every last bit of it.

“Alright, that’s enough licking, miss sexy swimsuit.” –Maddie said. –“Are you either going to use it or just use your tongue to play with it?”

“Both...” –London whispered to her in a low sexy tone.
Making use of her tongue, she licked the dildo from top to bottom once more, before inserting it into her mouth incredibly slowly. She stopped when she had swollen half of it. Slowly, she removed it from her mouth, and using her left hand, she slid the part of her swimming suit covering her pussy to the side, and pressed the dildo’s tip into her labia, moaning.

“Ooooh, Maddie... this feels so good.” –she moaned lightly –“A dip in hot water really is the best thing to make your pussy super sensitive, To the touch.”

She kept moaning, as Maddie snapped more photos of her playing with the dildo. Using the tip of the dildo to circle her entire labia, she then began to insert it in her pussy, incredibly slowly. Just like her labia, the inside of her pussy was incredibly sensitive. As the dildo entered it, she felt every little inch going in and out. At first, she began to thrust it in and out of her, real slowly.

“Mmmm... it feels incredible, Maddie...” –London moaned harder and louder.

Thrusting it into her faster and faster, she reached her left breast, and began to touch it in order to achieve maximum pleasure. Just like before, she felt her orgasm building inside of her and having Maddie photographing her only increased her pleasure. There was something special about being watched masturbating or having sex with another person that made things all the more pleasurable and exciting. She was about to ask Maddie to give her another sex toy, when she heard something that made her stop; it was a ringtone from someone’s cell phone. Shakira’s Wakka Wakka song was absolutely unmistakable, and it made it also unmistakable to identify which cell phone was ringing... it was Maddie’s.

Maddie, also hearing and sensing it vibrating on her jeans’ back pocket, place down the camera and took it out of the pocket to see who was calling her. It was Zack.

“I wonder what he wants?” –she thought to herself, as she answered it. –“Hi, Zack!”

“Hey, Maddie! Whatcha doin?” –he asked her.

“Not much...” –she lied. –“What about you?”

“I’m watching reruns of the Three Stooges” –he chuckled. –“But that’s not why called you. My mom told me to ask you, if you and London would like to have dinner with us during her show tonight?”

“Tonight, you say? Hmmm... sure, why not? We don’t have dinner plans yet. Count us in, then.” –she told him.

“Okay, then. Oh, and she also told me to tell you can wear casual clothes. See ya later, sweet thang!” –Zack said, as he ended the call.

“Looks like we’ve been invited by Carrie to have dinner with her and the twins during her show. Isn’t it that great, London?” –she said, waiting to hear the Asian-beauty say something, but she did not say anything. –“London?”

Looking at her, the blonde could see that London was not exactly happy. In fact, she could see she was a little upset.

“That Zack... his full name should be Zack “Orgasm Killer” Martin, if you ask me.” –London spat out. She was incredibly annoyed with that. They’d been interrupted, and now she was not in the
mood to go on. –“Couldn’t he at least have waited for me to cum?!” –she pouted.

“Oh, London, how could he know that we were in the middle of something kinky? Zack’s got the unmistakable talent to get into trouble and to get out of them as well, but he can’t know what others are doing when he’s not around. He’s not psychic, you know?” –Maddie joked about it, trying to cheer her up.

“Still, I have all the right to be absolutely upset with him.”

“Don’t be like that.” –Maddie told her, as she helped her get up. –“I already have enough sexy pictures of you... for the time being of course. We’ll continue this another time. And next time, you won’t be the only one posing for the camera.” –Maddie told her with a mischievous smile on her face. –“And as for that lost orgasm, I think I might be able to help you with that.”

Leading London to the nearest reclining chair, she asked her to lie down and to spread her legs open. With her fingers, she pulled the swimming suit to the side to reveal the heiress’ lovely shaved pussy. Inhaling the sweet scent of her lover’s love juices, Maddie began to kiss the pubic mount, before making her way to London’s outer lips, making her moan louder. Feeling hornier and hornier, London wrapped her legs around Maddie’s shoulders, gently pulling her towards her. Maddie, felt the water on London’s legs drop onto her head and neck, but did not mind, thinking of it as refreshing. Being incredibly possessive of London, the blonde used her tongue to thrust even deeper into heiress’ pussy, licking her inner walls.

“FUCK!!! Oooh... Maddie, you’ve got the... (pant)... fastest and most... (pant)... incredible tongue... (pant)... IN THE WORLD!!!” –London gasped, rolling her eyes from all the pleasure she was feeling.

The blonde’s tongue swirled like crazy, making sure that London enjoyed it. Using her fingers, she pulled London’s outer lips, stretching the opening of her pussy, before using her tongue to lick even deeper than before. London’s sweet aroma was absolutely intoxicating as always. To Maddie, her love’s juices were the purest and strongest aphrodisiac she knew. She could keep sniffing London’s pussy forever, without ever getting tired of it.

“I’m going to make you cum so hard, Princess. You’ll be panting for hours.” –Maddie thought to herself.

Feeling London would cum any minute, Maddie raised the game. Inserting her fingers deep into the Asian beauty’s pussy, she made London squirm. The deeper her fingers went, the hardest was to take them out, because London’s pussy looked like having a mind of its own, sucking them to its interior. Maddie’s fingers felt the warm wetness of the heiress’ pussy. Twisting them just a few inches, she caused London to scream from the top of her lungs. She was really close to cumming. Her tongue caressed London’s clit. Moaning louder and louder, London prepared herself for the inevitable orgasm that she was about to have.

“HOLY SHIT!!!! BLONDIE... (pant)... FUCK!!! I’M CUMMIIIIIIIIIIIIING!!!!” –London screamed on top of her lungs, as she felt like she was going to explode.

She came in Maddie’s face, much to the blonde’s delight. Lifting her head up, the first thing Maddie saw was London trying to grasp for air, but with a big smile on her face, the exact smile she had told the heiress did after having an orgasm. Smiling, she licked the love juices shot by London’s pussy over he face, as she dragged herself right next to the heiress.
“So? Was this orgasm big enough for you to forget about that ruined one?” –Maddie giggled.

“Hell yeah... (pant)... Thanks, Maddie... (pant)... I was really needing it.” –the heiress answered, still trying to catch her breath.

“I can see that.” –Maddie giggled, as she caressed London’s face with her fingertips. –“And now that you’re feeling way much better, you think you’re in the mood to have dinner with the boys and Carrie during her show tonight, Princess?”

“I am... but first, I’m gonna need a shower.” –London said as she got up. Her legs felt a little wobbly, but she tried her best not to show it.

“I was actually thinking about a relaxing bath in the jacuzzi, just the two of us with all those bubbles.” –Maddie whispered to the heiress’ ears –“We still have a couple of hours before we have to meet with the boys for dinner. What do you say?” –she asked London, her tongue licking the heiress’ earlobe, making her giggle.

“Race you to it! First one to jump into the jacuzzi wins, what do you say?” –London challenged Maddie.

“Alright, on three, then.” –Maddie happily agreed, putting herself into position.

“Okay... THREE!!” –London yelled, sprinting out of there.

“Hey that’s not fair, London! That’s cheating and you’re already half-naked!” –Maddie exclaimed as she tried to catch up to London, who kept laughing at her.
Misty Days

When the S.S. Tipton left Dublin’s port the weather was fine, a little windy, but fine. But as they went up the English coast on their way to Edinburgh, the weather grew worst and worst. On their second day of voyage, it began to rain and all passengers saw themselves confined to the interior of the ship, without the possibility of heading to the poop deck. When looking outside, it was not raining cats and dogs, but it was raining just enough to make it quite unpleasant to be on the outside. Still, a few passengers ventured themselves outside, without fear of catching an unwelcomed pneumonia.

On the third day, it did not rain, but icy wind blows and clouds as grey as the greyest of greys which blocked the sunlight, made it one of the most unpleasant days the people aboard the ship had seen since the beginning of the trip. Plus, banks of fog surrounding the ship made it almost impossible to see the water.

Fortunately for the passengers, there were numerous ways for them to spend the time, without needing to go outside. From cinemas to theatres, from the libraries to the shopping areas, from the spas to the botanic garden, not counting of course the discos, the arcades, the bowling alleys, the gymnasiums, the restaurants, among other things, the hard thing to do was to decide what to do with their time.

Still, there was one person who knew what he was going to do on that day, and that person was none other than Zack. Unfortunately for him, his plans for that particular day were plain and simple; he was going to spend the whole day in bed, under his sheets, all because he caught a cold the day before, and was now sneezing and coughing like crazy. Usually he would blame his luck, but this time this was his doing. Because he was running late to watch his favourite show, after practice was over, instead of hitting the showers, he decided to go straight to the suite, thinking that he would take a shower after the show. The trouble was, in order to get there faster, he took a few shortcuts, one of them taking him by the outdoor deck, where it was raining. Needless to say, that was enough for him to catch that flu.

While in bed, he felt his whole body burning up with fever, his muscles ached, and his nose was absolutely congested, making it difficult for him to breathe normally.

Soon, someone knocked on the door; it was Carey. When she saw that Zack was not feeling well, she called her production assistant and told him that she was not performing that day, so she could spend it taking care of Zack, which was what she was doing right then, by bringing him some warm chicken soup.

“Honey, I brought you some chicken soup.” –Carey chirped, as she entered the room with the tray in her hands.

“Thanks mom...” –Zack thanked her. He was not really hungry, but he knew his mom’s world famous chicken soup was a guaranteed remedy to end with that cold.

“Remember, you have to stay in bed, nice and toasty, while we take care of that cold. Plus, you need to drink plenty of liquids.” –Carey said, giving Zack the usual pep talk about what to do when catching a cold, as she placed the try with the hot chicken soup in front of him.

“As if I didn’t know that already.” –he grumbled to himself. –“I just wish I’m better tomorrow.” –he
said, as he grabbed the spoon and began to eat the chicken soup.

“I also wish that, otherwise, you’ll have to stay in bed until you’re better.”

“But mom, we’ll arrive in Edinburgh tomorrow, I can’t stay in bed! I got a city to visit!” –he exclaimed.

“Yes, you can.” –she declared. –“Unless that cold is better tomorrow, I’m not letting you out of this room, mister.”

“You can’t be serious, mom... You’re actually going to force me to stay in bed, while Cody and the others go to visit Edinburgh?!” –he protested.

“Oh, I’m deadly serious alright, and you can only blame yourself for it.” –she shot at him. –“Imagine, taking a shortcut through outdoor deck right after practice, all sweaty and hot, in order to get here faster to watch some TV show. You’re lucky it’s just a little cold, and not a case of pneumonia.”

Zack sighed, knowing she was right, but back then, taking that shortcut felt like a good idea.

“I bet that everyone else is having more fun than I am, right now, even Cody.” –he sighed. –“You didn’t even let Max come and visit me.” –he pointed out. Max had knocked on the door right after breakfast, but Carey told her that Zack was sick, and as such could not have any visitors.

“And risking her catch your cold, I don’t think so.” –Carey told him. –“Now, finish your chicken soup. I’ll be back in a couple of minutes to give you your medicine.”

As Carey exited her son’s room, closing the door behind her, Zack once more sighed in annoyance. He felt frustrated because he could not get out of bed or do any of the stuff he used to do. He could always play some videogames he had in his bedside table drawer, but he was not in the mood for it, or did have the energy to do it. Right then, he felt like the unluckiest kid in the world

“Just my luck...” –Zack sighed. –“I wished I had someone here with me... Heck, I would even like to have Cody here, talking about those boring scientific discoveries he reads about on those magazines of his.”

Looking out the window, outside was windy and dreadful. But inside the Wonderland Suite, it was cosy and warm. London herself was only wearing a t-shirt and her panties, as she talked with her mother on the phone. Akita Tipton had called her daughter to see how she was doing, and to know how things were between her and Maddie.

“We’re doing fine, mom.” –London said, as she paced around the suite’s bedroom. –“We couldn’t be happier.”

“I bet you couldn’t, sweetheart.” –Akita said, as she finished her latest drawing. She was working a commissioned tiara for the Queen of Holland, who felt the Dutch Crown Jewells needed a new and more contemporary piece to be added to the collection... and after many drafts she had finally finished its design. She was sure the Queen would approve the design, once she saw it. –“No parents, no worries, I bet you and her are on cloud 9 right now.”
“Yeah, it’s been quite the experience.” –London agreed. –“Maddie and I are closer than ever before. And you know what? It feels good to actually be living with her fulltime. We have meals together, do our homework together, go shopping together...”

“Sleep together...” –Akita said in a playful tone.

“Mom!!” –London exclaimed, a little embarrassed by that last statement.

“What? I know you girls sleep together... did you really think those two separate beds in the bedroom would fool anyone?” –Akita told her, always in a playful tone.

“Well... yeah, I thought it would.” –London told her sincerely.

“Honey, there’s no shame in saying that you’re sleeping together and making love to each other, it’s only natural.” –Akita told London, in a slightly playful, yet serious tone.

“I-I know but it’s not natural for a mother to make comments about her daughter’s sex life.”

“You’re right, London, I’m sorry.” –Akita apologized to her daughter. –“It’s just that you girls have such a unique relationship that it feels to me like you’ve been dating for years now.”

That last comment made London giggle. The truth was that she too felt like she Maddie had been dating for years, instead of just a little more than a year now. Of course, if they counted their years of friendship before becoming girlfriends, then, it could really be said that they’d been hanging together for years.

“It really feels like it, doesn’t it?” –London said with a big smile appearing on her face, as the thought of her and Maddie being together after so many tribulations crossed her mind. –“I mean, we’re not the perfect couple, sometimes we argue and get upset with one another, but that’s a couple’s everyday life, right? It can’t be all roses and wine.” –London said, misquoting the expression.

“You mean wine and roses, honey” –Akita corrected her. –“But yes, that’s the way things should be, and the longer you date Maddie, the better you’ll understand that a couple goes through many arguments and tiffs, but if they love each other, they won’t things go sour because of problems or difficulties on the track.”

“You give such great advices, mom.” –London declared. –“I really wished you had come with us on this trip.” –she sighed. She did not say a thing, but she was incredibly jealous of Zack and Cody who had their mother aboard with them, not to mention Mark and Anastasia who were being accompanied by their father and mother respectively. The fact of having someone there to ask for advice when you needed made all the difference; she could always call her mother, but it was not the same thing as having her there with her.

“I know you do, London, but you know my job is important. I miss you so much, sweetie, more than you can imagine. Still, you’ll see me during Thanksgiving and Christmas; I promise I’ll spend the holidays with you.” –Akita tried to cheer up London, not to mention herself. Right then, she too needed some cheering up.

“I can’t wait for those days to come, believe me.” –London told her. –“You think dad will also come?” –she asked her. Her dad had promised her that he would spend the holidays aboard the ship, but Wilfred Tipton was not exactly known for keeping his promises.
“Well, the last time I talked to him, he did say he would come... and if you remember well, I told you that if he couldn’t, I would force him to come.” –Akita told her. –“Trust me, I’ll make sure he’ll spend those days with us, even if I have to bribe his army of bodyguards to take a few days off, as well as his secretary to clear his whole agenda.”

“I know you will, mom.” –London said. –“Still, let’s try and give him a chance.”

“Yes, let’s.” –Akita said. –“Anyways, I got to get back to work, and you need to go cuddle next to your girlfriend.” –she giggled.

“Yeah, my favourite hobby on windy days.” –London admitted. –“You know what? She’s been too quiet...” –she suddenly noticed that for the last 30 minutes she did not hear Maddie utter a single word. It was not like her to do that, even when the Asian-beauty was on the phone with her mom. –“... too quiet really. She must be up to something.”

“Well, go and see what she’s doing. I’ll talk to you later, sweetie. Bye bye!”

Ending the call, London slid her cell phone into her jeans and went looking for Maddie. She found the blonde nested on the couch in the living room watching television. She was wearing a black t-shirt and white trainers. She was wearing her hair in a loose ponytail. The heiress thought she was watching a movie or a series, but instead she was watching a home-made film. The date on the video told her that this one was already 14 years old.

“Maddie.” –London called her. –“Maddie!”

“Oh, hey, Princess, whatcha doin?” –Maddie asked her, as London cuddled herself right next to her.

“That’s what I was going to ask you.” –London said, as she kissed her on the neck, making her giggle.

“Well, I’m watching an old home-made film.” –Maddie said. –“I’m feeling a little homesick.”

“You too?” –London asked her.

“Yeah... I guess I miss having my family around me.” –she shed a tear.

“Don’t be sad, Blondie. You’ll see them soon.” –London cheered her up. –“Now, tell me, when was this taped?”

“This was taped during my 6th birthday party.” –Maddie said, smiling. –“Look, look, here I come!”

Maddie pointed to the screen, forcing London to pay attention to what happened next. A young Maddie appeared in a blue dress with a rainbow stamped on the chest. She was wearing her hair in two loose ponytails, and she had a party hat on top of her head. Smiling to the camera, she then made a funny face, as her mother who was taping that asked her to do it. And after that, the music in the background changed and the young Maddie started to dance to its beat the way all 6 year-olds do when they hear a song they like, prompting everyone that was around her to giggle.

“You were so cute then.” –London said in a babyish voice.

“I’m still cute... I just got bigger and larger, on the right places, of course.” –Maddie said archly.
“True...” –London chuckled. –“Hey, is that your sister over there?” –she pointed out to a girl a little older than Maddie, dressed in a pink shirt, grey pants and pink sneakers, wearing her hair in a ponytail. She looked so grumpy, and did not even smile when the camera caught her.

“Yup, that’s her.” –Maddie snorted, grinning. –“When she was younger, Gennie always hated when it as my birthday, because that meant that everyone in the party would be paying attention only to me, and she felt she was ignored.”

“Oh, that’s sad...”

“That’s because you don’t know the whole story.” –Maddie declared, chuckling. –“Because she was always doing this, my parents asked one of our uncles or aunts to always buy a present for her, and usually, the present she got was way better than most of my presents.” –the blonde explained.

“I bet she hadn’t got her present when your mom was recording this.” –London chuckled.

“Probably not.” –Maddie giggled, as she snuggled in closer to London. –“You know, I never actually asked you what your birthdays were like when you were little. What were they like?”

“Oh, they were the greatest.” –London declared. –“Moseby would decorate my whole room with pink, red and white balloons and lots of fluffy plush-animals, and I mean like hundreds and hundreds of them. Then, he would present me with a beautiful princess dress; a dress that he would always say that my dad had bought for me... of course, I know now that he didn’t, he just ordered Moseby to do that for him.” –she sighed. –“And then, there would be a party in the hotel’s ballroom with all my friends with a big cake and lots of presents, and that was it.”

“Your mom and dad never came to one of your birthday parties, when you were little?” –Maddie asked her, incredulous. –“What kind of parents does that to their only daughter?”

“Nope... they only started coming to them after my 9th birthday.” –London sighed. –“And my mom was so angry at dad she’d only stay in the hotel if dad stayed in the other side of the hotel, where she couldn’t see him.”

Maddie remembered that last bit during one of London’s birthday parties. Fortunately, after the heiress told them both about the nature of her relation with Maddie, they both seemed to have made peace with one another.

“I’m sorry to hear that... I mean, when it comes to size, my birthday parties were small and almost insignificant when compared to yours, but at least I had a house filled with people who loved me and made me feel happy... I can’t even imagine what it was like for you to not have your mom or dad there to wish you a happy birthday, Princess.” –Maddie said, shedding a tear out of sadness for her love’s lonesome birthdays.

“It doesn’t matter, really. I was too young to even have noticed that. All I wanted was to be seen as the queen of the party and to unwrap all those presents... besides, Moseby was always there by my side.” –London lied to Maddie, trying not to worry the blonde about something that had happened so long ago. Still, even if her lips said one thing, her eyes said the complete opposite.

“Now, don’t lie to me, Princess.” –Maddie looked her right in the eyes, holding both her hands. –“I can see it in your eyes that you did notice that. I bet that you were always asking Moseby if they were coming, and he would tell you that they were on their way just to later tell you that they
something came up and they couldn’t make it... and then, you would run to your bedroom and you would cry your eyes out, until you fell asleep. Isn’t that what really happened?"

“Y-Yes...” –London admitted, just before breaking into tears.

The memories of just how awful her birthday parties during her childhood had been made London so sad, she broke down and cried. Maddie quickly released their hands, and gathered the sobbing girl in her arms, holding her tight. About thirty seconds later, Maddie also began to cry. When they finally ceased sobbing, they were drained and messy. Their faces were red and blotchy and their t-shirts were a little bit wet from their tears. Using her already wet clothing, Maddie wiped London's face off, and London did the same for Maddie with hers.

After they washed their faces in the bathroom and changed their t-shirts, both girls felt ever so much better. It was amazing how such a simple ritual made them feel like a weight had been lift from their chests.

“I really got to stop making you cry like this, London.” –Maddie said as she wiped her face.

“It’s okay, Blondie, I needed to take that out of my chest.” –London assured her, her still wet hand caressing Maddie’s face. –“And you’re right... I had the shitiest birthday parties in the world when I was little.”

“Well, thank God you’re not a little girl anymore, because both your parents will be present on your next birthday, and on every other birthday you’ll have. I’ll make sure you never have a bad birthday in your life, ever again.” –Maddie hugged the heiress, and planted a kiss on her lips, making her smile. This made London giggle.

“You sound like my mother just a few minutes ago, when she said that she was going to make sure that my dad would spend Thanksgiving and Christmas with us.” –the Asian-beauty giggled once more.

“Well, it’s nice to know that your mom also shares my view about what to do in order to make you happy.” –Maddie smiled. –“By the way, how was she?”

“She’s alright, a little tired but she’s alright. She told me she’s working on something big for the Dutch Royal Family, and that she really misses me.” –London said, as they both walked back to the living room, taking a seat on the couch they had been seated before. –“Whatever it is she’s working on it must be pretty important, because it’s not everyone that gets the chance to work for royalty.”

“I can only imagine... oh, by the way, Cody called me while you were on the phone with your mom. He told me Zack has caught a cold. I was thinking we could visit him later, and while we’re at it, we would take him something to cheer him up.”

“I like that idea, but what were you thinking to take him? A videogame, or perhaps a comic book?” –London asked her.

“I was actually thinking about something sweet, like a cake. I was thinking we could bake him one, and that way, Cody and Carey would also have dessert for tonight.” –Maddie suggested.

“Mmm, that looks ands like a delicious idea...” –London said as she kissed the blonde. –“... As delicious as you are, Blondie.” –she flirted with her.
“I’m glad you think that. Then it’s settled, after lunch, we’re both going to bake a cake for Zack, and you know what the best part of it is?”

“What?”

“Not only our suite will end up smelling like cake, but we’ll also do it together… and you could eat the dough.” –she said with a mischievous smile on her face.

After a light lunch, it was time for both of them to start with their next big adventure, baking a cake for the twins, but especially for Zack. In her data banks, FRAN had countless cake recipes from all over the globe, and the girls could have easily picked one of them. But Maddie knew exactly what cake they were going to bake for Zack. His favourite, chocolate cake. And not just any ordinary chocolate cake, Zack’s favourite variation of that particular cake was filled in the middle with strawberry jam and sliced bananas, plus, as a finishing touch it had melted white chocolate poured on top of it. And Maddie was determined to bake that same cake.

“You’re sure you know how to bake this one?” –London asked her, as she looked at the recipe’s image.

“Piece of cake.” –Maddie laughed at her own pun. –“I already did it once when I was babysitting them at the Tipton. It came out so good that Carey even gave me an extra 20 dollars for being able to bake something Zack loved so much, you know?”

“Whoa, that must’ve been one good cake.” –London said surprised, because Carey was not known for being a big spender, or a big tipper. –“But then again, Zack had such a crush on you that if you had served him salad, he would’ve ate it all just to impress you.” –she joked about it.

“I don’t think so.” –Maddie chuckled. –“I don’t think he would eat salad, not even for love.” –She knew him too well.

In the end, with London’s help, Maddie accomplished two things, the first was to make the kitchen look like a natural disaster area, and the second was to bake a delicious chocolate cake, which filled the suite with a delicious and divine aroma of freshly baked cake. They were both very happy with the result, even if the mess they did while baking it was enormous. Letting it cool, they took a moment to admire it.

“It’s beautiful.” –Maddie sighed happily.

“And I bet it’s delicious.” –London said slyly, licking her own lips. –“You think they’ll notice if I take itty-bitty slice?”

“Well, given that it’s a round cake, I guess they will, Princess.” –Maddie smiled. –“But if I know Zack, he’s going to share it with us all.”

“I thought he would rather hog it to himself.” –London giggled.

“I don’t think so.” –Maddie chuckled. –“He’s many things, but he’s not a glutton.” –she chuckled once more.

After cleaning up the kitchen, they called Carey and asked her if it was alright for them to stop by for
a visit. The twins’ mother told them that it was alright, and that the rest of the gang was already there trying to cheer up Zack.

Knocking at the door, Carey opened and salute the girls by giving them a big hug, and kissing them on the left cheek. She loved whenever London and Maddie appeared. She had witnessed everything that happened after the girls confessed their love for one another, and even before, and in a way, she felt like they were the daughters she never had.

“We brought this to cheer him up.” –Maddie lifted the apron and showed the cake they had baked for Zack. –“We know just how much he loves this cake”

“Oh, you shouldn’t have, girls” –Carey told them, as she grabbed the plate and placed it on the nearby table.

“It was our pleasure, Carey.” –London said. –“Besides, I’m sure Zack’s not the only one who loves chocolate cake.

“Well, that’s true. Cody also loves it.” –Carey admitted it. –“Well, don’t just stand there, there on the boys’ room, and they’re waiting for you.”

The girls followed the unmistakable mix of laughter and giggles that was in the air, and found the gang where Carey told them they would be. When they entered, they saw that everyone was gathered around Zack; his girlfriend, Max, had decided to snuggle next to him, not caring if she caught his cold, she just wanted to be near him. The twin looked a little pale, but he still had a smile on his face, revealing that he was already feeling a little better.

“Hey, sweet thang! Hey, London!” –Zack exclaimed as loud as he could with his sour throat.

“Hey there, yourself.” –Maddie said. –“London and I baked you a treat... your favourite cake.”

“You baked me a strawberry, vanilla cake with lemon meringue, crushed Oreos and cherries on top?”

“Well... make that your second favourite cake. Chocolate cake filled with strawberry jam and sliced bananas, with melted chocolate on top.” –Maddie chuckled, trying not to show that she did not know that the cake Zack had described was his favourite.

“Now, don’t go eat it all at once.”

“I’ll make sure he doesn’t, don’t worry.” –Cody told them.

Mark and Anastasia were so focused on a book they were reading, they did not even notice the girls had arrived.

“Hey, guys, London and Maddie are here!” –Barbara called them both.

“Oh, hey girls!” –Mark said.

“Sorry we didn’t see you entering. We were just looking at this book from Edinburgh and planning our visit.” –Anastasia explained.

“Yeah, we’re just making a list of where to go.” –Mark told them.
“Looks like you’re already doing your homework.” –London stated. –“You need help?”

“Sure, the more the merrier.” –Anastasia answered, as she flipped the page of the book, where you could see an illustration of Edinburgh’s castle. –“That way, everyone will pick a place they wanna go.”

“Everyone, except me.” –Zack pouted, with his arms crossed. –“I’ll be stuck in this room, while you guys have all the fun.”

“Now, Zack we already discussed this.” –a voice talked, as the bedroom door opened. It was Carey. She was carrying a tray with the cake the girls had brought. –“We agreed that you would go if, and I said if, you were feeling better. I don’t want you to catch pneumonia.”

“But mom, how do you except me to learn anything from Edinburgh, if I’m stuck inside the ship?... Atchooo!!!” –Zack protested, just before sneezing.

“Oh, come on, sweetie, you talk like we’re in the Dark Ages or something.” –Carey said, making the others laugh. –“Haven’t you ever heard of live feed from a tablet or a camera?”

“Yeah, Zack, don’t tell me you never heard of those marvellous devices that enable you to see a place, without being there?” –Maddie joked, chuckling.

“Ah, ah, ah, real funny, Maddie and mom.” –he said in a sarcastic tone. –“You know that seeing it through a screen, it’s not the same thing as seeing it live.”

“We know, sweetie, but you got to stay in bed until your cold is better.” –Carey said.

“Come on, mom, just let me go with them.” –Zack begged her. –“I promise I’ll wear the thickest sweater you can find me, along with two or three scarfs and a beanie. Heck, they can all make sure that I’ll do it.” –he said, pointing to his brother and the rest of the gang.

“Hmmm... I don’t know... I’ll think about it and I’ll tell you later.” –Carey told them. –“Now, I didn’t just come here to leave you the cake, I also wanted to know if you all would like to have dinner with us? I’m making spaghetti and meatballs.”

Quickly, everyone raised their hand, signalling they accepted the invitation. Carey smiled, and then told them that if they needed anything, she would be in the kitchen. Closing the door behind her, Carey kept smiling, as she sighed. Her sons really had the best friends in the world, and she could not be happier about it.

Back in the twins’ room, they all gathered around the book Mark and Anastasia had with them, and started to flip the pages looking for places they had to visit while in Dublin. To make sure they did not forget any of them, Barbara grabbed a piece of paper and pen, and began to write down the places. Soon the list became ginormous and even though they would be docked in Edinburgh for four days, if they visited every place there was on the list, they would need at least three weeks in order to visit them all. Narrowing it down the list, they ended up with the most important spots.

“This looks like a good list. Not too big, not too small.” –Barbara said, as she counted the number of places still on the list.

“That way it will also give us time to also visit Loch Ness.” –Maddie stated.
“You think two days will be enough to visit the city, and then another three to visit the lake? Don’t you think we’re cutting it a little close here?” –Mark asked them. He had doubts they would have the time to do everything, and the more he looked at the list of places to visit, the more he felt he was right.

“Don’t worry, if we take a little longer than in the plan, I’ll just call Moseby and tell them to delay the departure a little bit.” –London said.

“London, sweetie, it’s very thoughtful of you, but you can’t ask Moseby to do that. It wouldn’t be fair for the other passengers to be waiting for us.” –Maddie told her in a sympathetic tone. It was a nice idea, but it just would not do, and she knew London knew that.

“Yeah, you’re right Maddie.” –London agreed. –“Well, then I’ll just call the helicopter to pick us up and bring us to the ship, easy peasy,” –the heiress giggled. –“That is, of course, if we need it.”

“Okay, okay, but other than Loch Ness, what else you want to visit while there, I mean, we’re not gonna spend two whole days searching for a monster that probably doesn’t even exist, now are we?” –asked Anastasia.

“Well, according to this website, there are a couple of castles built on the shores of the lake. Maybe we can visit one.” –Cody suggested, as he showed them the website on his laptop.

“I would like that. Scottish castles are among some of the oldest buildings in Europe, and are known to be the ones that have some of the bestest legends and the bestest ghosts.” –Mark excitedly declared.

“Don’t tell me you believe in ghosts?” –Anastasia asked her boyfriend.

“As a matter of fact I do, and I’m not the only one here who does, am I?” –he looked to the others, who waved affirmatively with their heads.

“After what happened that Halloween... (cough)... on suite 613, who wouldn’t?” –Zack said.

They kept discussing their plans for the next hours, when Carey called them for dinner.

“Yes, it’s Middle Scot, it means, Old Smokey.” –Cody explained. –“It’s one of the nicknames of Edinburgh. It was nicknamed like that because of the amount of chimneys that existed in the town, with smoke always coming out of them during the rigorous winters.”

It was yet another of Cody’s trivia session, as Zack liked to call them. Normally, he would just tell his brother to shut up about it, but on that particular morning, he was happy to hear his brother’s ramblings, even if it was 8 o’clock in the morning. It had been a hard bargaining, but he had managed to convince their mother to let him tag along with the rest of the gang on their first day in Edinburgh. It took the combined promises of his brother, his girlfriend and Maddie that they would keep an eye on him and made sure that he would keep warm to convince Carey. That and three jackets, a hoodie, two scarves, a pair of gloves and a beanie, not to mention of course the warmest pair of pants he had in wardrobe.

And a good thing he had all those clothes on him, for the day was rather cloudy and windy, the typical Scottish day. Still, there was a good chance it would not rain, and that could be considered lucky; coming to Scotland and not end up wet has a dog on your first day in the country was considered to be good fortune.

When looking at him, a person would ask herself if he was a person, or an overgrown and overstuffed walking scarecrow. Thanks to the scarves, you could hardly see Zack’s face.

“Fascinating.” –Zack said, mildly amused. –“I just wished the others would hurry up. I’m practically cooking inside these clothes.” –he said, as he checked his watch. –“If they don’t come soon, we’re going to take at least two hours to get out of this ship.” –he thought to himself, as people went by them.

“I can imagine.” –Cody smirked. –“Mom really went a little overboard this time.” –he admitted, looking at his brother’s figure, laughing a little. He could not help but smile. Looking at him the right way, Zack looked like South Park’s Kenny.

“What’re you laughing about?” –Zack asked Cody, as he loosened one of the scarves a little.

“You look like Kenny from South Park.” –Cody laughed.

“I do not!” –Zack protested.

“Yeah, you do.” –Cody insisted. The more he looked at him, the more he saw him as the character. –“The only thing you needed now was a sign saying “Kill Me” around your neck!” –the twin kept laughing.

“Yeah, and after I was run over by a truck, drowned in a tub, shot in the head, frozen in nitrogen, blasted into smithereens, dipped in a pool of acid, shredded in a, or whatever gruesome faith I had, someone would appear and say: You killed Kenny! You bastards!, right?” –Zack said in a rather sarcastic tone. He really did not like being compared to the character.

“Come on; don’t be mad, I’m just trying to cheer you up a little.”
“I’d rather you didn’t. I’m still a little sick, I can’t breathe through my nose, and I feel like an overstuffed Christmas turkey.” –Zack sighed.

“Once we start moving, you’ll feel better.” –Cody told him. –“Hey, look, here come the girls.” –Cody pointed to the small group that approached them.

About 50 meters from them, were girls, making their way to them. They were all dressed for winter, with parkas and jackets of all the colours in the rainbow, with matching beanies and umbrellas.

The group was made up by the twins’ girlfriends, Barbara and Max, by London and Maddie, and by Corrie and Mary-Kate, who decided to unexpectedly tag along with them. No doubt Corrie had been following London’s twits on Facebook and Twitter about the time she was leaving the ship, and instantly glue themselves to London, who was one of her idols. The heiress did not mind having them around, but she feared what the rest of the gang would think about that little decision of hers, especially Maddie. The candy-counter girl was on good terms with them, but they were not besties, on account of all the things they had said and done to her in the past.

Maddie, being who she was, was not exactly enjoying the fact that she had to bare the presence of those two. Still, she would not show any discontent or displeasure in having Corrie and Mary-Kate around; she was superior to all of that.

“London could have told them no, but then that would be rude of hers...” –Maddie thought to herself. –“Still, she could have also said that we already had plans, the eight of us, and there was no place for anyone else.” –she kept musing to herself. –“Well, what’s done is done. I’ll just have bare their presence. But, if the opportunity comes, I’ll make sure we ditch them.”

Arriving where the boys were, they immediately greeted them.

“Hey there, gorgeous.”

“Hey there, you little rascal, you.” –Max kissed him, ignoring the fact he was sick. She didn’t mind catching a cold, especially one given from her boyfriend. –“You look like Kenny from South Park, you know that?” –she giggled.

“Cody already told me that...” –he said in a sarcastic tone. Even his own girlfriend mocked him about the way he looked.

“And he’s right; you look like a really cute Kenny,” –Max told him, using a babyish voice. He knew she only talked like that when she wanted to cheer him up, and right then, it was making him feel better.

“Well, if you say so.”

“So, you’re all ready for the day ahead of us?” –London asked them, as wrapped a scarf around her neck.

“You bet.” –Cody said.

“Me too.” –Zack said. –“All we need now is for Anastasia and Mark to show up. Do you know why they’re taking so long?”
“They texted me and told me that they’re taking a little longer because Mark is helping Anastasia with her boots.”

“Her boots?!” –Zack asked, raising an eye at her.

“Don’t look at me like that, that’s all they told me over the phone.”

A few minutes later, the two remaining members of the Tipton gang showed up and by looking at them, they understood why it took them longer to get ready. Mark was dressed in his usual winter wear, but Anastasia... she once more had gone Lady Gaga. She had decided to wear something incredibly beautiful, yet also incredibly unconceivable. Looking at her, she was wearing a skeleton-patterned full body latex suit, with matching high-heel stiletto boots and a black mini-skirt, similar to ballet skirts. On top of that she was wearing her hair combed all the way back, and her whole face and neck were painted to match her outfit. She was also carrying a backpack shaped like a skull, as well as black and white umbrella. Looking at her, she looked like a walking skeleton; the real deal. Everyone was in awe when looking at her.

The first thing that crossed both London and Maddie’s minds was how the suit itself looked like the ones they wore during their bondage sessions. It was incredibly beautiful, and accentuated all her curves, but it would not be the first choice of either one of them to wear if they had to go out on the street. Then again, Anastasia was known for her extravagant, although nice taste in fashion, so wearing this kind of clothes from time to time was pretty standard for her.

“Hey, everyone! Sorry we’re late, but you just can’t imagine how hard it is to get into these boots when wearing this suit.” –Anastasia chirped in her usual perky voice.

“It’s nearly impossible. That's why her mom and I had to help her out.”

“But don’t you think it’s a little, I don’t know, provoking and revealing?” –Barbara asked her. She admired the fact of her wearing such a kind of clothes in public. She would not dare to do it, even if she was paid to do it.

“A little bit, but I think it’s way more important for me to feel alright about what I wear.” –Anastasia answered her. The truth was she loved the way the latex surrounded her body. It gave her a sense of safety; that, and it was also an excellent thing to wear on a cold and windy day, because it retained the warmth of her body.

“Still, isn’t it too early for Halloween?” –Zack asked her, still admiring her outfit.

“Halloween for me is always when I want it to be.” –Anastasia declared.

“I just hope you can keep up with us.” –Corrie said, looking at her feet. The boots she was wearing looked like she was walking on her tiptoes.

“Don’t worry about me. I can move as freely as a bird in this... well, sorta.” –Anastasia joked. Even though that suit restrained her moves, she was able to walk and move normally.

Already on Scottish ground, the gang made their way through the busy streets of Edinburgh. The historical centre looked a bit like the centre of Dublin, where they had been a few days before. For one living in a European country, seeing old buildings like those, some of them with 400 years or
more was pretty common, but for one living in America, where most buildings were not more than a century old, it was something else.

Holding her camera steady, Maddie tried to capture the essence of the city on video, while recording yet another of her video diaries.

“And here we are, Edinburgh, our second stop in this trip around the world!” –the blonde exclaimed to the camera. –“It’s really windy here, but we don’t care, right? Today, our group has two other members, Corrie and Mary-Kate. Say hello to the camera, you two!” –Maddie asked them. Just because she did not sympathize with the two of them, that did not mean she would not try and act nice towards them.

“Hi!!!!” –they both replied, waving at the camera.

“We’re in well spirits today, and it’s all because we have a ton of places to visit in this city.” –Maddie kept talking, as she recorded what was going on around them. –“Hey, Mark, wanna give us one of your famous lectures and say to the camera where exactly we are?”

“Sure thing, Maddie. We’re walking down the Royal Mile, one of Edinburgh’s most important and busiest streets. It has this name because it’s approximately one Scots mile long, which is longer than an English mile. It runs downhill between two significant locations in the history of Scotland, namely Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood Palace, which we’ll be visiting today.”

“Hollywood Palace? I didn’t know there was a palace in Hollywood... and I also thought Hollywood was in sunny California.” –Zack said, not hearing the palace’s name right. Having two scarves and a hoodie covering his head and his ears, made it a little difficult for him to hear things right when he was

“He said Hollyrood Palace, Zack, not Hollywood.” –Cody told his brother.

“Oh, that makes a little more sense.” –Zack said, making Cody, Barbara and Max chuckle lightly.

Mark also chuckled a little. It was almost impossible not to laugh at Zack when he said things like that. Clearing his voice, he went on reading from his tour guide book:

“The streets which make up the Royal Mile are Castlehill, the Lawnmarket, the High Street, which is where we are, the Canongate and Abbey Strand. The Royal Mile is also the busiest tourist street in the Old Town, rivalled only by Princes Street in the New Town.”

“Thanks, Mark!” –Maddie said, as she turned the camera to herself. –“That’s Mark, alright. He just loves those tour guide books, and he loves to read them to us what’s in them. But I’m sure he’s not the only one who knows things about this town. What about you, Princess? Do you know anything about this town or any of the monuments we’re going to visit?”

But London did not hear her. The heiress was too focused on another activity, window shopping. Whenever she saw something beautiful in a shop, she began to think how a particular object, outfit, dress or whatever would look on her, or someone she knew. And on that particular moment, she was looking at a beautiful winter coat, imagining how it would look on Maddie. The coat itself was quite simple, but beautiful, especially because of its purplish colour.

“Maddie would look beautiful in that coat... should I buy it for her, or not? “ –she asked herself. She was so focused on her thoughts; she did not even felt Maddie touching her, resting her hand on the
“Princess... Princess... Are you there?” –Maddie asked London, raising her voice just enough to get the heiress’s attention.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Maddie, I guess my mind was on the Moon. What were you saying?”

“I was asking you, if you know anything about this town?”

“Well, I know that’s really old, and that it’s always raining here. Does that count?” –London childishly smiled to the camera,

“I guess you could count it... but I know you can do better than that.” –Maddie teased her. –“Now, come on, give us the really smart and sexy London that we all love to watch on camera.” –the blonde focused the camera on the heiress, capturing her beautiful smile.

“Okay, okay...” –London blinked her eyes, in order to look even cuter while looking to the camera. –“I read that the city was founded in the 7th century. It is the second most populous city in Scotland and the seventh most populous in the United Kingdom.”

“See? Studying has its benefits, gorgeous.” –Maddie chuckled. –“And now on a lighter note, what were you looking at before?”

“Oh, I was looking at that coat over there.” –London pointed to the coat in question, as Maddie caught a close-up of it. –“I was musing if I should buy it for you, or not.”

“It is a beautiful coat, alright.” –Anastasia said, approaching them. –“And I think it would look nice on Maddie. You got a great eye for spotting nice clothes, London.

“Of course she has a great eye for it, she’s a fashion diva!” –Corrie exclaimed, in way it felt like Anastasia had committed a capital sin. Maddie just rolled her eyes. “It’s going to be a really long day”, that’s all she could think.

“Tell me, Maddie, do you want it? I’ll go inside and buy it for you. Just say the word.” –London asked the blonde, who was still recording.

The coat was really beautiful and a little expensive, but as always, money was not a problem; not as long as London was around. Plus, Maddie did not have one like that in her wardrobe, but she felt like that was not the time for shopping.

“I don’t know, London... it’s really beautiful and all, but if you buy it now, you’ll have to drag it with you all day long.”

“Oh, no I won’t, Maddie. I’ll just ask them to deliver it to the ship.” –London chirped

While the girls waited for London to come out of the store, the boys themselves also engaged in a conversation. Seeing the girls gathered all around the boutique’s window, the three of them felt like they had been cast aside for a while. Still, they did not mind, after all, by now they were used to seeing their girlfriends ditching them to go and see a pretty dress.

“How long do you think she’s going to stay inside?” –Mark asked out loud.

“No idea... but knowing London, it could be just a couple of minutes, or it could be a couple of
hours, depending on how big the store is, or what kind of clothes it has.” –Cody answered him.

“Let’s just hope it’s the first option.” –Zack sighed. He could hardly believe that his girlfriend Max was mingling with the rest of the girls, she, who acted more like a boy than like a girl; she, who hated skirts and dresses. –“Can’t believe she’s over there talking about girly stuff.” –he thought.

He had not finished that last bit of thought, when Max left the rest of the girls waiting for London to come out of the shop, and joined him, Cody and Mark.

“I thought you had gone to the Dark side.” –Zack mocked her.

“Har, har, har, real funny.” –she laughed with a false laugh. –“It’s so funny I even forgot to laugh, mister.”

That last remark made the boys laugh.

Fifteen minutes went by, before the boutique’s door opened and London exited. She had a wide smile on her face, a smile from ear to ear to be more precise. Just by looking at her smile, Maddie knew the heiress had done a little more than to just buying the coat. She would not be surprised if she had bought the whole shop just for fun.

“Okay, London, what did you buy?” –the blonde asked her,

“Not much... just the coat, as well as a couple of fluffy leg-warmers they had.” –she smiled.

“And, where are they?” –Cory asked her puzzled, seeing she was not carrying any of her new acquisitions.

“Oh, I asked the girl at the counter if they could deliver it to the ship. Initially, she said they didn’t deliver, but when I promised that there would be a 200 Euro tip waiting in the ship for the person who delivered them, she immediately said she would deliver them herself” –London giggled. –“Which reminds me, I better text Moseby and tell him that when the girl gets there for him to receive the packages and to pay her.” –she took her cell phone from her messenger bag and began to text him.

“Oh, London...” –Maddie giggled. –“Only you would give tips that big to a person” – the blonde kept giggling. –“To think that about a year ago, I was also after those crazy huge tips you would end.” –she thought to herself.

“Well, now that you finished shopping, where should we go from here?”

“Honestly, I don’t know...” –the heiress said.

“Well, you could say we’re halfway to about a handful of tourist attractions, so from here we could either go one way or the other.” –Cody answered. –“I vote we climb Highroad and go to the castle.”

Naturally the wish to see the town from above was something they all shared, and so, Cody’s suggestion was well received. Starting to walk, they made their way to Edinburgh’s castle.

Already up on Castle Rock where the castle was located, they were marvelled by both the view of
the city, as well as the castle itself. Castle Rock offered a naturally defended position, with sheer cliffs to north and south, and a steep ascent from the west. The only easy approach is from the town to the east, and the castle's defences had been built in a way to make it practically impossible to attack it except from that direction. With those characteristics, there were no doubts why Edinburgh’s Castle had been built on that location; in terms of defense, it was absolutely perfect. During many centuries it had been a stronghold, and the residence to Scottish Royal Family, up until 1603, when James VI of Scotland, became James I with the Union of the Crowns. But nowadays, it was just a tourist landmark, yet one that still had not lost its splendour from its earlier days.

The court outside the castle called the Esplanade was crawling with tourists. Groups of tourists from every place in the world were there. You could easily identify the tourists’ nationalities from the language they spoke, or from the way they behaved. Among the various groups there, one could identify a noisy group of Germans, who kept talking and laughing quite loudly in their language. Then, they also had a group of Japanese elderly who were quietly hearing the tour guide that accompanied them, while snapping photos of just about everything. There were also two groups that were being led by tour guides from the S.S. Tipton, no doubt passengers who signed on one of the many excursions the ship offered them. A few of them were students from the Tipton High Seas School. The gang could also have signed on to take one of those excursions, but for them it was a lot more enjoyable to visit the city at their own pace, without having a tour guide to tell them what to do, where to go, when to stop, when to eat, among other things; it was also a lot more relaxing too.

“It’s really beautiful. I mean, Dublin’s Castle was also beautiful, but this one...” –Anastasia commented.

“It’s different from the other, isn’t it?” –Barbara asked her.

“Yes, quite different. From here, this one looks more like a medieval fort than a true castle.”

Shortly after buying the tickets, they entered along with the rest of tour group. Immediately they felt impressed by the castle’s interior. Aside from the way it had been built, they all noticed something else; the wind kept blowing like crazy. Following the guide, they listened to her explanation attentively, for even though she was a young woman in her late twenties, she spoke with a rather thick Scottish accent, and no matter what language she spoke, there were some words that a person who was not a native would not understand, unless they paid full attention.

“Good morning, my name is Lauren, and I’ll be your tour guide here in Edinburgh’s Castle. First and foremost, if during the visit you have any kind of doubts or questions to wait until the end of my explanation, for I’ll be happy to answer each and every one of them.” –she said, and then replied the same thing in other languages such as French, Spanish, Portuguese and German –“Now, can anyone tell me just how old is this castle?” –she waited for someone to answer, and in a matter of seconds someone said that it was more than 900 years old. –“That is correct. According to historians, there has been a royal castle in this very same place since at least the 12th century, during King David I’s reign.”

She went on with the explanation, as they passed under the imposing Portcullis Gate which granted access to the rest of the castle. As they followed her, they learned that the castle had been under several sieges over the centuries, even though it was located on such a high slope. Because of this, most of the castle buildings were not as old as one would think.
gang decided to stay and explore a bit more on their own. Maddie herself had recorded so much with her camera already, but kept recording, hoping to catch something funny or interesting on film.

“And as you can see, the wind here is blowing like crazy, so coming up here without warm clothes is definitive no.” –Maddie kept talking, as if she was doing a documentary. –“It’s a good thing you came with all those clothes, Zack.” –she exclaimed to the twin, who waved at the camera, as he wrapped yet another scarf his mother put in his backpack.

“Having a blast with that camera, aren’t you?” –a voice told Maddie. It was London, who approached her from behind.

“You bet, Princess. I never thought I would ever have this much fun doing this video journal.” –Maddie told her, as she switched the camera off for a minute, always smiling at the heiress.

“I’m glad you are.” –London told her, as she buttoned her parka. –“Cody and Barbara are there discussing where we should go next, and they would like for us to join the discussion, you coming?”

“Sure, I’ll be right there. Let me just call Zack and Max, and we’ll go.” –the blonde told her, as she waved at Zack and Max, telling them to come.

Everyone gathered near St. Margaret’s Chapel to discuss where they would go from there; everyone, except Mark and Anastasia, who were inside the chapel having themselves a photoshoot. Wearing that outfit, Anastasia felt it would be a shame for her not to have a few photos of her posing like a professional model. Still, they told Cody and Barbara that they could pick the place, they did not mind passing that voting. In their own words: “Whatever you choose is fine with us”

“Well, it’s nearly 1 o’clock in the afternoon, and we have to decide where to go from here.” –Barbara said. –“Me and Cody vote that we go from here to Hollyrood Palace. We’ll go down the Royal Mile, grab something to eat and then head to it.”

“But I wanted to go to Edinburgh’s Dungeon! I want to get scared the daylights out of me!” –Zack said with a hoarse voice. Even with all those scarves around his neck and a hoodie, the wind was making its toll on the boy’s throat.

“Same with me. I need some adrenaline in my veins.” –Max stated.

“We can go to that attraction later, after dinner.” –Maddie said. –“The palace is way more interesting, and it’s not opened at night.”

“I’m with you, first the palace, then, we’ll do something else, and after dinner we’ll visit Edinburgh Dungeon.” –London told her girlfriend, always smiling.

“We’ll go wherever London wants to go.” –Mary-Kate said. Hearing that, Maddie thought; “What a bunch of groupies”, but decided not to say anything.

“Looks like we’re outnumbered, Zack.” –Max sighed.

“Guess so...” –Zack sighed. –“But you better uphold your promise, or I’ll be nagging you for the rest of our stay in Scotland, sweet thang.”

“We promise, Zack.” –Maddie blinked an eye at him.
With their itinerary set, they went to get Anastasia and Mark, who were still in the middle of their photoshoot. At the moment they entered the chapel, Anastasia was posing next to the altar, as Mark snapped a few more photos of her. For such a small chapel, the place was incredibly well illuminated, and as for the interior itself, it was rather simple, consistent with the period it had been built. Aside from the Romanesque elements of decor, the only other decor elements were the five stained-glass windows that illustrated St. Margaret, St. Andrew, St. Columbia, St. Ninian and William Wallace, one of the main leaders of the Wars of Scottish Independence. Unlike so many other religious landmarks they had visited, this one was rather simple, and yet it possessed as much historical meaning as some of the other landmarks combined.

Snapping photos as fast as he could, Mark knew it was only a matter of time before a group of tourists showed up, ending that photo session, so, he made sure to take full advantage of that moment when they were just the two of them inside. He was so focused on it, he did not even notice the rest of the gang was behind him. Anastasia had seen them, but did not move a muscle so as to not ruin the photo.

“Hey, you guys finished already?” –Barbara asked them, startling Mark, who turned his back to see them

“Just about it... a few more photos and I think we can call it out.” –Mark said as adjusted the camera’s lenses. Turning his attention back to Anastasia, he said: “Alright, for the last one you’re going to open your umbrella and held it over your shoulder.”

Doing as she was told, Anastasia did not move a muscle, as the sound of the camera snapping photos was heard. When the sound finally ceased, Mark smiled at her and told her she could move.

“And with that, we have enough photos of you in here.” –Mark told her. –“So, where to now?” –he asked Maddie.

“We’re heading to Hollyrood Palace now, and then later, after dinner, we’re going to Edinburgh’s Dungeon, because Zack and Max want to catch a scare.” –she chuckled.

“The scaredy cat wants to get scared?!” –Anastasia laughed, referring to Zack, on account of the story she was told the previous evening, regarding a certain pair of twins and a haunted suite. –“Usually, scaredy cats don’t like to be scared.”

“I’m not a scaredy cat, and that last ghost was real, Cody there can vouch for me, right bro?” –Zack looked at his brother.

“Well, I guess that could’ve been a real ghost, but without the presence of physical evidences like ectoplasm and such, we can only speculate...” –Cody kept talking, when he noticed his brother raising an eyebrow at him. –“... okay, maybe it really was a ghost, I can’t explain what really happened by using science.”

“That’s because it was a ghost!” –Zack exclaimed, coughing a little.

“Try not to talk so much, Zack, or you’ll get worst.” –Max told him. –“Maybe we should buy some cough syrup for you, or you’ll end up aphonic.”

“We’ll buy it on the next pharmacy we come across.” –Maddie said. –“And now, let’s beat feet. It’s still a long way to Hollyrood Palace.”
The two days they spent exploring Edinburgh had them visiting the most incredible places. On their first day they walked up and down the Royal Mile, visited Edinburgh’s Castle, Hollyrood Palace, St. Giles Cathedral and Edinburgh’s Dungeon; the last one was Zack’s favourite. As for their second day, they visited

But, it was only on their third day in Scottish lands that they absolutely felt like they were in Scotland. With their minds made up, the Tipton gang, accompanied by Carey, Felicia and Stephen made tracks for one of Scotland’s most famous landmarks, not to mention one of the nature’s crown jewels in the Highlands, Loch Ness.

The trip to their destination was quite long, so they left Edinburgh when the clocks struck 6 in the morning, and made tracks for Loch Ness. Since they were being accompanied by Carey, Stephen and Felicia, they had to take two cars. It was decided that the adults would do driving, with Carey and Felicia at the wheel. London, Maddie, Anastasia and Mark felt that they too should have the wheel, if the adults needed to rest for a while, and argued about it, but their complaints were in vain. Grumbling about it, they joined the twins and their girlfriends on the back seats.

Given they were still sleepy, most of the gang fell asleep right after they entered in the car, being Anastasia the exception, who managed to stay awake, talking to her mom, in order to prevent her from falling asleep at the wheel. Still, even she eventually closed her eyes, falling asleep after an hour on the road.

When they woke up, the sun was already up on the sky, and they were fast approaching Loch Ness. They did a bit of research on where they would stay, and decided that the best place would be a small village on the south west end of Loch Ness called Fort Augustus.

On the way there, they saw that the Highlands were just like the postcards they had seen in Edinburgh were like. Even with the skies cloudy, the hills and valleys looked incredibly green. From time to time, they would see a flock of sheep grazing on a beautiful meadow, and near it, was a shepherder, accompanied by a faithful sheepdog, who made sure the flock stayed together. Those stereotypical images really looked like they had sprung out from a book; still, that did not make them any less beautiful.

“Are we there yet?” –Zack asked for the millionth time since he had awakened, incredibly bored of being stuck inside the car. He was never a fan of long car trips, and he was not about to turn into one right then. He was always asking himself how certain people could drive or be driven in a car or a bus from one side of the country to the other, without going berserk, because he sure could not.

“The last thousand times you asked that, the answer was no... This time, it's actually yes.” –Barbara told him, pointing to the welcome town sign, where you could read “Welcome Fort Augustus” and beneath it, the population number; 646 inhabitants.

“Finally! I thought we’d never arrive!” –Zack sighed out of relief.

“Whoever hears you saying that will think you haven’t left this car in weeks.” –Cody said, making everyone in the car giggle lightly.
At the same time, on the other car, the oldest half of the Tipton gang were being given a lecture by both Carey and Stephen, even though it was more of a bunch of advices of what to do and not do, rather than a true lecture. Most of the advices were for London and Maddie, but they could apply for Anastasia and Mark also.

“Now, I’m sure you girls have heard this before, but you better not show much affection for one another in public, around here.” –Carey warned them.

“Unlike what happened in Ireland, in Scotland, especially the eldest who live in the countryside, tend not to see same gender relationship with an open-mind.” –Stephen told them.

“We know. Still, you think its okay for us to be seen joining hands together?” –London asked, with her usual sweet and innocent voice.

“I don’t think that will be a problem. Even best friends hang out together, while joining hands from time to time.” –Carey told them, with Stephen nodding with his head.

Some would think that Carey and Stephen would tell the girls that just to nag them; after all, Maddie’s parents had given to her the same talk before departing, and the same happened between London and her mother, but the truth was they just wanted to make sure the girls would not get hurt or be bothered by remarks from strangers, and both of them knew that, and appreciated the gesture of both adults reminding them that.

During their trip around the world, they had yet to meet people who would be less than thrilled to meet them, let alone be in the same place as them, and London and Maddie knew that Scotland could very well be the first place where that might happen. Looking at each other, they smiled to one another, knowing they were having the same thought, as so often happened.

“I’m there for you, and I won’t allow them to hurt you.” –they both thought, while smiling.

The town looked quite friendly as they entered it. They had imagined it like a small town that would have stopped in time, like the ones you would see in a television series or a film, but they could have not been more wrong about it. The town itself looked quite modern, but it still fit with the landscape surrounding it. Looking at the few shops that existed, it was more than obvious that the monster of Loch Ness was the star of the town, with most of them being named after the creature.

When they got to the town square they saw they saw that they would not be the only tourists around there. There were a few groups tourists disembarking from buses that gad brought them, as well as other groups of tourists sightseeing. Looking for the inn where they would be lodged, they quickly found it and parked the cars in front of it. The inn’s name was the Hidden Nessie. The lodge itself was an old building from the beginning of the 20th century; its brick house front was blackened by the age, giving it an even older, yet sturdy look. An old sign with the inn’s name hung just above its entrance, matching the place’s outdoor decor.

Looking at it from the outside, it didn’t look like much, but once a person entered in it, it would have its opinion regarding the establishment. The interior’s decor looked brand new, and its warm colours, with a small dash of the old Scottish green on the walls and the carpets adorning the floor and some of the walls seemed to capture the essence of good old fashioned Scottish hospitality. The fireplace on the living area had a nice fire burning up, and above it was a particular art piece that captured one’s attention, an old iron cast statue of the Loch Ness Monster, or at least, it was supposed to represent the legendary creature. But what made her unique was not its shape or size, but the fact that
it was painted with vibrant and warm colours, matching the decor. When looking at it, one would even ask itself if Nessie really existed, if it would like that depiction.

“What a strange, yet original statue.” –Barbara thought to herself.

There was no one around, and no one at the front desk. As the gang placed their luggage on the floor, Carey approached the front desk and rang the service bell. A few seconds later, a young woman showed up. You could see she was in her late twenties, although she could pass by being in her early twenties. She had fair white skin, long coppery red hair, freckles, green eyes and thin lips. She was wearing a white turtleneck sweater, a red short skirt, with black leggings, and matching red shoes. On her sweater there was a name tag where you would read “Karen”.

“Good afternoon, and welcome to the Hidden Nessie. My name’s Karen, how may I help you?” –she asked them, with a thick Scottish accent.

“Good afternoon, Karen. I don’t know if it was with you that I talked to on the phone, but I booked a reservation under the name of Martin.” –Carey answered her.

“Oh, yes, Martin, I remember it. You booked five double rooms and a single, am I right?” –Karen asked Carey, who waved affirmatively with her head, as the girl checked the reservation on the computer. –“Here we are, five double rooms and a single. You’re really lucky it’s our low season. We usually don’t have so many vacant rooms.” –she said, always with a smile on her face.

After the paperwork was filled, and the room keys had been giving to them, Felicia asked about the best places to visit around, as well which was the best place to eat, and which were the best shops.

London looked at her a couple of times, trying to see if she had recognized her, or any other member of the group, because people tend to freak out whenever they see a celebrity, especially one such as her or Maddie now that everyone knew they were dating. Still, she could not figure out if Karen did not recognize her, or if she was just pretending to not recognize her or the others, being professional while on the job.

“Well, let me give you a map.” –she said as she grabbed a map and began to point out the places to visit in that little town.

While she did that, the rest of the group went up to their rooms. As they were passing by the hallway, Maddie felt like they were being watched. She turned her head behind, but did not see anyone. Still, she could not shake that feeling which kept sending unpleasant shivers up her spine. Unknown to her and the others, someone was really watching them through a door ajar.

As they opened the rooms’ doors, they all saw how their rooms were. When compared to their suites back in Boston, and also the ones aboard the S.S. Tipton, those rooms were all rather simple, with none of the luxuries they were used to have. Still, they looked cozy and nice, and furthermore, they all had everything for everyone’s basic necessities, like a bathroom, a television set, and of course, beds; the perfect place to spend the night and to recharge their batteries.

Placing their suitcases on their king size bed, London and Maddie then both jumped on the bed, lying side by side, always smiling to each other.

“Well, you’re happy with the room?” –the blonde asked

“It’s simple, but when I’m with you, even the lousiest place on Earth looks like the Ritz, because you
“Now that you mention it, I did feel that for a couple of seconds, but it must’ve been our imagination.” –London said.

“Maybe… but I don’t know.” –Maddie said, still not buying it. –“I mean, we’re always being seen together and people ask us to take a photo with us, or they do it from afar, and I’ve got used to it… but this time, it felt like someone was watching us, while hidden.”

“Well, if you say so, I’ll tell you what, I’ll keep my eyes and ears open for any suspicious creep that might appear.” –London told her, playfully. The heiress knew that there were all kinds of weirdoes’ and creeps out there who would not think twice about hurting her or Maddie, but she doubted that there would be one around those parts, especially when nobody knew they had had decided to spend a few days near the famous loch, so the chances of existing someone there who might want to hurt them was quite small.

“I’m talking seriously here, London.” –Maddie declared. –“You know I’m quite sensitive about these things.”

Seeing her lover like that scared London. Looking her in the eyes, she saw that Maddie was a little scared. Placing her hands on the blonde’s shoulders, she said:

“I’m sorry, Maddie, and you’re right, you usually have a sixth sense for these things. If you felt like we were being watched, then I’ll take your word for it.” –London tried to tranquilize her. –“We’ll tell the others about it, and we all keep our eyes peeled for anyone who might look or seem suspicious, alright.”

“No, Princess, don’t do that. I don’t want scare anyone for what might’ve been just a bad feeling. Let’s just keep this between us for now, okay?” –Maddie begged the heiress –“I don’t want the others to get nervous because of this.”

“Okay, if you say so.” –London sighed. –“Now, let’s forget about that for a few minutes, and let’s get changed into something a little prettier so we can go and see the views.” –she smiled, planting a kiss on Maddie’s lips.

About half an hour later, all of them had gone back to the entrance hall, and were waiting for the twins and Carey to arrive. When they finally came down the stairs, Zack and Cody were carrying a bunch of cameras, a duffel bag and a messenger bag each, as well as a couple of books. One of them you could read the title “How to catch aquatic monsters”. Mark and Anastasia both giggled at the sight of such scene.

“Don’t tell us that you guys are actually thinking about capturing the Loch Ness Monster?” –Anastasia giggled ever more.
“No, I’m going to capture him on film, so as to have scientific and irrefutable proof of its existence. I’ll prove that it’s either real, or just a very big hoax.” –Cody stated, as he tried to balance all the cameras he had in his arms –“He on the other hand is really going to try and capture it…” –he pointed to his twin.

“Well, good luck with that… it will be easier for you guys to be struck by a lightning bolt, than to find or catch Nessie.” –Mark snickered at Zack.

“Says you!” –Zack exclaimed with a cocky voice. He was obviously convinced that he was going to –“When I catch that fish and have it on display in an aquarium, then we’ll see who laughs best at the end.”

“Technically, the Loch Ness monster isn’t a fish, Zack. Researchers and theorists believe that it might be a long-necked giant amphibian, or perhaps a Plesiosaur, although that last theory is nothing more than a theory, because assuming that dinosaurs managed to survive for more than 65 million years, just to end up in this lake and not show up more than a couple of times per decade, well, that’s just crazy!” Cody explained to his brother.

“Who cares what it is?!” –Zack cried out. –“Whether it’s a fish or a reptile or a dinosaur, it doesn’t really matter. When I get him, my name will go down in history as one of the world’s greatest hunters ever... like Indiana Jones.”

“You do realize that Indiana Jones is a fictional character, and that technically he wasn’t that famous, because all of his discoveries ended up either lost, or placed in a secret hangar, or just vanished into the space between spaces, and nobody knew about them, don’t you?” –Maddie asked, raising her eyebrow at him.

“Okay, okay, bad example, but you know what I mean.” –Zack shook off. –“That creature is my ticket to fame, sweet thang, and I’m gonna catch it.”

“Did you actually let them bring all this equipment so they could go on a wild goose chase?” –Felicia asked the twins’ mother. –“And furthermore, aren’t you afraid they might get hurt in the process?” –Being such a mother hen, it was strange for her to see Carey giving so much freedom to Cody and Zack,

“I figured that as long as they’re doing it, I won’t have to keep an eye on them... plus, it will be fun to see them coming back empty-handed with a funny tale to tell me. But getting hurt? A few bruises and scratches build character... not that they need more of it, let me tell ya.” –Carey whispered to Felicia’s ear. –“Besides, whatever the outcome might be, at least they’ll be keeping themselves busy and I can have the afternoon all to myself” –she smiled.

The twins were excited about the day they had ahead of them, and the same could be said about the others. Before they exited, Karen told them that if they decided to have dinner there that it would be served at 7.

“Tonight’s dish will be our cook’s specialty, haggis, and trust me when I tell you that she makes the best haggis in this part of the country.”

“We’ll think about it.” –Stephen said, as they all exited.
After a light snack on a nearby café, they all went decided to reunite in front of the Hidden Nessie around 6 in the afternoon to relax a little in the rooms and gather back a couple of energies, before dinner. Since the town was so small, there was no chance of them getting lost or anything, so the adults did not even waste time to not getting lost, or telling them to be careful. They only advised them to always having their cell phones with them and to not do anything reckless.

Accompanying her boyfriend, Max was happy to join Zack on that wild goose chase of his. She did not even placed the chance of the two of them finding the Loch Ness monster, while Zack really believed he was going to find it and capture it. For her, she just wanted to spend some time alone with him.

“You make it sound more like you’re going to catch a Pokemon instead of a creature, which no one has actually seen” –Max sighed, as she helped him carrying the gear.

“And it will be, trust me. I came up with a full-proof plan.” –Zack said, as he grabbed the camera that he had around his neck and snapped a few shots, just to make sure it was in working order. –“I bet people around here have tons of stories regarding the monster. One of them might even know a place where the monster could hang around. So here’s what we’re going to do; we’re going to interview as many locals who know a story regarding the Loch Ness Monster, and then we’re going to cross the information we gather and see if some of the elements of the various stories match each other. Then, we’re going monster hunting, Max!”

Max just felt like waving her head, and telling him that plan was the dumbest thing she had ever heard. It was one of those plans made up by Zack that never ended well, like those who knew him always told him. Still, she stayed quiet and complied with her head. She was seeing a glow in his eyes, a low that only appeared when he was truly inspired or excited about something he was passionate about.

“Fine, if you think that we can find it and capture it, then I’m with you.” –she smiled at him. Grabbing her backpack and the two cameras Zack had given her, she said. –“Come on, let’s go and start interviewing people.”

At the same time, Cody and Barbara, joined by Mark and Anastasia were walking near the loch’s shore. The place was packing with other tourists; this had become an already regular sighting for them by now, after visiting so many monuments and landmarks on the two separate countries their trip around the world had taken them until then.

Still, it did not matter if they were surrounded by other tourists, who had seemingly come from as far as Japan or Australia. It was such a beautiful location that it did not matter if there were other people around, because its beauty and essence did not disappear.

Stopping near the pier where they were advertising boat trips around the loch, Cody dropped all the equipment he had brought with him. Opening his messenger bag he took out a book with the title “Loch Ness: Myth or Fact”. The book was rather old, most likely because Cody had bought it in a flea market or a second-hand store, and it was bookmarked with numerous post-its. No doubt he had been reading and analysing it quite effusively.

“So, let me get this straight, unlike your brother, you don’t want to catch the monster and put it on display for everyone to see, but you still want to catch it on film... I thought you didn’t believe in it, with you being all about science and facts.” –Anastasia said.

“Well, a good scientist is always open to new ways of thinking, and consequently, to new kinds of
"knowledge." –Cody said. –“Besides, I do believe there really is something in this lake, just not what you would expect when you talk about a mysterious monster. Sightings of a strange creature date back to 565 A.C., so, I think it’s something that’s worth checking, don’t you think?” –he said.

“And you believe that a creature could live for more than 2000 years straight?” –Mark asked him, with a mildly amused voice.

“Of course, not. That’s physically impossible, and you know it.” –Cody said, as he looked around, seeing many other people also with “monster hunter gear” just like him. –“But there has to be an explanation for those sightings, that I’m certain.”

“The only real proof that there is out there that there’s a monster in this lake here is the infamous Surgeon’s Photograph, and that one has been unmasked as a hoax for almost a decade now.” –Mark declared, as he checked some of the books the twin had brought with him.

“And you’re right, that photo is a complete hoax, but if so many people believe they saw something, there has to be an explanation for all those accounts. Just because cryptozoology is a pseudoscience, that doesn’t mean that the things they claim to exist don’t exist at all in a way or another. Like I said, I believe that there’s something in the water that makes people think they’re seeing a monster... the question is what is it?”

“And what do you believe it is?” –Anastasia asked intrigued.

“If I had to take a guess, I would have to agree that those sightings could be only wishful thinking, or most likely just a misidentification of various animals such as a grey shark, a wels catfish or perhaps seals swimming in the water.” –Cody told his girlfriend. –“And, of course, there’s always the chance that there really is a new and unidentified animal swimming in the lake.”

“I like the idea of an unidentified animal, but throughout the years there have been multiple expeditions with sophisticated equipment searching for any kind of evidence and they didn’t find anything.” –Mark declared. –“What makes you think you’re going to have success where so many have failed?”

“I don’t know. I just have this feeling that I will find something.” –Cody answered, as he placed down the book he was holding, and grabbed one of the cameras and checked its lens.

“And even if you don’t find anything, I’ll be here to congratulate you on trying.” –Barbara told him, as she planted a kiss on his cheek, making him blush lightly.

“But don’t you think you should first, like, interview the locals for any sort of leads that might help you in this search of yours?”

“Not initially. You see, like all tourist traps, people who work or live near them, tend to exaggerate or lie about the facts regarding the actual events, and that is exactly what I believe it will happen if we ask them about the creature. They’ll most likely start blabbing about how they saw the monster and how it looked like… I’m not saying that some of the folks around here haven’t seen anything that is worth knowing, but I prefer to stick to the facts in the reports I’ve read, as well on the images I might capture.” –Cody declared.

“Then, what’s the first thing we need to do, o fearless leader?” –Mark laughed of his own joke.

“Well, after we check out if all the equipment I brought is working, I think the best thing to do is to
go on one of these boat trips, in order to explore the loch and check the kind of natural elements we’ll have to work with.” –the twin explained.

“Okay, fine by us. Let’s beat feet, people!” –Mark exclaimed

As Mark and Anastasia made their way to the ticket line to buy the tickets, Barbara stayed behind to help Cody pack the things he had taken earlier from the bags. As she helped him, she could not resist throwing him a naughty smirk, before saying:

“You forgot to mention that the boat trip can also be quite romantic, if you’re with the right person, you know?” –she kept flirting with him. Barbara was not one of those girls who flirted a lot, but when she did, she liked to make Cody blush about it.

“Yeah, well, it’s true… but, I wasn’t going to say that with those two around us, come on. I bet even Mark would be embarrassed to say that to Anastasia, if we were around.” –Cody grinned.

“Oh, you really are a sweetheart… a really shy sweetheart.” –Barbara whispered to him, planting a kiss on his nose. –“Now, hurry up, as you said it yourself, we have a mystery to look into.”

As the afternoon wore off, the various members of the Tipton gang managed to find ways to keep themselves occupied. Both the twins, along with this respective girlfriends, as well as Mark and Anastasia kept following clues they believed they had found, regarding the mystery surrounding Nessie. As for London and Maddie, they had decided to just spend the day snapping photos at each other, always near the loch, taking advantage of the beautiful landscape. During their walk, a couple of people recognized them and as always asked them for a photo or an autograph, which did not surprise them. This made Maddie feel a little uncomfortable for the first time since the world found out about their relationship, mostly because of the fact that earlier she felt they were being watched. Still, London reassured her that everything was alright, and that there were no reasons for her to feel scared, for she would protect her.

When they finally had a moment, they sat on the grass and looked at the photos they had taken. Some of the photos they took looked incredible, while others were completely blurry and hazy. This made the blonde relax and forget about everything else. Having London’s wrapped around her made her feel good. She even asked her if they should be doing that after what Carey and the other adults told them, but she just said she did not care. All that mattered was Maddie feeling good and safe.

“I got the best girlfriend in the world.” –Maddie mused to herself, always smiling at London, who smiled back.

But, after a couple of hours of taking photos, they got tired of it, and decided to do their second favourite thing when they were on a foreign country, and that was, shopping.

Since the little town of Fort Augustus did not even had a small mall, the choice as to what to shop and where to shop. Thankfully, one of the shops was actually a boutique, so London and Maddie decided to spend the rest of the afternoon in it, trying everything that would fit them. Naturally, the shop owners also recognized them and offered to make them a special discount. They both thanks but said that it would not be needed. They would be happy to pay for whatever they bought without any discounts.

With more and more clothes piling up next to the dressing booths, London and Maddie had entered
full shopping mode, where they would lose the track of time, while trying out clothes and talking about all kinds of subjects.

“Did you notice that the receptionist at the inn did not even recognize us?” –London asked Maddie.

“Now that you mention it, yeah, I did notice it. Why do you ask?”

“Well, she would be the only one around here who didn’t recognize us. You think she was just being professional or something? By the way, does this blouse make me look fat?” –the heiress asked, as she looked herself in the mirror.

“Probably, I mean, back in Boston, sometimes a celebrity would come to the candy-counter to buy something and I had to control myself, so I wouldn’t start blabbing about how I loved his or her work and stuff, or if I could take a picture, so yeah, I think she might’ve been ignoring the fact of who we are and just acting professionally… oh, and no, that sweater looks great on you, it matches your hair colour.” –Maddie told her.

“Yeah, you’re probably right. And as for you acting professionally while on the job, do I have to remind you of what happened 2 years ago when the Backstreet Boys stayed at the hotel?” –London cajoled her girlfriend.

How could she not remember about it? Two years before, the Backstreet Boys were in Boston for 3 nights of concerts, and they were staying in the Tipton. The concerts were not just simple concerts, since they were part of a reunion tour, which meant that for that tour, Kevin Richardson, the fifth member of the band who had departed a few years before, would be joining them. Needless to say that Kevin was Maddie’s favourite member of the band, When they arrived at the hotel, Maddie was working at the candy-counter as usual, unpacking a couple of boxes that had been delivered earlier, when Kevin walks in to buy a newspaper. As soon as she saw him, she practically screamed ecstatically, jumping over the counter just to ask him for an autograph.

Of course, that did not end well, with Moseby coming over and apologizing for the mishap, and the scolding the blonde for her unprofessional behaviour. Still, that did not stop Maddie from trying to get an autograph, and perhaps, to talk with him; even if it was just to apologize for her behaviour before. Later that day, she asked for Esteban’s help to get inside their suite, by showing up dressed up as a guy with something from room service. Unfortunately, that did not end well, with the other members of the band always asking for her to go back to the kitchen and bring them something else. When she finally managed to fulfil every order, and entered the suite, she found out that Kevin had gone out and would meet the others at the concert. Furthermore, she also found out that due to an unexpected problem, he would have to go back to L.A. the following morning.

She was later found back in her work post by London, feeling utterly miserable and cursing the fact that she would never get the chance to talk with her favourite Backstreet Boy. Maddie told her all that happened, trying as hard as she could not to cry.

It was then that London did something amazing. Since the Tipton Hotel was sponsoring the concerts, she had been given free tickets with backstage passes and she was there to invite her to come with her that night. When she said that, Maddie jumped on London’s arms and hugged her as hard as she could, with tears of happiness rolling down her face. The heiress could not even imagine of how happy she had made her right then.

As the memory of that day emerged from the depths of her brain, Maddie remembered just how amazing the concert was, and how before and after it she had the chance to hang out with the band.
At the end of it, she had collected their autographs and countless photos, especially a very special one where she was hugging Kevin as if he was a huge teddy bear. It had been a night to remember for the rest of her life, and it was all thanks to London, her best friend/soon to be girlfriend at the time, who remembered about her.

“No, you don’t need to remind me of what happened.” –the blonde giggled innocently. –“I know I wasn’t very professional on that day. Still, now I don’t regret doing what I did, especially when everything ended up swimmingly well... and all thanks to you,”

“Yay, me...” –she giggled her famous catchphrase. –“It was nice to help you fulfil a dream. So, what do you think of this new look?” –London asked as she tried something completely different, a kilt and a shirt.

“Wow... I’m speechless.” –Maddie said shaking her head. The kilt looked so beautiful on London, she did not even know what to say. –“That looks great on you. I’d take it if I were you.”

“Really?” –the heiress asked innocently, looking herself in the mirror. The black, pink and white striped kilt looked really good on her. Even though it was not a traditional kilt, it was still a beautiful piece. –“Okay, I’ll take it, but only if you buy one yourself too. I’m not going to be seen wearing it alone, okay?”

“Fine, I will.” –Maddie chuckled. –“There’s something sexy about wearing a kilt, you know?”
The sun was nearly setting on the horizon when they all returned to the Hidden Nessie inn, where the adults were already waiting for them. They were all beaten and tired. While ones carried the “monster catching” or “monster reconnaissance” equipment they had used on their hunt, other carried either souvenirs or clothes they had bought.

“So, any luck finding the monster?” –Stephen asked his son, who looked more dead than alive, as he entered the inn, carrying a few bags in his arms, no doubt things he had bought to the local shops.

“No such luck, dad.” –Mark answered him.

“But we still have a few more days to find it. After all, Rome wasn’t built in a day, you know?” – Cody declared with confidence.

“Well, while you went all monster hunting, we decided to go shopping.” –London said, smiling as she carried at least a dozen bags in her hands. –“Come on, Blondie, let’s get ready for dinner... we bought the cutest kilts and we’re going to put them on for dinner.” –the heiress confessed in a whisper to Carey.

“I’m coming.” –Maddie said dryly. –“You really shouldn’t have bought half the store.”

“Well, you also helped.” –London said deadpanned, making the blonde and the rest of the gang laugh.

Dinner was served at exactly eight o’clock and just like Karen told them, it was Haggis. Everyone looked at the dish and asked themselves what it would taste like. Zack gulped as he tried to understand what the dish actually was, because apart from the mashed potatoes and rutabaga, the rest of it looked like an alien egg of sorts.

“What exactly is haggis?” –Zack wrinkled his nose at the sight of that so called Scottish delicacy.

“Haggis is mainly a sheep's heart, liver and lungs stuffed in the animal’s stomach. It also takes onions, oatmeal, suet as well as spices, Zack.” –Cody said. –“Quite the delicacy they say. In fact, it’s considered an insult to leave even a little bit of it on the plate.” –he teased, knowing his brother was feeling nauseous just from hearing what he had just said.

“Delicacy? It looks more like an alien egg or something that an orc would have for breakfast.” –Zack whispered.

“Well, I for one want to try it.” –London said, as she grabbed her knife and carved the dish, releasing a strong yet delicious aroma into the air. –“I’ll agree with you that it doesn’t look like the most delicious thing in the world, Zack, but this aroma makes a person reconsider.”

The aroma coming from the carved hot haggis really made it more appetizing than it looked.

“So, what do you say, Zack? Are you going to be adventurous and try it?” –Max asked him, obviously teasing him. He knew that when she said that, what she meant to say was “Are you chicken?”, and Zack was not going to let that go by. Grabbing his plate he signalled his mom to fill it up. He was determined to prove he could eat anything, even if it looked like something that was not supposed to be eaten.
Taking a bite, he was actually surprised by how good it tasted. It had a slightly smoky flavour and he could taste the spices it had been added to the mix. Some of them he recognized like pepper and nutmeg that he was used to taste in his mom’s cooking, but then there were others he had never tasted, and he liked the taste.

“I guess he likes it.” –Felicia smiled, as she served her daughter.

“Zack tends to be a little picky with his food, but when he finds something he likes, he’ll eat it, without leaving a speck of food on his plate.” –Carey commented. –“Of course, there was that time when he was 8, when he refused to eat anything but fried sausages with mashed potatoes for nearly a month, because he didn’t like the soup I made. Can you imagine I had to make that for him every day, and of course, Zack would always ask me if he could eat it with lots of Tabasco sauce. I think he gets that from his dad.”

“Mom... please, don’t embarrass me in front of the others.” –Zack begged her.

“Oh, come now, sweetie, it’s not the worst story I have of you. If you want I can always tell them about that time when we went to the beach and...”

“No, no, no mom! Remember what you said? You said that you would never speak of that one time ever again!” –Zack warned her,

All this made everyone laugh, and eventually, even Zack started to laugh. They still attempted to find out the story Zack did not want everyone to find out, but Carey and Zack did not say another word about it. Of course, they asked Cody about it, but he did not open his mouth about it during the rest of the dinner, which went by without any other commotion.

After dinner, everyone decided to entertain themselves as they could, while waiting for the time to go to bed. The adults went to the living area and stayed there watching whatever was on television. As for the rest of the gang, Mark and Anastasia joined the adults on the living area room, but instead of watching TV, they each picked a book and made the decision of finishing them until bedtime.

As for the twins, they were joined by their girlfriends in the inn’s bar reviewing what they had discovered that day, comparing what they had on the mythical creature from the lake. Gathered around one of the tables, they were being observed by Karen, who was behind the bar reading a magazine, while waiting for a customer to show up.

At the same time, not far from the twins’ table, London and Maddie were engaged in the latest of a series of game of chess. London had won the first 3 games, and Maddie had only won the following one. London was the best chess player from the two of them, and Maddie knew it. It was still a mystery to her how London was always able to beat her at chess, but with time she decided that that was one of those mysteries revolving around the heiress she felt she did not need to understand; she was just happy to have someone to play chess with her that actually made her take the game seriously. And on that night that she was determined to show London that unlike before when they played and London always won, they were now equally matched, and to that, she was going to beat her on a best 4 out of 7 matches. Looking at the Asian-beauty as she thought about her next move made her heart go faster, and she liked when that happened. Still, London had other plans in mind, and Maddie was about to find that out.

“Hmm... my Queen is in danger. What am I going to do? Should I protect her with my Knight? No, if I do that, I’ll leave Mr. Pointy-Head, I mean, the Bishop vulnerable. But what if I move the pawn?” –London thought to herself, analysing every possible move in her head. Maddie was putting up a good fight, and she knew it. If she was to win her, she would have to come up with an idea to
counter the blonde’s strategy. –“No, that won’t work either. What shall I do? Yes, my Queen will have to fight a rearguard action... Right... then, with my next move I’ll launch a flank attack with my other Bishop... but if I do that, Maddie we’ll see the danger and use a pawn to cover her Castle.” – the heiress kept musing over the best strategy.

“I got you now, London. You may be a better chess player than me most of the times, but this time I have you right where I want you.” –Maddie thought to herself, as an impish smile appeared on her face.

“Screw it! I’ll take the plunge and sacrifice my Bishop. But it won’t be a sacrifice in vain. I’ll then take Maddie’s Castle, and then, check. Her king won’t be able to go anywhere.” –London smiled, as she made her move. And just as she had predicted, Maddie moved her Castle, and then London captured it, leaving her free to attack the King. –“Checkmate, Maddie!” –London exclaimed, clapping her hands.

“Again?!” –Maddie exclaimed, not believing her eyes. –“How come I didn’t see that move?” –she kept babbling, still not believing what had happened.

“What can I say? I’m good at it.” –London playfully gloated about it. She just loved to see Maddie’s face when she managed to outmatch her in a chess game. –“So, you ready for another round?” –the heiress asked the blonde, as she placed the chess pieces in their proper place.

“Nah, forget it. It’s not my night.” –Maddie sighed, admitting defeat.

“Oh, Maddie, come on, if you want to I’ll let you win the next one.” –London told her innocently. She did not want to see her girlfriend sad.

“No, it’s okay, we’ll play some other time...” –Maddie said, when she felt a shiver up her spine. She felt like she was being watched; just like in the morning when they arrived. Turning her head, this time she saw someone looking at them from around a corner. It was just a little girl, younger than Zack and Cody. –“Hey you!”

That startled the girl and made her jump, making her leave her hiding spot. Looking at her with a little more attention, Maddie saw that she was most likely 7 or 8 years old. She had short red coppery hair, white skin and green eyes. She was wearing a white and green striped wool shirt, a pair of brown jeans and black and white sneakers.

“Oh, I-I-I’m sorry. I didn’t m-m-mean to be spying on you.” –she said, as she got ready to leave.

“No, it’s okay. Come here.” –Maddie said with a sweet and tender voice, showing she was not upset or angry. –“Come here, please.”

Slowly, the little girl approached them. But before she could say another word, Karen called her from behind the bar counter.

“Caitlin! What did I tell you about bothering or spying on the guests?” –she asked her, obviously not approving what she was doing.

“Sorry, sis.” –the little girl said.

“I think it’s time for you to go to bed.” –Karen told her.

“Oh, no wait, it’s okay. I’m sure she didn’t do on purpose.” –Maddie said. –“In fact, if you don’t mind, London and I would like to get to know her.”
“Well, I guess if you don’t mind, I think it’s okay.” –Karen said. –“But remember, Caitlin. Don’t go and bother Miss Tipton and Miss Fitzpatrick with any crazy or inappropriate questions, you hear me?”

“Yes, sis.” –Caitlin sighed, as she stopped in front of the girls.

“Well, don’t just stand there. Have a seat.” –Maddie said, as the little girl pulled a chair nearby and sat on it. –“I think introductions are in order. I’m…”

“Madeline Margaret Genevieve Miranda Catherine Fitzpatrick, or as you prefer to be called, Maddie Fitzpatrick.” –Caitlin declared. Maddie’s jaw almost dropped when she heard say that. Only a handful of people knew her name by heart. –“And you are London Leah Tipton, or just London Tipton as you like to be called. Allow me to introduce myself; I’m Caitlin Taylor, I’m 10 years old and I’m a really big fan and supporter of you and your relationship, not to mention that I also think that you make the cutest couple since Brangelina.” –she giggled.

“Whoa…” –London said, almost speechless. –“I think we found out number 1 fan, Maddie.”

“Oh, I wished I was. I mean, don’t get me wrong I know a lot of things about you, but it’s mainly what I watch or I read in the news. I bet there are tons of other people who know more about the both of you than me.”

“Well, why don’t we do this? You ask us something you want to know about us, and we’ll ask you something about you. That way, you get to know us better, and we get to know you. What do you say?” –Maddie suggested her.

“Cool! You girls go first, I insist.” –Caitlin said.

“Okay, if you insist. Then, tell us about you. Have you lived here all your life?” –London asked her.

“Yes, I have.” –Caitlin answered. –“Now, it’s my turn. How did you end up giving each other your nicknames, Blondie and Princess?”

“Oh, I see you’re already asking tough ones.” –Maddie giggled, truly happy to see that the little girl was not as shy as she looked like, at least when it came to asking persona questions. –“Well, London gave me the nickname of Blondie because I’m a blonde, and I gave her the nickname of Princess because I used to call her princess because she’s super rich and was always buy everything she wants to without caring about money, while I had to work like a slave sometimes to buy what I wanted.”

“Don’t forget about the fact that you called me that with a really sarcastic tone.” –London said. –“You used to be so much more sarcastic with me than you are now.” –she commented.

“Well, you did start to behave less like you did, little by little, so there was no more reason for me to throw you sarcastic comments. But if you want to, I can go back and making sarcastic comments about you, Princess.” –Maddie smirked at her, calling her Princess with a sarcastic tone, which made Caitlin giggle.

“Oh, okay, I get it. But I think we’re shying away from the conversation.” –London stated. –“We better get back to the questions.”

They kept talking, and as the conversation went on, Caitlin found out stuff about London and Maddie that would make her their number 1 fan for sure, while the girls found out the whole story about Caitlin’s life. As she told them, her parents had died in a car accident 3 years before and ever since then, it had been just her and her sister Karen. She told them that she tried to help her sister
managing the inn, but Karen was incredibly stubborn and kept telling her that she needed to concentrate on her studies in order to one day go to college, and to leave the hard work for her, since she had to give up on her plans to go to college to keep the inn running. She then told them that she had been following London on Facebook and Twitter for a couple of years, and ever since she and Maddie came out of the closet, she had been following them both, stating that what she read on their posts had cheered her up on more than just one occasion. A little ashamed, the young girl told them that she had wanted to talk with them when they arrived in the morning, but did not had the courage to do anything, except spying on them as they went by the corridor. Maddie did not say it, but hearing that had relieved her of the fact that she had not imagined she was being watched when they arrived, and thankfully, it was only Caitlin and not some psycho stalker like she initially feared.

As they heard their story, both girls could not help but to feel compassion towards the two sisters. Maddie especially saw much of herself in them. The blonde had also started to work part-time when she was only 13, and even though her family had never starved or had had bad financial problems, she still knew how hard it was for a person to keep leash on their money. And still, even after going through all that, Caitlin still smiled, and told them that life had given her and sister those cards to play with, and the only thing they could do was to play them the best way they could, while waiting for the best.

They were so absorbed in the conversation that they failed to realize that someone had entered the bar, an old man, and he was talking with the twins. The man was in his late 70’s or early 80’s, and a nice old face; the kind of face you expect grandfathers to have, always smiling, always cheerful. He was wearing an old tartan green and blue Scottish kilt, a black sweater, black shoes and had an old Scottish bonnet, better known as a tam o’shanter covering his bold head. Only when he began to talk a little louder, did they notice his presence. His voice was quite joyful, and his heavy accent made him sound like those old bards you hear when watching a film about the times of King Arthur and such.

“So, ye laddies have come here in one of them cruise ships, and ended up coming here to see if ye can find the beast?” –the old man said.

“That’s old Rufus MacLeod. He’s one of the village’s story tellers. In fact, if there’s one thing he loves more than telling made up stories about the Loch Ness monster to tourists, is his usual glass of Scotch.” –Caitlin giggled, whispering it to the girls.

“A can hear ye from here, you know that, don’t ye lassie?” –old Rufus shout at young Caitlin, letting out a joyful chuckle. –“Don’t be shy and join us, and bring ye lady friends. Dem rascals here tell me that they came with them.”

Accepting Rufus’ invitation, the girls got up and joined them by the counter, where Caitlin’s older sister, Karen was pouring Rufus another glass of Scotch, with the old man telling her that he wanted the glass full.

“Nou don’t give me that talk that ye can only pour until it’s half full, lassie. Ye ken that good things in life must be enjoyed to the fullest.”

“Maybe, but you know what Dr. William told you about what will happen if you keep drinking like you do.”

“A know very well what will happen, and A keep telling ye that ma liver is better than most livers of ye young ones, cause ye eat nothing but synthetic food and beverages.” –he kept laughing as he sipped his Scotch. –“Nou, A already presented myself to these laddies and their lassies here, but A didn’t had the chance to meet ya lovely lassies. Rufus MacLeod, last of the MacLeods, a fine
appreciator of Scotch and yer old story teller."

“London Tipton, please to meet you, Mr. MacLeod.”

“Maddie Fitzpatrick, and it’s also a pleasure to meet you, Mr. MacLeod.”

“Pleasure meet ye two, lassies, but call me Rufus. Mr. MacLeod was my long departed da.” –he answered, as Caitlin quickly whispered to them that da was the Scottish word for father. –“A’ve seen ye on the village this morning, and A’ve seen ye on the news as weel. Ye twa lassies hae fire in ye blood. It takes a lot of guts to tell the world what ye are. A admire that in ye.” –Rufus said, praising them. –“Don’t looke so surpris aboot it, A may be olde but A still watch the telly and read the newspaper from time to time.”

“Rufus was telling us about some amazing stories about the Loch Ness monster.” –Zack said. –“He says he saw the creature more than 10 times during his life.”

“Ay, it is true, young laddie. Nessie only reveales itself to those who believe in it.” –Rufus confirmed.

“I find it hard to believe that. I mean, if the Loch Ness monster truly existed and revealed itself to those who believe in its existence, then, instead of being a myth, it would be a fact that it existed, because someone would have proof like a photograph, a real photograph or a video where you something more than just a blur.” –Cody declared, not buying what he was being told.

“Ah, a skeptical, are ye? Ye ain’t the first to say that, laddie, and A bet with ye that ye will not be the last.” –Rufus said. –“Believe me when A tell ye that the creature can sense what people feel.”

“You’ll have to forgive my brother; he’s always about scientific evidence and all that stuff. He doesn’t believe in what he can’t see or touch.” –Zack stated. –“But please, tell us more about the creature. What does it look like?”

They all sat and listened to old Rufus’ tales about the Loch Ness monster. He told them that he first saw Nessie when he was just 12 years old, and described it, pointing out that it had a long neck but it was not an eel, it more like a dinosaur, similar to the one depicted in one of the books that Zack had brought with him. When asked by Cody how he knew so well how it looked like, Rufus said that once he’d seen it jumping out of the water. He also told them that most of the times, Nessie loved to come out during Baltic foggy days, when the fog is as thick as pea soup, and that was why it was so hard to catch a good glimpse of it.

“How convenient…” –Cody thought to himself.

Eventually, Mark and Anastasia heard all the commotion around the elder, and decided to come and see what was going on. Pulling a chair, they sat and listened to what he had to say. As they heard the stories, all of it reminded Mark of the way young people used to gather around a fire and listened to the stories told by the elders, who were seen as the keepers of the knowledge and truth. It was a rather strange and somehow weird comparison, but it made sense.

“And all those times you saw it, didn’t you take a picture of it?” –Max asked.

“Naw, unlike most of ye that come here to find the creature, A had a job to do. Ye see, A used to be a shepherd, so A’d to keep my eyes peeled, to see if the sheep didn’t disappear. When ye have a job like that, you need to be cautious and make sure that everything is alright with the flock.” –Rufus answered. –“Over the years, many tourists have even asked me if A had a trick to spot Nessie, but truth be told, A don’t. A believe that Nessie, like a wild animal, only does what it wants.”
“How close were you to Nessie?” –Maddie asked.

“Well, A think it was during the fifth time A saw it. A was fishing, when it appeared in front of me. It’s head was like 3 feet from me. It stood there for about ten or fifteen seconds, and then, it plunged back into the dark water.”

All sorts of questions were asked; how big Nessie was, what its colour was, did it look scary, among others. And Rufus made sure to answer all of those he knew the answer to. Finally, it came time for Karen to close the bar, and Rufus said his goodbyes, telling them that it was nice to meet them and that if they had any more questions regarding Nessie, or just wanted to talk, that they could find him near the pier.

“A’ll be around the pier, if ye need me. Or, ye can always wait for me to come here at night.” –he said

“We will, believe us. And thank you for everything you told us.” –Barbara said.

“Naw, thank ye. It’s always guid to ken that an olde man such as myself still has some use.” –Rufus joked about it. –“Well then, guid nicht and guid luck in yer hunt for Nessie.” –the old man said, as he left inn.

After Rufus exited, Karen waited a couple of seconds before exiting from behind the counter to close the door. As she bolted the door she said:

“Old Rufus and his Nessie tales.” –she chuckled.

“You don’t believe in them?” –Cody asked her.

“Let’s just say that he isn’t the only one around here who tells tales like those. But, I think his are some of the few that are actually true. I’m not saying all of them are true, but, there’s something about a few of his stories that manage to stand out as the real deal.” –Karen answered him. –“Of course, not everyone around here believes in the creature’s existence.”

They all noticed that Karen seemed a lot more relaxed and at ease then when they first met her. The first thing that came to their minds was that when she was doing her work, she behaved differently, than she did after closing time.

“Don’t take this as an insult, but I always thought that you people around here were required to really believe in the existence of the creature.” –Anastasia stated.

“There are a couple of people in the village that believe in it, like Rufus and myself, but most people just pretend they believe in the creature so they can promote the local tourism.” –Karen said, as went back behind the counter and began to clean it. –“My little sis there is one of those people. She pretends to believe in it, but she really doesn’t.” –Karen admitted.

“What can I say? All these years and I’ve never seen even a glimpse of Nessie, and the same thing could be said about you.”

“Well, I’ve never seen it before, but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. You can’t see the air or the wind, but it exists.” –Karen shot back at her sister. –“Either way, it’s time for you to go to bed.”

“Fine, I’ll go. Try not to stay up late. Guid nicht.” –Caitlin told her sister.

“I think it’s time for us to go to bed too. We got another big day tomorrow.” –Barbara suggested, as she looked at the clock on one of the walls, which marked seven past eleven.
After wising a good night to the adults who were going to stay in the living area for a little longer, one by one, they all went up to their rooms. Maddie was the last one, because Caitlin asked her one last question.

“I’m really sorry to bother you with another question, but I really wanted to ask you.” –she said. She had waited for her older sister to go inside before asking the blonde the question.

“No worries. As long as I’m staying here, you can ask me anything you want.” –Maddie told her, always smiling. –“So, what was it you wanted to ask me? Don’t be shy about it.”

“Well, it’s just that I... well, I was wondering, when was it that you found out that you were a lesbian?” –Caitlin asked. Maddie was a little shocked about the question, but before she could have the time to answer it, Caitlin said: “You know what? Forget I asked you that. Guid nicht!” –she said, before she zipped out of there, leaving Maddie without knowing what to say or think about.

Already in their room, London was doing her bedtime routine, while Maddie waited her turn to enter the bathroom. The television was on, but she was paying no attention to it. While waiting for the heiress to exit the bathroom, she kept replaying in her mind the conversation they had with young Caitlin. The girl had not asked them anything inappropriate, but, there had been a question she posed only to her that was a little unexpected, and it was the main reason why the blonde was still thinking about it.

As she came out of the bathroom, already wearing her pyjamas, London looked at Maddie and noticed just how lost in her thoughts she was. Approaching her, she called her out.

“Maddie? Are you okay?” –London asked, gently rocking her.

”Uh... yeah, I’m fine. I was just lost in my thoughts.” –the blonde declared, after being brought back from wherever her mind was.

“I noticed it.” –the heiress giggled. –“Wanna talk about it?”

“Sure.” –she said. –“I was just thinking about what Caitlin talked with us. Especially the question she asked me when you were already climbing up the stairs.”

“And what was the question?” –London asked her.

“Well, she asked me when did I found out that I was... a lesbian” –Maddie said it finally.

“She asked you that? So, what’s the big deal?” –London asked puzzled.

“Well, I don’t really know, you know? I mean, I don’t know if I consider myself a lesbian. We both said that we support LGBT rights and we really do, but I actually never thought about what I really am. Tell me, do you consider yourself a lesbian, London?”

She was about to answer yes, but then it hit her. The question hit London the same way it hit Maddie when Caitlin asked her earlier. She had never thought about that question either. She loved Maddie that she was sure of, and Maddie was a girl, and the definition of a girl loving another girl. Thinking about it rationally, they were lesbians, but at the same time, it did not felt right.

“Now that I think about it, I don’t really know what to consider myself either.” –the heiress answered, still pondering on the question.

“You know, on the day that I told you how really felt about you, Carey asked me if I considered
myself a lesbian, and you know what I answered her back then?” –Maddie asked London, with the heiress shaking her head. –“I told her that I didn’t consider myself one. I told her that I was attracted to just one very special person, and that person happened to be you.”

“Really?” –London asked her with her usual perky voice. –“Then, that settles it.”

“How?” –Maddie asked her, puzzled.

“Well, you said it yourself. You are only attracted to just one very special person, and that person happens to be a girl, who happens to be me.” –London answered her. –“If you think about it, you never said anything but being attracted to another girl, and I don’t remember seeing you checking any other girl’s rack or caboose.”

That last statement made Maddie laugh. She was not used to hearing London using slang while talking. The heiress looked at her, confused as to why her girlfriend was laughing.

“What?! Why are you laughing?! What did I say?!”

“Sorry, sorry…” –Maddie said, as she stopped laughing. –“… I’m not used to hearing you use slang, that’s all.” –she admitted, just as she took a deep breath.

“Yeah, I don’t use it a lot.” –London admitted, also laughing.

“But you’re right; I don’t go around checking other girls’ rack or caboose as you said. Besides, why would I need it? I only have eyes for you, and your rack and your caboose.” –Maddie giggled, making London also giggle.

“See? So, from now, when people ask you and me, we’ll just say that we’re girls who fell in love with their best friend and that we don’t care about stereotypes or any of that shit.” –London told her.

“Sometimes I wonder how could you hide such a beautiful and intelligent personality from me and the rest of the world for so long, you know?” –Maddie smiled, leaning towards London and gently kissing her on the nose.

“Me too.” –she said, returning the kiss on the nose, with one of her on.

“Still, why would she ask me something like that? When we were all talking, she asked us all kinds of questions, but this one…” –she commented, as she kept asking herself, why she asked her that.

“Look, don’t think about it. Whatever her reasons are, you’re not going to guess them just because you want to guess them. Tomorrow, if we happen to come across her, and you still want to know why she asked you that, then you do it, okay?”

Maddie sighed, knowing London was right about it. There was no point in keep thinking about it, right then. Smiling, she hugged the heiress and said: “You’re right, there’s no point in getting all worked up about it. Besides, tomorrow is another day.”

“See? I give the best advices or not? Now, hurry up getting ready for bed.” –London said, as she playfully slapped Maddie on the butt.

“Alright, alright, I’ll be right back so we can snuggle.” –Maddie said, as she got up from the bed and entered the bathroom.

While she was getting ready, she heard London turning off the television, but did not even pay attention to it. She just assumed that the heiress had gotten tired of what was on it, and decided to
turn it off. But when she opened the bathroom door, ready to get under the soft covers, did she understand why London did turn off the television. Staring at her, on top of the bed was London, sated on her knees absolutely naked and with a mischievous smile on her face.

“Did I forget about something regarding today’s date?” – Maddie chuckled as her eyes admired the Asian-beauty’s lovely and sexy body.

“Nope, I just felt that after beating you at chess tonight, and after that conversation we had with Caitlyn which filled your head with so many questions, you deserved a little consolation prize.” – London said, gently grasping her breasts with her hands, as her thumbs played with her nipples. Even though she was planning to do all kinds of kinky things with the blonde, she still had that innocent and angelic look on her face, which after looking at her, even a priest would absolve her of any kind of sins she was about to commit.

Maddie smiled and approached her girlfriend. Leaning over her, London was about to kiss her, when the blonde turned her face away, and hugged her.

“You really are the best, London.” – Maddie said sincerely, hugging her even tighter. – “But I’m not really in the mood for any kinky things tonight. I just want to snuggle right next to you.”

Hearing that, London sighed, but not even for a second felt bad about what she had said. It had been a rough day, and Maddie had been under a little bit more of stress than she was used to. It was natural she just wanted to get some sleep.

“It’s okay, Blondie.” – London answered her, as Maddie released her from the hug, and pulled up her shirt, leaving her naked from the waist up.

And before the heiress could say anything, the blonde just answered her.

“I said I want to snuggle in with you, but I didn’t say how I was going to snuggle.” – Maddie told her, as she took off her pyjamas’ pants, ending up completely naked – “Come on, last one to get beneath the covers is a sour candy.”

Climbing into bed, the girls snuggled onto each other, and pulled the covers up. It felt nice to snuggle like that, feeling each other’s warmth, a sensation that no matter how many times they experienced, never got old. Laying there in each other’s arms, they turned their heads to stare into each other’s eyes.

“Can I tell you a secret?” – London whispered to Maddie’s ear.

“Sure.” – Maddie answered, nodding her head.

“I’m looking at the most gorgeous girl in the world.” – London whispered softly to the blonde’s ear, making her giggle.

“That’s impossible, and you want to know why? Because I’m the one who’s staring at the most gorgeous girl in the world, right now.” – Maddie giggled. They just loved to pillow talking like that. It made them feel good about themselves and about the world around them, when it became too awful or too unpleasant.

“So, after Ireland, how are you enjoying your stay on Her Majesty’s lands?” – London asked, as she played with one of Maddie’s hair locks, wrapping it around her index finger.

“In two words? Loving it!” – Maddie said, as she kissed London on her forehead. – Can I tell you something?” – she asked, with London waving her head. – “At first, I was excited about all this, but
also scared that I might get real homesick from not seeing my parents and the rest of my family. But like my grandma usually says,

“When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade and you drink it in one big gulp” and that’s exactly what I’m doing.”

“Your grandmother sure gives you great advices.” –London said, as she got even closer to Maddie’s, squishing her boobs against the blonde’s. –“Mmm... I love it when our boobs touch like this” –the heiress bit her lip.

“You ain’t the only one, Princess.” –she said, as she kissed her hungrily on the lips.

“I thought you weren’t in the mood for kinky stuff tonight.” –London said, as she kissed her back.

“Well, I changed my mind, you know?” –Maddie said, as her left hand made her way down London’s abdomen, to the heiress’ already wet pussy. –“Mmm... are you this wet from just a couple of kisses?”

“Being naked and having your boobs against mine also helps.” –London bit her lip, as she felt Maddie’s finger caressing her outer lips. –“I think I’m going to keep winning when we play chess, so I can use it as an excuse to fuck with you after, Blondie.”

“You don’t need any excuses to fuck me, silly.” –Maddie said with a lightly slutty voice, as she her fingers kept rubbing London’s sensitive clit.

“I know... but I... want to...” –the heiress began to pant, as the blonde kept playing with her body.

“Fine... now, enough talk, kiss me.” –Maddie almost demanded London, using her dominatrix voice.

“Yes, mistress Blondie.” –London said, making them both giggle, as they exchanged yet another fervent kiss.
Once more, London and Maddie had a night of passion that only ended when the clock stroke 2 in the morning, as they fell into each other’s arms, exhausted from all the kisses and orgasms, falling asleep shortly after with a smile in their lips.

Around 7 in the morning, the first rays of light began to enter the room, waking up London. Her eyelids felt like they weighed three tons each, and it took her a couple of seconds to crack open her eyes. Blinking her eyes a couple of times, the heiress noticed it was already morning. She turned her head to the right and saw that Maddie was still asleep. There was a beautiful smile on her face, making her look like a doll. A very dishevelled and sleepy doll... her doll... her Hideous-hair Maddie, as she liked to call the blonde, ever since the incident that originated that nickname.

Not wanting to wake her up just yet, she moved in closer to Maddie and gently squeezed the blonde’s body against hers.

“I don’t want to wake you up... you look like a doll when you’re asleep. But if I don’t wake you up now, we won’t have time to get ready for breakfast.” –London thought, as she caressed Maddie’s nose with her finger, making her nose twitch a little. –“Then again, what’s a couple of minutes more under the sheets?”

Staying truth to her decision, she decided to wait another 10 minutes before waking up Maddie. While waiting for the right moment to wake her up, she kept staring out the window, even though there was almost nothing to see, because of the rather thick and strangely mysterious fog. The fog was as thick as pea soup, and London saw herself saying you could slice it with a butter knife. And if it looked like that, then she could only imagine how cold it was outside.

“Now that’s what I call a foggy morning. You can’t see a thing outside.” –London’s thoughts echoed in her mind. –“Good thing we’re here, between the sheets and the covers. Still, there’s something about this fog that makes it beautiful... If I were the monster, this would be the perfect time to come for a little trip to the surface, without being seen.”

With these thoughts in her head, the heiress quickly imagined the Loch Ness Monster coming out of the loch, its head a long neck above the water, turning left and right, searching to see if it was safe to be. The version of the creature she had come up with on her mind looked like a child’s version of what the creature might be, fluffy, pink with green polka dots and huge goofy eyes. She giggled of how her imagination could be so childish and innocent sometimes.

“As if the monster would look like that.” –she thought, as she kept giggling.

Minutes went by; when finally she decided Maddie had had enough sleep. With an evil smirk on her face, London began to kiss her. Placing sweet kisses all over her face and neck, she fully woke her up with a sweet yet luscious kiss on the lips. The blonde giggled, repaying her girlfriend for waking her up in such a sweet manner, with an even bigger kiss.

“Mmm... I love it when you wake me up like that.” –Maddie whispered, as she stretched her arms.

“Can I have a few more of those delicious kisses to go, please?”

London did not even answer her. She simply leaned her head and kissed her sweetly once more. She would never get tired of kissing the girl she loved.

“So, how do you feel?”
“I’m a haute mess.” –Maddie laughed. –“You did quite a number on me last night, you know that?” –the blonde giggled, as she snuggled in closer to London.

“Well, you also did quite a number on me last night, and you don’t hear me complaining.” –the heiress said deadpanned. –“And you’ve been watching Ashley Tisdale movies again while I’m at the spa, haven’t you?”

“How do you know that?” –Maddie asked her.

“You said I’m a haute mess... that’s one of her catchphrases.” –the heiress rolled her eyes.

“Guilty as charged. I can’t help it, she’s one of the funniest actresses I know, and you said it yourself that I look a lot like her.” –she sighed, admitting it, always smiling.

“You’re right, you really do look like her, and I mean a lot. You could be twins for all we know.” –London told her, as she planted another kiss on her lips. –“You know, it just occurred to me that we’re in a hotel...”

“Well, duh.” –she said with a tint of sarcasm, rolling her eyes.

“Come on, don’t interrupt me.” –she begged her. –“As I was saying, we’re in a hotel, and we could, I don’t know... maybe call room service and have our breakfast here in bed. I checked the brochures and we have that option.” –she pointed out.

“Mmm... as tempting as that sounds, I think the others will be waiting for us to have breakfast with them.” –Maddie told London, as she threw the covers aside. Even though the room’s air was warm due to the central heating, the blonde still shivered as her nude body was exposed to it. –“Brrrr, it’s really cold.” –she chitter her teeth, trying to warm up –“How abut we take a nice long hot shower together in order to get warmer?”

“You know we really don’t need to shower together to get warmer, don’t you?” –London asked her, joking.

“I know that. I just wanted to have an excuse to have you next to me a little longer.” –Maddie said, as she got up from the bed.

“I thought I was the one who came up with those lame excuses. I guess I’m starting to rub it on you, Blondie.” –London giggled, as she slide out of bed and walked to where she was, putting her arms around her and pulling her into what some would call a sexy embrace, with their nude bodies touching one another. –“God, you’re so sexy... even with... (kiss)... that messy hair of yours.” –she giggled, as she kissed Maddie.

“Look who’s talking!” –Maddie said deadpanned. –“Did you look yourself... (kiss)... in the mirror this morning?” –she giggled.

“Nope...” –she also giggled. –“But I’m not... (kiss)... the one, who has the nickname... (kiss)... of Hideous-hair Maddie.” –London pointed out, while continuing to kiss her.

“Come on, let’s... (kiss)... continue this in the shower.” –Maddie said, as she grabbed the brunette’s arm and guided her to the bathroom.

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After a delicious breakfast that could have easily competed against the ones served aboard the S.S. Tipton, the gang went outside and tried to decide on what to do next. That would be their second day
in Loch Ness, which meant that on the following afternoon they would have to go back to Edinburgh, in order to continue their voyage aboard the cruise ship. Needless to say, knowing they would only stay there for maybe another 40 hours, they were looking for something to do that was out of the ordinary.

“With this fog, it’s basically impossible to go on another cruise around the loch” –Max said. The fog was as bad as it was when London woke up; they could barely see an inch in front of them.

“You mean it’s basically impossible to do anything.” –Zack said.

“Don’t be so negative about it; we’ll find something to do.” –Cody told his brother.

“We can always go back inside and spend the day reading or watching television, at least until the fog dissipates a little.” –Barbara suggested.

“That could take hours!” –Zack exclaimed.

“Or just a few minutes.” –a voice was heard, followed by a series of barks. –“The fog around here can appear and disappear in a matter of minutes sometimes.”

Coming out of the fog was Caitlin, and she was not alone. With her was a beautiful Rough Collie, who kept yapping as it approached the gang. Max instantly crouched and began to pet it on the head. The dog thanked her by licking her hand.

“Good morning, Caitlin.” –Maddie greeted her.

“Morning, everyone.” –Caitlin greeted them all. –“Ah, I see she likes you.”

“What’s her name?” –Zack asked her.

“Don’t tell us it’s Lassie.” –Mark joked.

“No, it’s not Lassie.” –she giggled. –“This is Diana.”

“Oh, she’s so cute... I wish we could’ve brought Scampy and Ivanna with us. That way they could play with her.” –London said, as she also began to pet the beautiful Rough Collie.

“I know, but you know the law in this country is quite strict when it comes to letting foreign animals enter.” –Maddie said, as she crouched and also began to pet Diana.

“She’s really beautiful. It’s easy to see you take good care of her.” –Anastasia said.

“It’s more like she takes care of me. She’s really protective. I’m almost amazed she likes you, because she usually doesn’t like strangers.” –Caitlin said. –“But tell me, what are you doing here in the middle of the fog? It’s freezing out here.”

“We’re here trying to figure out what to do.” –Cody answered her.

“And the fog pretty much has restricted our options.” –London declared.

“Don’t worry, the fog might take a little to dissipate, but it will happen before lunch time, I can guarantee you that.” –Caitlin said. –“As for what to do, you can always go shopping, or maybe go back into the inn and read the book by the fireplace, at least until lunch time.”

“And what about you? What are you going to do today?” –Maddie asked her.
“Oh, I came outside to walk Diana and now I’m going to get ready for the big event that’s going to take place after lunch at the Flintheart property.”

“And what big event is that one?” –Mark asked her.

“Oh, that would be the Fort Augustus Gold Tournament. It’s one of the year’s highlighting events around here, and it will take place this afternoon, right after lunch.” –she said.

“You’re entering it?” –Mark asked her.

“Yes I am.”

“You play golf?! But that’s an old folks sport.” –Zack said.

“Actually Zack, over the last 10 years golf became a sport played by many young people.” –London said. –“I should know, I play it.”

When she said that, everyone around her stood there in silence, looking really serious at her. Noticing it, the heiress did not know if they were looking at her that way because of what she said, or because they did not know how to properly react to it. Even Maddie was like that. Finally, she broke the silence by saying:


“You play golf?!” –Cody asked her, surprised.

“Yeah, I do. I mean, I’m not Tiger Woods, but I can swing a club.” –London answered.

“You never told me that. Where and when did you learn how to play golf?” –Maddie asked her girlfriend, still processing what she had just heard. By now, the blonde should have already been used to finding out stuff she did not know about London, but every time she thought she had finally found out every little secret about her, she managed to surprise her once more.

“Well, you never asked.” –she giggled innocently. –“And I learned when I stayed in Dubai.” –she said. –“Did you really think I only went shopping when I visited that town?”

“To be honest… yes.” –Anastasia hesitated for a bit in saying that. –“Don’t get me wrong, but you don’t seem like the kind of girl who’d appreciate playing golf.” –she told her.

“Well, to tell ya the truth, I’m not really into it, but when you have to attend a private golf tournament instead of your father, you at least need to know how to play a little.” –London admitted.

“Does that mean you’ll be entering the tournament?” –Caitlin asked her. –“Anyone can enter, including tourists.”

“What’s the prize?” –Zack asked. –“If it’s a tournament, then it’s bound to have a prize… a prize in cash!” –he exclaimed, at the same time ideas for what to do with the prize money raced through his mind. He had never played golf in his life, but how hard could it be? After all, unlike his brother, he aced in every sport there was. Why would this one be any different?

“Oh, there’s a prize, yes, but the money will be donated to charity.” –Caitlin explained.

“To charity?!” –Zack exclaimed, a little disappointed.

“Well, I think that’s a wonderful idea.” –Barbara said. –“And I’ll tell you even more; I’m going to enter in this tournament. Who’s with me?”
Quickly, everyone raised a hand. Zack was the last to raise his hand, on account that he was counting on winning the prize for the money, but now that he knew the money would be given to charity, he was not so sure if he really wanted to play golf. As for Caitlin, when she saw that everyone was ready to enter the tournament, she nearly began to jump from joy.

“Excellent! I’ll sign you all up right away.” – the young Scottish girl exclaimed. –“Believe me; you’ll have a blast, all of you.” – she confidently said.

After lunch, and just like Caitlin had told them, the fog lifted and a good thing too, otherwise it would have been really hard to for anyone to play golf. The tournament was to take place in a property about 20 miles from Fort Augustus. In order to get there, one would have to drive there, or catch a bus. The gang offered to give a lift to Caitlin, which she accepted. Her sister Karen was to take her, but because their cook, who usually helped around the inn had asked for the afternoon off, she would only be able to join them around dinner time.

But before they could go, and since they had not bring clothes appropriated to play golf, London decided to treat them all to a trip to one of the boutiques in the village, where they all picked clothes appropriated for what they were about to do, including tam o’ shanters. Needless to say, they all looked right for the part.

On their way there, accompanied by Carey, Felicia and Stephen, Caitlin told them just about everything regarding the tournament, the party that would follow, as well as the dinner offered by the head of the Flintheart clan to the tournament’s participants and their companions. She also told the gang all about the history the Flintheart clan had with the Loch Ness monster’s legend.

“The Flintheart clan is one of the oldest clans to have settled in this region- Its castle was build on top of a hill, turned to the loch. Over the centuries, stories regarding them as the keepers of the secret were passed from generation to generation.”

“Keepers of the secret? What secret?” – Stephen asked her.

“The secret of Loch Ness; namely the secret of the creature’s existence.” – Caitlin answered. –“You see, the tales say that if there is someone who might know if the monster real is someone from the Flintheart clan.”

“So, you mean that if the monster is real, then someone from that family would know?” – Zack asked her, to which she waved her head. – “Why didn’t anyone in the village told us this?! It would have saved us the problem of questioning all those people as to where we might find the monster!”

“For once I agree with you, bro.” – Cody said. – “I haven’t seen any reference to the Flintheart clan in any of the books I bought about Loch Ness. If the clan is so important to the history of the creature’s supposed existence, then why isn’t it documented?”

“Well, mostly because over the centuries they have negated their involvement in the history. You should have been here to see the way the head of the Flintheart clan, Dame Emilia, treated the last journalist who even attempted to talk about this. She practically kicked him out of the property herself, after setting the hounds after him, and I’m not joking on that matter.” – Caitlin told them.

“But why would she do that?” – Barbara asked.

“You have to understand, the Flintheart clan is probably one of the oldest clans in Scotland, and their personal history has been… outshined, by the tales of them having anything to do with the creature.
Everyone around here knows about those old widow’s tales, but most people have decided to not even mentioning them out of respect for the clan’s true history, which is quite rich I might say.” – Caitlin said. –“It’s not hard to imagine how she feels about people only remembering about her family, based on something that could not even be real, instead of all the great historical achievements the clan has gathered over the centuries. But don’t worry, Dame Emilia Flintheart is a true lady and she is very nice to those who deserve it, as she puts it. She’s tough as nails, but has a soft heart, which she shows on the right time. You’ll have the chance to meet her tonight during dinner and see it for yourselves.”

After nearly half an hour, they finally arrived at their destination. The entrance to the property was done across an old iron gate where you could see the name and coat of arms of the property’s owners, the Flinthearts. Over the gate there was a banner advertising the tournament. As they crossed inside, they were surprised by two security guards asked them for their credentials. Caitlin, who was on the backseat showed them the papers bearing their registrations in the tournament, and they let them through.

They were all a little surprised about that, but did not think about it anymore when they all saw why the tournament was to be held there. The grass went as far as the eyes could see. It was green and vigorous, wet from the amount of humidity in the air. The only thing even more beautiful than that gorgeous natural landscape where they would soon play golf in was the old Flintheart castle, with its magnificent and majestic three towers. Looking at it, it was clear the castle had been rebuilt more than once over the centuries, yet, it still retained that medieval look from the days when Scotland was still named Caledonia. If the stones building it could talk, they would certainly had hundreds, if not thousands of tales to tell to those who were there.

Parking the car in an improvised parking lot next to the castle, they then joined the people that had gathered in a set of tents, where the action was taking place. When they agreed to enter the tournament they thought this was just a small event, but it was being covered by just about everything from BBC to Eurosport, not to mention some newspapers and sports bloggers.

“I thought you told us this was just a small event.” –Barbara said, as she looked around.

“I never said that. I said it was the biggest annual event around these parts. It was you who assumed that just because we’re in the middle of nowhere that it would be small.” –Caitlin told her.

“That explains the amount of security.” –Carey said.

“For a second there, I thought people had come here just to see the two of us playing.” –London whispered to Maddie, who giggled.

After grabbing their credentials, there was a small photo session where the 26 participants were all photographed and a small interview was done. Needless to say London and Maddie were the ones who got the most attention, even though one or two journalists from the local newspaper, as well as a reporter for the Times recognized Stephen and proceeded to interview him.

“Mr. Stevenson, could you tell us why you’re here? Are you researching for another book” –one of the reporters asked him.

“I’m afraid that’s not the case. I’m here merely accompanying my son as well as his friends, who will participate in the tournament.” –Stephen answered.

“Do you think your son, or any of his friends, including Miss Tipton or her girlfriend, stand a chance of winning the tournament?”
“To be honest, I don’t know. But, since this is a charity tournament, I do believe that everyone will be winners. Still, I believe that they will try their best and perhaps give the more experienced players a run for their money.”

The organization behind the planning of the tournament seemed to have predicted everything. Some of the participants had brought with them their own golf bags with their own clubs, but for those who did not have them, they provided them with clubs to play with. Zack opened his as soon as it was given to him and tried to figure out what was inside it.

“Well, let’s see… we got balls here, and clubs… and what are these iron clubs?” –he asked to the others.

“Those are irons, Zack.” –London told him. –“You use those to play the ball towards the hole over shorter distances.”

“This is a lot of equipment to play one game.”

“Don’t worry, I’m sure your caddy will help you decide what to use.” –Mark told him. –“Besides, no matter how many rules this game has, the golden rule is just one… play the ball where this one lies.”

To each player was assigned a caddy to carry the golf clubs and to also drive them to the teeing grounds in golf carts. As soon as everyone was ready, the tournament started with the oldest contestants playing first. The gang noticed that with the exception of Caitlin, they were youngest ones there. The rest of the contestants were all men and women with ages between 35 and 70. With 18 holes to go, they had a lot to play.

As the tournament went on, time seemed to slow down to those who were watching it. But not for the players; those were too concentrated on the game to even notice that. When it was finally time for the gang to play, Zack was the first. Following the instructions and recommendations from his caddy, who was a man of his early forties, he played his first ball.

“Remember, empty your mind and keep an eye on the ball.”

“Gotcha.” –Zack waved his head to his caddy. –“Just got to hit the ball.”

After looking where the hole was, he looked down at the ball, squinted his eyes, and took a really deep breath. Clearing his mind, Zack visualized the move, shouted “fore”, swing the club and hit the ball… or so he thought. He kept looking into the air, looking for where the ball might have gone, not realizing he’d missed it. It was only when Cody called him to tell him the ball was still in the tee that he found out he’d missed the shot.

“You missed the shot, Zack!” –Cody yelled at his twin.

“What?!” –Zack exclaimed, looking down and seeing the ball still on the tee. –“Oh, come on!!!” –he said, as he swung the club once more, and failing, miserably. It took him another five shots before he finally hit the ball, sending it flying over the green.

“Try to relax. The ball can feel your stress.” –Zack’s caddy told him.

“Thanks for the tip.” –Zack as he kept exhaling loudly, still a little frustrated for not having been able
to hit the ball on the first try. “Well, if I’m having trouble playing this game, then Cody won’t be able to hit the ball, even if the fate of Mankind depends on it.” –he thought to himself, smirking.

Unfortunately, Zack could not be more wrong about it. When he played his first ball, Cody was a natural at it. Picking a number 2 club, he tried to relax before concentrating on what he was going to do.

“Now, how did that old spiel go? Oh yeah… the tee is used to support the ball.” –he thought to himself, setting the tee on the grass and placing the ball on top of it. –“The club is held loosely between the index and the fourth finger of the right hand. Then you place the left hand palm open facing away, then slide the right hand below the left. Now place the thumb, and close it, while moving the index finger over the thumb.” –Cody repeated to himself, as he did the movements with his hands, adjusting himself to take the shot.

“Fore!” –he shouted.

Swinging the club, he hit the ball, launching it into the air, landing just a couple of meters from the hole. This shot was so good that almost everyone started to applaud Cody.

“I can’t believe it!” –Zack thought to himself. –“How come he managed to do that shot perfectly, while it took me five strikes to do it?!”

“Now what do you know? It really paid off reading that old book about golf.” –Cody mused to himself, satisfied with his play.

“Lucky shot, that’s all that it was. I bet that he won’t be able to pull that stunt again.” –Zack told himself. There was no way his smart twin brother, who was a loser at just about any sport would be a wiz when it came to playing golf, a game, where Zack was not acing in.

But once more, Zack was wrong about it. As the tournament went on, Cody kept playing like an ace. The one who proved also to be an ace was Caitlin. She was quite good for a girl her age and the way she played showed that. But, those two were not the only ones to score big on the tournament, and as it went on, the Tipton gang, one way or another showed the other players, as well as everyone else who came to watch the tournament, that there was more than one way to play golf.

For example, on hole number 3, in order to play a putt, Anastasia decided that the best way to get a good shot at the ball was to perform the splits. And on hole number 6, Max decided to play blindfolded. London and Maddie also had their fifteen minutes of fame when playing on hole 9, where they London helped Maddie, by holding the club over hands, and swinging it for a magnificent shot. Still, none of those managed to beat what Zack did on hole 12, where after failing a putt he grabbed the ball threw it into the air and hit it with the club as if he was playing baseball, sending the ball into a hook, landing on a sand trap.

“Oh, come on!!! That ball has to be cursed!” –he yelled, as he tossed his club to the side in anger.

“Try to calm down, sweetie. Remember, anger is your worst enemy on this game.” –Carey warned him from the middle of the crowd.

“Zack’s really having a hard time, isn’t he?” –London whispered to Maddie’s ear.

“Definitely.” –Maddie giggled. –“He’s not used to having this kind of difficulties when playing a sport. Still, I feel sorry for him, right now.”

“Don’t be, it’ll teach him not to be so cocky about being the best in sports.” –London told her.
“Just like the time when your dad lost all his fortune, and you ended up having to live with me and my family, which helped you realizing the true value of friendship and that money shouldn’t be spent like crazy just because you have it?” – Maddie teased her.

“Yep, pretty much like that.” – London said, smiling.

As the sun went down, and its last rays of light disappeared behind the mountains, the tournament reached its end, when they got to hole 18. Counting the points, all members of the gang ended up on the last places of the scoreboard, which did not surprise them, for they had been playing against older players. Only Caitlin had had a score that placed among the top 10, an 8th place, which granted her the honour of going up on the podium. As for the scores among the members of the Tipton gang Cody was the best, while Zack had had the worst score, and that made him feel absolutely down on his luck. Trying to cheer him up, his brother gave him a pat on the back.

“Come on, don’t sulk like that.” – Cody told him.

“Easy for you to say...” – Zack sighed. – “It wasn’t you who made a fool of yourself in front of everyone.”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. Look at me, I suck terribly at sports.” – Cody said truthfully. He knew his brother was better at sports than he would ever be, and he had no shame admitting it. Cody really believed he had had luck, and nothing more than that.

“Yeah, Zack, it’s not one game that’s going to spoil your reputation.” – Maddie told him, as she approached and sat right next to him. – “So Cody managed to score higher than you in a sport, big deal. You still hold the title of king of sports.”

Maddie always knew what to say to cheer up Zack. That was why he cherished their friendship and had come to see her not only as his friend, but as a big sister, when looking for advice or a shoulder to cry on. And she was right, what was one game? Cody still sucked at every other sport, and when compared to him when it came to skating, his twin would need to practice for decades before even achieving his natural talent.

“You really think so?”

“I know so, silly.” – Maddie said, giving him a well deserved hug. – “Plus, you can’t be all gloomy and grumpy during dinner. That’s not very sporting and you know it.”

“And that’s why we should all celebrate with a drink.” – London said, as she showed up with the adults, carrying a tray with orange and lemon juice glasses. – “We really should toast to this crazy afternoon.” – she smiled at them, as she gave a glass to every member of the gang, starting with Zack, trying to also cheer him up a little.

“Thanks, London.” – he chuckled. – “And, yeah, let’s toast to it! To a crazy and different afternoon, and may we have many more like these throughout this voyage!” – Zack exclaimed, raising his glass, to which everyone else did the same.

Just like Caitlin had promised them, it had been a really fun day, and unknown to them, before the night ended, that really fun day would become a truly unforgettable one.
The tournament had come to an end, but the celebrations had just begun inside the castle hall, where the contestants and everyone else that attended it were starting to enjoy themselves. When entering it, the people noticed the enormous hall had robust walls copycatting the castle’s outward structure, with tartan hanging on them. The domed ceiling looked more modern and from it, hanged several candelabras which filled the place with an almost mysterious light. The band that was playing was all wearing clothes from the 13th and 14th century, as well as playing with instruments from that time. All of that was quite medieval, if one looked at it from the right perspective.

Everyone was just having a blast, especially Zack who had already forgotten about what he had called a humiliating defeat to his brother, by going over to the buffet. This one was separated into four main sections. On one end they had fast food dishes like hamburgers, pizzas, sandwiches, hot dogs, French fries, chicken wings and legs, spring rolls. On another, they had a salad bar. They also had a hot foods bar, where they were serving roast beef, pork and lamb chops, haggis, barbecued stakes, meatloaf, among many other things. And finally, there was a section where they had some exotic or foreigner dishes like Norwegian salmon, boiled quail eggs, braised pineapple stuffed with peanuts and chestnuts, caviar, sushi, paella, Swedish meatballs, among many other dishes. There was also a bar where they were serving milk, orange, mango, papaya and pineapple juice, ice tea, champagne and of course, beer.

Losing no time, he piled up as many slices of pizza and hamburgers as he could on his plate, before taking it to the table and head back for another plate of goodies. He was already on his fifth plate, when Max decided to call his attention.

“Zack, don’t you think you this is too much just for you?”

“Well, that plate over there is for you, not me.” –he pointed it out to a plate filled with chicken wings and French fries. –“Besides, if I wait too long, everyone will get the tastiest things, and I won’t be able to try them.”

That last statement made Max roll her eyes.

“You’re speaking as if you never seen a buffet in your life.” –Max told him, clearly annoyed. –“We’ve been to bigger buffets than this one, and you never acted like that.”

“Leave him be, Max. His pride’s been hurt. If stuffing himself with food is his way to deal with that pain, then let him.” –Cody told her, as he went back to get another plate of food.

“Yeah, besides, he’s not going to eat all of this on his own, even if he wants to.” –Barbara said. –“We’ll just give him a hand when he’s not looking.” –she giggled.

Not far from their table, the adults were enjoying themselves in a casual conversation with some old golfers, who kept telling them stories about their younger years in the green,

“You see, golf itself might seem hard, but it’s actually quite simple. You just need to know what to do when the time is right.” –the oldest golfer told them.

“And when is the right time?” –Carey asked him

“Why, the right time is the right time.” –he joked about it, while Carey looked at him slightly confused with his answer. –“But perhaps it will be easier for you to understand, if I explain it to you from another perspective. For example, a putt is the simplest of all plays. The ball must simply go
from here, to here.” –he said, mimicking the ball’s movement with his hands. –“Of course, amateur players all think that it’s just a matter of the wrist, but a professional golfer leaves nothing to chance. We consider all the elements like the wind velocity, the humidity, rotation of the Earth, the time of day, temperature, lay of the land, trajectory angle, longitude, latitude and a few mental calculations on the strength that must be used to play the ball.”

“That seems complicated.” –Felicia said.

“Not at all, mam, not at all.” –the youngest of the group said. –“What he’s saying might sound complicated, but it’s one of the easiest things in the world. It’s a matter of practicing. And I’m sure a pretty lady such as you would do magnificently on the green.”

“Why thank you.” –Felicia said, then turning to Carey and whispering to her –“Is it me, or is this old geezer trying to put the moves on me.”

“I don’t know, but you know how men are. They can’t resist a pretty woman.” –Carey whispered back, with both of them laughing about it.

The party had been going for two hours, when the music suddenly died and the sound of trumpets was heard, announcing the arrival of someone important to the party. That someone was a slim, yet short woman, Dame Emilia Flintheart. When entering the great hall, she was wearing a female version of the ever famous traditional Scottish costume, the kilt bearing the colours of her clan’s tartan. On her left hand she was holding a peculiar staff. This one had a metallic tip which echoed every time it touched the floor, but its most distinctive feature was its top. The top was a silver metallic sphere with a magnificent blue and white cross embedded in it, St. Andrew’s cross; Still, Emilia Flintheart was the kind of woman that did not need any fancy clothes to look imposing. Even if she was not very tall, her figure brimmed with authority. She appeared to be a woman of her late 60’s or early 70’s, although you would only assume this because of her white short hair. If it was not for her hair, one would say she was in her early 50’s. Her face looked almost as if it had been chiselled, and the very few wrinkles she had hardly revealed her true age. Still, her most distinct feature was her eyes; she had the eyes of a person who had seen the best and the worst of mankind during her lifetime, and that clearly reflected not only one her eyes, but also her face, a most austere, yet compassionate face.

Climbing on to the stage, she was then handled a microphone by one of the stage assistants. Clearing her voice she then said:

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I take it that you’re enjoying the festivities.” –she began, what was going to be quite the speech. –“And that is good. That would be the wish of my late husband, as it is mine. Now, those of you who know me know that I’m not the biggest fan of golf; my late husband was the one who played it and lived for it. You could say he spent more time in the green than inside this castle. But even so, like him I recognise its importance and the way it helped to promote the Scottish culture all over the world. That is why he created this tournament as a way to show that golf is for everyone and should be played by people of every age, and today we’ve all seen that happening. And I’m sure that if my late husband was still with us he would agree with me that once more this tournament showed exactly that. And now, let us proceed with the festivities, for let’s be honest, nobody likes to hear an old hag like me talking, when there are other things that are so much more interesting to do. Enjoy yourselves.” –Dame Flintheart said, as everyone in the great hall applauded her speech.

After that short yet beautiful speech, the party went on without any sort of trouble, with everyone socializing. Unfortunately, even the best parties always have their fair share of more explosive and unexpected episodes, and the most unexpected and rather unpleasant episode of that evening was to
happen with London and Maddie.

The girls were all having fun on the dance floor, dancing the waltz, along with several other couples, when one of the servants with a tray of champagne glasses accidentally bumped into London and spilled the tray’s content on top of an old gentleman who was seated on a nearby table, smoking a cigar, soaking him wet. When this happened, the servant immediately apologised for the mishapen, but the man was not mad just at him, he was at London. Jumping out of his chair, he practically shoved the servant aside and then made his way to where the girls we’re still dancing, and had not even noticed what happened.

“Hey, you two!!!” –he shouted as he aggressively grabbed London by the arm.

“Ouch! Hey what gives?! What was that for?!?” –London shouted, as she tried to force him to let go of her.

“Do you American scum have any idea of what you just did?!” –the man shouted. –“Thanks to you, that idiot over there spilled champagne all over me! Because of you, my great-great-grandfather’s kilt is ruined!” –he kept shouting, as he gripped her upper arm even tighter.

“Sorry, but that’s not an excuse to grab me like that!” –the heiress shouted at him.

“Take your paws away from my girlfriend, you brute!!!” –Maddie shouted at him, forcing him to let go of her. She then, rubbed London’s sore arm. –“It was an accident, and besides, why are you blaming us if he was the one who spilled the drinks on you?!”

The yells and shouts alerted the remaining Tipton gang, as well as their parents, who quickly joined them, trying to figure out what was going on.

“Look, if it’s about the cleaning bill, I’ll be happy to send it to be clean up.” –London told him, upset about the way the man’s reaction to that incident.

“No, it’s not just about that! You Americans carpet munchers are defiling this party with your presence. Its bad enough they let you play in the same green as everyone else, but letting everyone know what you do when you’re alone, that is utterly disgusting!”

“What do you mean by that?! We were dancing like everyone else! What’s so disgusting about that, you bastard?!!” –Maddie shot at him, already with her nerves and patience being tested.

“Listen, mister, you better watch your tongue or you’re gonna regret it!” –Anastasia yelled at him.

“Now, calm down, there’s no reason for any of this! –Felicia tried to calm her daughter down.”

“She’s right. We’re all civilized people here. There’s no need for that kind of language to be used.” –Stephen said, trying to calm down everyone.

“There’s nothing civilized about having two women liking each other! Their kind should be gassed up just like they did with the Jews in Auschwitz!!! Hitler had the right idea, and if it was up to me, they would be but the first ones on a long line of filth that should be exterminated for the sake of humanity!!!”

Hearing that remark, Zack just wanted to punch that old geezer in the face, but London was quicker than him. Not liking where that conversation was going, she slapped the man as hard as she could on the face, leaving him shocked and almost speechless. She was feeling repulsed and disgusted by what he had just said, and only regretted to have slapped him, instead of punching him on the face or kicking him in between the legs.
“OUR KIND?! OUR KIND?! OUR KIND?!?! Listen, buddy, I don’t care who you are, but you better take back what you just said, or I will...”

“YOU’LL WHAT, HUH?!” –he said. That last remark of London had left him seeing red.

“I’LL MAKE YOUR LIFE INTO A LIVING HELL! I’LL HIRE AN ARMY OF LAWYERS THAT WILL SUE YOU FOR EVERY PENNY YOU GOT, AND MAKE AN EXAMPLE OUT OF YOU TO EVERYONE WHO DARES TO MOCK, RIDICULE, INSULT, ABUSE, OFFEND OR HURT A GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL OR TRANSSEXUAL PERSON, YOU FUCKING RACIST PIG!!!” –London yelled at him; the hate and disgust she was feeling about him heard on every syllable.

“ENOUGH!!!!!!!” –a yell was heard, a woman’s yell.

Upon hearing that yell, everyone stopped talking and the music stopped. An uncomfortable veil of silence fell down upon the room, leaving everyone without knowing what to do or say next. The people nearest to that commotion all stepped away, creating a path to the woman who yelled, Dame Flintheart. Approaching them, her footsteps echoed the now silent hall.

“That is quite enough!” –she said, looking at the two arguing parties.

“I absolutely agree, madam. These two...”

“I meant that for you, MacEwan!” –she yelled at him.

“B-But your ladyship, what happened was...” –he stuttered.

“I saw what happened, and as I see it, none of the young ladies had any direct fault on it.” –Dame Flintheart said with a stern, yet calm voice. –“And I don’t see it why you should use that kind of language towards my guests.”

“But they insulted me, your ladyship!”

“BY DOING WHAT?! By calling you a racist pig, which is the very thing you are?!” –she asked him, by giving him a glare that could have easily melted an iceberg. And before he could reply, she went on: “May I remind you that you are a guest in my house, and as such, you will either behave yourself according to it, or leave! Now, apologize to these young ladies, this instant.”

“But...”

“YOU WILL APOLOGIZE TO THEM, IMMEDIATELY, OR I’LL BE FORCED TO CALL SECURITY AND ORDER THEM TO EXPEL YOU OUT OF MY PROPERTY.” –she told him sternly. The truth was that she was as repulsed by the man’s action as the girls and the remaining Tipton gang, and only wanted a good excuse to kick him out of the party. –“DON’T TEST ME, HAROLD MACewan, BECAUSE YOU KNOW DARN WELL THAT I’LL DO WHAT I SAY!”

Gulping hard and feeling more insulted and vexed than ever, he practically gnarled before saying:

“I’m sorry, but I cannot in good conscience apologize to them, because I do not regret a single word I said to them.” –He said –“No need to call security, madam, I know the way out.”

And with that he began to walk away, pushing everyone in front of him to the side, as he kept mumbling something to himself. Whatever he was mumbling about, it was not something pretty.
“Well, now that he is gone, I think the party can continue.” –she said, signalling the band, who resumed playing. Approaching London and Maddie, she smiled and asked. –“Are you two alright?”

“Yes, madam, we are.” –Maddie said, as she kept rubbing London’s sore arm. –“Forgive us for what happened. It wasn’t our intention to cause all this.”

“You have nothing to apologize for, my dear.” –she told them. –“I would have dealt with him the same way you two did. It is I who should ask you for your forgiveness for any kind of trouble he might have caused you.”

“It is quite alright. We’re used to these situations.” –London replied sincerely.

“Just because you’re used to, doesn’t mean you should like it, London.” –Cody told her.

“He really had no reason to have said the atrocities he did to you two.” –Max agreed.

“Your friends are right.” –Dame Flintheart said. –“He should have not told you what he did, and I feel partly responsible for what happened. I can still see you’re a little disturbed, which is why I extend you the invitation to come with me to a more private location, where you can calm down and relax for a little.”

“Thank you, but we don’t want to impose ourselves.” –London told her

“No, no, I must insist. It’s the very least I can do, after the way you were treated by that most unpleasant individual.” –she tenderly smiled at them.

“Well, if you insist, we accept it, your ladyship.” –Maddie smiled.

Excusing themselves, they followed Dame Flintheart. Following her, she took them to the library where they would continue their conversation. Entering it, they all felt the opulence this conveyed to those who entered in it. The room had two floors and the bookcases were filled with books of all sorts, some of them were quite old and fragile, while others looked brand new. The imposing fireplace burned steadily, filling the room with the scent of burning wood, oak wood to be more precise. The ceiling was decorated with vivid hunting pictures and adorned with numerous crests of all the families that belonged to the Flintheart clan. On the floor there was an enormous Arabian carpet, like the ones people usually saw on the city of Istanbul, Turkey, lying before the fireplace and placed on it were four majestic chairs of red Corinthian leather, two red sofas and a table, where a beautifully black and white ivory chess board, decorated with gold and silver trimming, rested without anyone to play it. This last one caught the eye of London, who made the mental note to get one even more beautiful and give it to Maddie for Christmas.

“Please, take a seat.” –she said, as London and Maddie sat on one of the sofas.

Behind the two sets of sofas there was a desk that had numerous objects on it; a golden metallic globe, a box of ancient pens, and a couple of books piled high and a little dusty, probably because no one had picked them up and read them for quite a while. Right next to the Earth’s globe, a magnificent piece of wood and black iron that had the continents sculpted in a manner that looked almost real there was also a mini-bar with three crystal bottles filled with various beverages. Reaching for it, Dame Flintheart grabbed a glass and poured herself a drink.

“Like I said before, I must congratulate you on the way you both dealt with that unfortunate situation back there.” –Dame Flintheart said.

“Thank you, madam.” –London said.
“And at the same time, I must apologize for what happened.” –the old woman sighed.

“Oh, no, it’s we who should apologize for what happened.” –Maddie said, truthfully.

“And why should you do such a thing?” –Dame Flintheart said, as she sat on the opposite sofa. –“That old Harold MacEwan is a philistine with a tongue worthy of rattlesnake, and a soul and heart of a swine. For years I’ve wanted to give him the boot, and thanks to you girls, I’ve finally done it.” –she said, sipping her drink. –“He believes that because others are not like him that they should be locked away or worse. I don’t know why he was invited in the first place. But let’s not talk about him anymore, let’s talk about you two. Like I said before, I admire your guts, and I would like to know you a little more.

As the talk with Dame Flintheart continued, at the party, the rest of the gang did their best to forget what happened and enjoy the rest of the evening. But this was easier said than done for some of them, mainly Zack and Cody, but mostly Zack. After that scene, the twin was so pissed with what he had seen that he had lost his appetite and decided to go for a walk outside, hoping for his mood to improve a little. Max felt that she should accompany him, but decided not to. He was furious about what had happened, but mostly, he was furious with himself, because he could not do a thing to protect his best girl friend.

The first thing he noticed when opening the doors to go outside was that the temperature, it was practically freezing outside. That and the fact the party was happening inside explained why there was almost nobody outside. The only people that he noticed were a pair of waiters taking a smoking break, a young couple flirting with each other, and a couple of security guards followed by German shepherds patrolling the grounds. He kept walking, kicking off the grass beneath his feet, until he reached a bench. Without realizing it, he ended up in a viewpoint. From there you could see the loch, with the Moon reflected on it. Sating on the bench, he took a deep breath and then expelled the air from his lungs, pretending he was a dragon. Ever since he was a little kid he loved doing that, it gave him the feeling that he was an unstoppable magical creature.

He was so into it, he failed to notice the approaching footsteps of his brother, who followed him to see if he was alright. In his hands he was holding a huge sundae with three kinds of toppings, melted chocolate, caramel sprinkles and cherries, not to mention whipped cream. Only when he touched his brother’s shoulder, did he realize he was not alone.

“You skipped your dessert.” –Cody told him.

“I lost my appetite. Besides, isn’t it a little too cold for ice cream?” –Zack pointed it out.

“A little, but you’re used to eating entire tubs of ice cream during winter, so I know you can handle this bad boy here.” –Cody said, as he sat next to his brother and handed him a spoon. –“Come on, I know you want to try it, so dig in.”

“You do realize that sharing this ice cream with you looks kinda gay don’t you?” –Zack laughed, making Cody roll his eyes.

“Only you and that twisted mind of yours, would even remember that.” –Cody told him, as he took a bite of the sundae. –“We’re brothers, not boyfriends.”

“That doesn’t mean anything. Have you ever read Supernatural fan fiction? I have, and Max is obsessed with some of the stories where Dean and Sam end up falling in love with each other. Can you believe that?” –Zack laughed,
“And you’re thinking that just because people have written those stories where two fictional characters, who happen to be brothers, fall in love with each other, that the fact of us being here sharing this sundae means that we’re gay?” –Cody chuckled. –“Sometimes I wished I would understand how your brain works, and how did you reached such a crazy and ridiculous idea.”

“Don’t blame me, blame society and my girlfriend for making me hear her read all those stories out loud.” –Zack told him, as he scooped another bite of ice cream. –“Don’t tell me Barbara doesn’t force you to read silly fan fiction?”

“Not really, she and I like to debate things like ancient cultures, or if the dinosaurs were actually warm-blooded or cold-blooded animals, that sort of thing.”

“You’re telling me that you spend all your time with her discussing science and History? Don’t you do any smooching?”

“Of course we do, but that’s not what we’re talking about here.”

“Can’t you just act like a kid your age that’s in love with a girl, instead of acting like you’re Tolkien or Hawkins who spent their lives discussing things that no one else cared?” –Zack asked.

Hearing this, Cody started laughing like crazy.

“Now that... (laughs)... is one of the reasons... (laughs)... I put up with you. You always know... (laughs)... what to say... (laughs)... Even if it’s the dumbest thing in the world.” –he kept laughing.

“And I thought it was because of my good looks.” –Zack shot at his twin brother.

“We both have the same face, remember? I don’t need you around to know how good looking I am, I just need to look at myself in the mirror.” –Cody shot back at Zack, proving he also knew how to play that game.

“See?! That’s what I mean! You need to be a little more spontaneous, like me. I bet your girlfriend would actually thank you for that.” –Zack told him.

“And maybe your girlfriend would also thank you if you started to behave a little bit more seriously, on the proper occasions of course.” –Cody advised him.

“Maybe... I’ll think about it.” –Zack sighed.

“You really needed a laugh, after what happened back there, didn’t you?”

“Hell yeah... you don’t even imagine what I wanted to do to that bastard. I swear, I was ready to jump on him and punch his saggy old face until all his teeth were broken.” –Zack sighed. –“Only London was quicker than me. And I have to say, I loved seeing her slap him on the face. Still, I think she should have also kicked him in the nuts... I would have done that, for what he called them.”

“Don’t sweat over it. We both know that you’re willing to protect the two of them from just about anyone who says bad things about them. But they’re older than us and they know what they’re up against. You don’t need to impress anyone, bro, especially not Maddie. She knows you’ll always be there for her and London.”

“What makes you think I was trying to impress her?”

“Oh, come on, you’re my twin, I know you like I know myself.” –Cody chuckled. –“But maybe I chose the wrong expression. You were not trying to impress her, but instead, protecting her. Ever
since you met her, you’ve been trying to impress her, and that evolved into a protective instinct. It’s in you, and that’s not a bad thing, after all, you said it yourself once that you consider her and London as sisters from another mother, so it’s only natural.” –he said.

“Maybe, you’re right.” –Zack sighed in acceptance. –“But don’t say a word about this to anyone. I’ve got a reputation to keep.”

The conversation went on for what looked like hours, even if only a few minutes went by really. It was so rare for the Martin twins to have that kind of honest conversation between them, even if they spent most of their time together. Some would even say that it was a once in a life time thing, like watching a total solar eclipse or the migration of the Monarch Butterflies.

“You know what I just remembered? We should’ve brought the mini-subs to explore the loch and find the creature. Don’t ask me how we would have brought them, but knowing London like we do, she would have make is happen, somehow.” –Zack chuckled. –“She always finds a way, always.”

“You’re right; she always finds a way to.” –Cody asserted.

“Good evening, laddies!” –he voice was heard.

Turning their heads around, the twins immediately recognized the figure that was approaching them, Rufus. Smiling, they both waved him back.

“I didn’t know you had come.” –Zack said.

“A’ve been around here for a while nou. In all these years, A’ve never missed a party given by the Flinthearts.” –Rufus told them. –“A see that even ye cannot escape the enchantment of the loch, like me.”

“I do believe you’re right, Mr. Macleod. This loch seems to have a kind of power that attracts people to it.” –Cody said.

“Ah, A take it someone has told ye about the stories regarding the Flintheart clan to the creature, aye?” –Rufus asked them.

“Yeah, we have. Caitlin told us about it.” –Zack said.

“But did the young lass told ye about the fact that people believe that the creature’s lair is located beneath this castle and that the entrance to it is hidden somewhere in the castle.”


“According to one of the legends, aye.” –Rufus asserted with his head.

“Well, what are we waiting for?! Come on!” –Zack exclaimed pulled his brother by the arm and dragged him back to the castle. –“Thanks for telling us that! Believe me when I say that tonight we’re going to find that creature and prove its existence!” –he kept saying, absolutely mesmerized by the possibility of finding the monster.

“Zack, stop!” –Cody asked him, as his brother kept pulling him by the arm.

“No time for small talk, Cody! We’ve got to find that secret passage to the Loch Ness monster’s lair!” –Zack kept talking. As they both walked back to the castle, Rufus MacLeod just smiled.
revealing herself to be quite the character. They were surprised, to say the least, with her view of the world and other subjects. They had expected her to be quite severe regarding themes like lesbianism, homosexuality and such, but instead, Emilia Flintheart revealed herself to be quite proactive regarding those movements.

“I do believe that a woman should never, ever in their life, depend on a man. Men believe themselves to be the stronger sex, while we women are regarded by them as the weaker sex, but let me tell you something.” –she said, as she sipped her drink. –“Women are the ones who gave birth. There’s not greater joy and physical pain than that one, and that’s a pain that men will never understand, because the pain from the act of giving birth is the equivalent to having all the bones in your body broken several times at the same time. Now, you two are too young to know this, but I’ve had seven children, and I know what I’m talking about. Men are sissies... they break an arm or a leg, and they feel like the world is coming to an end, but not us.”

“That is quite profound, your ladyship.” –Maddie said.

“Thank you, dear. I may have been raised in an almost Victorian way, but I’ve inherited what some would say is a very particular trait of the women from my clan, and that is the habit of saying what we really feel about a particular subject.” –she admitted. Looking at them, she noticed that London looked a little spaced out. –“Dear, are you okay?” –she asked the heiress

“Oh, I’m sorry, your ladyship.” –she apologized. –“I was just admiring your library. It’s really beautiful.”

“Why, thank you. I take much pride in it. While my late husband spent his free time practicing and perfecting his golf game, I on the other hand spent mine furbishing this library, by collecting every book I felt a proper library should have.” –she said. As she talked, the girls noticed her eyes glimmering with enthusiasm. They could see she really loved that place and every book it contained. –“That’s one of the main reasons why I’ve acquired several first editions of the same book. But please, feel free to check it for yourself.”

“Thank you.” –London said, as she grabbed Maddie by the hand and got up. –“Come on, Maddie. I know you’re also eager to check it out.” –she whispered the last part.

“I’m afraid I cannot stay and keep you company, but I must return to the party. Feel free to stay here for as long as you want.”

“Thank you, but we’ll try to be quiet brief, your ladyship. Our friends are probably wondering what’s taking us so long to go back.” –Maddie said.

“I understand. But if you change your mind, stay for as long as you want to.”

The girls were telling the truth when they said they were going to be quick, but each book they saw on the shelves was even better than the previous one. The girls were both mesmerized by the amount of valuable books there, without any kind of protection that prevent one from reaching it and read it. Passing the fingers by the bookshelves they quickly found a book that interested them both. In its back, one would read “Gulliver’s Travels by Jonathan Swift. The book was quite ancient, probably from the end of the 19th century given its state of conservation, and the quality of the binding. Running their fingers by it, they felt sort of a jolt that sent shivers up their necks.

“Whoa, that you felt that too?” –Maddie asked London, as she kept caressing the book’s binding.

“I did.” –London exclaimed, with a big smile on her face. –“It felt sorta like a mind orgasm... or something of the kind. It felt good.”
“I had a teacher in middle school that once told me that if this happened when we touched a book, than it meant that was really good.” –Maddie chuckled. –“What do you say we read a little excerpt?”

“I say we do it.” –London smiled at her. –“I’ll start it.” –she said, as she gently opened the book, not to damage it. –“My father had a small estate in Nottinghamshire: I was the third of five sons. He sent me to Emanuel College in Cambridge at fourteen years old, where I resided three years, and applied myself close to my studies; but the charge of maintaining me, although I had a very scanty allowance, being too great for a narrow fortune, I was bound apprentice to Mr. James Bates, an eminent surgeon in London, with whom I continued four years. My father now and then sending me small sums of money, I laid them out in learning navigation, and other parts of the mathematics, useful to those who intend to travel, as I always believed it would be, some time or other, my fortune to do. When I left Mr. Bates, I went down to my father: where, by the assistance of him and my uncle John, and some other relations, I got forty pounds, and a promise of thirty pounds a year to maintain me at Leyden: there I studied physic two years and seven months, knowing it would be useful in long voyages.”

“Soon after my return from Leyden, I was recommended by my good master, Mr. Bates, to be surgeon to the Swallow, Captain Abraham Pannel, commander; with whom I continued three years and a half, making a voyage or two into the Levant, and some other parts. When I came back I resolved to settle in London; to which Mr. Bates, my master, encouraged me, and by him I was recommended to several patients. I took part of a small house in the Old Jewry; and being advised to alter my condition, I married Mrs. Mary Burton, second daughter to Mr. Edmund Burton, hosier, in Newgate-street, with whom I received four hundred pounds for a portion.” –Maddie went on.

The girls read a couple more random paragraphs, getting all jolted about the story in the book. Maddie had already seen a couple of adaptations of the book before, but she had never had the opportunity to read it. As for London, she neither did one nor the other. She was finding it interesting, to say the least. One more book she would have to read from cover to cover.

“We better put it back where it was, or otherwise we won’t be able to let it go until we finish it.” –Maddie said.

“You’re right...” –London sighed. –“Once we get back to the ship, we’re going to buy it and we’re going to read it in one night, okay?” –she said, as she placed the book back where it was. Placing it on its place she noticed something that should not be there in the first place, given the history of the Flintheart clan and Dame Emilia Flintheart opinion regarding it... a book about the Loch Ness monster. –“Hold on, what is this?”

“What it is what, London?”

“This, Maddie.” –she pointed out the book in question. –“Don’t you think it’s a little strange for this book to be here, given what Caitlin told us about the clan and what

“I’ll admit it’s a little strange, but where are you going with that?”

“Well, what if it’s actually a switch that opens a hidden passageway? I read that these old castles are filled with them.” –London answered.

“Oh, London, you’ve also been reading too many detective novels, or watching too many detective films.” –Maddie chuckled after hearing London’s answer. –“Why would you even ponder such a thing?”

“Well, for once why would you have a book about something that you don’t want to even hear about? Plus, this is the only book whose cover and binding looks brand new in this shelf, and it
doesn’t seem to have any dust, while the others are a little dusty.” –London said, as she examined the book in question up-close. –“And what do you know? Take a look at this... it’s not even a real book.”

Puzzled, Maddie crouched next to London and also examined the tome in question. To her surprise, she found out that her girlfriend was right, the book was not really a book, but instead a block of wood shaped like a book, which had been disguised to look like one.

“O-kay, now I’m really starting to wonder if you’re right about what you’re saying.” –Maddie said, turning to face London. –“But, is it really a switch? And if so, how do you suppose it works? Opening it can’t be easy, or otherwise someone unfamiliar with it could activate it by accident, right?”

“I don’t know. But hidden passageways and rooms should be easy to access, if needed. Moseby once told me my dad’s office in New York has a panic room, which can be accessed by pushing a statue that’s on top of his desk, so maybe it will be the same principle; we push it.” –London said.

Gulping, Maddie pondered it for a couple of moments, before asserting it with her head. Pushing it, the book did not move an inch. But then, it occurred to her that instead of pushing it, maybe they should pull it. Once more, she placed her hand over it, and this time she pulled. As soon as she began pulling it, a noise was heard. And this noise was a most peculiar noise, a mechanical noise, like the kind one hears when clogs begin to move. Then, a few seconds later, another sound was heard, forcing the two girls to turn around their heads. To their amazement and surprise, the fireplace began to slide right, revealing a dark hole on the wall. Climbing down from where they were, they approached the mysterious hole. Looking inside, they saw that the hole was actually the entrance to a tunnel that went down.

“London, I’ll never, ever again doubt you. Would you look at this?” –Maddie said, as she examined the tunnel’s entrance, still excited by their discovery. –“I just hope nobody heard it when the fireplace slid out of its place.” –she practically whispered, fearing what might happen if someone had heard it.

“I don’t think they have with the party going on.” –London said, resting her. –“What do you say we see where this tunnel goes? It has to go somewhere; after all, it’s got a staircase. Shall we investigate it?”

“Hold your ponies, Princess. I think we’re going to need help for this one.” –Maddie declared. –“I’m going to text the others so they can see this. Besides, there’s safety in numbers.” –she said, as she picked her cell phone and texted them a message.

While this happened, Zack and Cody were searching for the hidden entrance to Nessie’s lair, which was likely to not even exist in the first place, as Cody kept pointing out to his brother. They’d been able to give the slip to a couple of security guards that were guarding the doors to the part of the castle where they were searching. Years of evading Marion Moseby’s preying eyes had paid off, with them now being able to sneak in to most places that were guarded.

After hearing Rufus telling them about that hidden entrance, Zack had made his mission to find it until the end of the night, despite all of Cody’s warnings of that being a wild goose chase.

“I keep telling you, this is just one big wild goose chase.”

“And I keep telling ya that it isn’t! Why can’t you just accept that Rufus might be right about this?” –he asked him, as he inspected the hallway’s walls, in search of a hidden switch or something else that
would trigger a hidden passage’s entrance.

“Because he’s a snake oil salesman, Zack! And like him, there are a dozen or more around these parts, telling tales of the Loch Ness monster.” –he rattled. –“I never said this in front of him or any of you, but the guy’s a swindler and a liar!”

“Then why are you here with me?”

“Because you’re my brother and because I don’t want you to get into trouble if you get caught.” –Cody told him, as he put his hands over his brother’s shoulders and looked him in the eyes. –“Look, stop for a second and answer me truthfully. If there was a hidden passage that would really take you to Nessie’s hidden lair, don’t you think people would have found it centuries ago?”

“Well.... maybe, but then again, what if they found it and then decided to hide it from everybody else? Have you thought about that hypothesis?” –Zack asked his brother.

“Well I... hold on, I got a text.” –Cody said, as he checked his cell phone.

“So did I... it’s from Maddie.” –Zack said

“Mine too... it says: “Big discovery. Come to the library now. But don’t say anything to anyone else.” –“Cody read out loud.

“Maybe they found what we’ve been looking for!” –Zack exclaimed.

“Highly doubt it... but we won’t know until we get there.” –Cody said. –“Now, all we have to do is find our way to the library.”
The Loch Ness Monsters

It took the twins a little longer than they imagined finding the library, but after fifteen minutes of walking up and down corridors and stairs, opening every door they felt like it could be the door to the library, they finally found it. When they arrived, the rest of the gang was already there, along with Caitlin, examining what London and Maddie had discovered.

Seeing that, Zack immediately screamed:

“I told you so! I told you so!” –he kept screaming to Cody. –“Who’s the smart one now, huh?”

“Uh, boys, what are you talking about?” –Barbara asked them.

“Oh, your boyfriend was saying that there weren’t any secret or hidden passageways that lead to the Loch Ness monster’s lair... and if that isn’t one, then my name is George Washington.” –he smirked at Cody, who still couldn’t believe his eyes.

“We don’t know if this is a passageway to the Loch Ness monster’s lair, Zack.” –Maddie pointed it out.

“Oh, come on, sweet thang, if this isn’t a passageway to it, then why is it located behind a fireplace?” –Zack asked her.

“I don’t know about that, but this definitely goes somewhere.” –Max said, as she looked at the hole in the wall.

“I’ve heard about castles having secret passages in the old days, but this really is something.” –Anastasia said, as she looked inside the tunnel.

“By the looks of it, this passage has been used quite recently.” –Mark said, as he kneeled in front of the tunnel’s entrance, examining it up closer. –“Just take look at this... Fresh footprints... Whoever’s been using it wears high-heels size 6 ½, I can assure you that.” –he said, as he pointed to the track of footprints on the old dusty stairs.

“That’s Dame Emilia’s shoe size.” –London said, with the others eyeing her. –“What? I’ve an eye for that kind of details.” –she said, making everyone burst into laugh.

“Well, it’s not exactly a mystery there... I mean, she’s the owner of this castle, so it’s only fair to assume it’s her who’s been using it.” –Cody said, as he also inspected the tunnel. –“The real mystery here is where this tunnel leads to?”

“I’m telling you why for the past hour! To hide the Loch Ness monster!” –Zack kept insisting on the matter. –“Come on... what are we still doing here?! The only way we’ll be able to solve that mystery and prove that I’m right is to head down the tunnel itself.” –Zack said, as he stepped into it. –“Don’t tell me you guys are afraid?”

“Not afraid... Cautious.” –Maddie said. –“What if someone appears and sees this open? We’ll be in big trouble, and I mean trouble with a capital T, Zack.”

“Then... another reason why we should hurry down there and see what’s at the end of the tunnel.
The faster we go, the sooner we’ll come back.” –Zack said.

There was no arguing with Zack’s logic. If they did not want to get busted and wanted to find out where that lead to, then they would have to be quick. Silently, they all nodded and entered the passage, with Zack in the lead. Entering it, he turned on the lamp of his camera’s cell phone to light the way. The tunnel had been excavated into the rock and was not very high; in fact, excluding Zack and Cody, as well as the Max, Barbara and Caitlin, the rest of the gang was forced to squat a little in order not to hit the top of the tunnel. Its walls and top were made out of dark kind of limestone, while the steps were made out a lighter limestone. They had been going down the stairs for nearly five minutes and if felt like the tunnel kept going downward forever. On top of that, as they went down a distinctive smell invaded their nostrils. They could not quite picture what exactly the smell was, for it was a mix of various smells like seaweed, moss and dead fish.

“Phew, what’s that stench?” –Barbara asked.

“Don’t know, but it doesn’t smell like roses.” –London said.

“You know what this tunnel reminds me of?” –Mark said. –“It reminds me of Silent Hill 2... On that game, there’s a tunnel just like this one that keeps on going like forever.”

“Now that you mention it, it kinda looks like it. Awesome game that one, by the way.” –Zack commented.

“Isn’t that the game where the whole town is cursed by some kind of evil spirit, and it’s always fog and there are monsters that roam in it, trying to kill you?” –Maddie asked.

“Yeah, that’s the one.” –Zack asserted.

“Then... inside that tunnel you’re talking about, there were monsters, right? Do you think there are also monsters here?” –Barbara asked, feeling a little creeped out by the whole conversation.

“Don’t worry, there weren’t any monsters in that tunnel. It was just a very long, dark and creepy corridor and there was nothing in it... besides, hardly doubt that we’ll find a Pyramid Head or one of those Nurses around here. It’s not foggy nor hot enough for them to hang around.” –Mark laughed at his own joke.

“Could you guys please stop talking about horror videogames? You’re giving me the creeps!” –London exclaimed, as she held Maddie’s hand with all her strengths.

“She’s right. I like a good discussion, but given where we are right now, a lighter subject would be in order.” –Cody said.

“Okay, then, where do you think this tunnel leads to? And don’t say Loch Ness Monster’s lair, Zack!” –Max said.

“Well, if I had to take a guess, probably one of the caves.” –Caitlin said.

“Caves? What caves are you talking about, Caitlin?” –Anastasia asked her.

“Well, there are these caves that are located around the loch’s area and go on for miles. Most people don’t know about them because it’s almost impossible to enter them. The only way to enter them is through a couple of underwater tunnels that link the loch to the caves. When they were discovered a
few years ago by a group of explorers, there were a few people that wanted to make use of those tunnels in order to make the caves accessible to the tourists. My sister even kept a couple of news articles about it.” –she pointed out. –“But there were a couple of problems with that... mainly the fact that the water from the loch is ale-coloured, which makes it very difficult for a diver to see where he’s going and second, those tunnels are mostly located on the bottom of the loch, which makes it even harder to access them. You can imagine that the only way to get to them is by using a mini-submarine or, and well, you can imagine just how expensive that would be.”

It was true, they all thought. It would be a tremendous, if not colossal investment just to venture into a couple of caves and show them to tourists, and not many would be willing to invest that much money on equipment and gear; it would take them years to get all their money back. No, if there was anyone who could venture into something that financially risky, it would be someone who had money to burn. It went by London’s mind that she was just the kind of person who could easily risk such an investment, without needing the money back right away.

“I need to ponder about that...” –the heiress thought. –“... it would be a favour I would for tourism. Besides, I bet the caves are absolutely beautiful and deserve to be known by others.”

“In other words, you guys around here have a bunch of unexplored caves that nobody can get to... which could very well be the perfect place for the Loch Ness monster to hide! Don’t you think that all of this is too good to be a coincidence?” –Zack exclaimed, his voice echoing on the tunnel’s walls.

“For the last time, Zack, you have to stop with that obsession.” –Cody told him.

“No, I won’t. Think about it, bro... First, the Flinthearts have a whole history regarding the creature and its existence; a history that the head of the clan doesn’t want to admit because according to her it overshadows the true history of the clan; second, they have a tunnel hidden behind a fireplace, which according to what Caitlin says, might take us to some caves that are practically unexplored, and third, these caves ... you’re the one that’s always saying that in science there are no such thing as coincidences, am I right?” –Zack went on.

“Yes, in science, but this isn’t science, this is you thinking about something and wishing it to be true. There’s nothing scientific about it.” –Cody told him, already a little upset with all that.

“Would you cut that out?!” –Max yelled, her voice echoing through the tunnel, slightly hurting their ears. –“You look and sound like a couple of 5-year olds who can’t agree on who gets to play with a toy truck!” –she exclaimed, this time a little more moderate.

“Everyone, quiet! Listen!” –Mark said, as he signalled everyone to hush. He had heard something.

There, in the middle of the dark, with nothing but their cell phones to light their way, they all stood still in silence, waiting to hear a noise. A noise that one of them had heard. Seconds went by, and the only noise in the air was the sound of their breaths. They began to think that it was just their friend’s imagination playing tricks on him, but then, they heard it... a distinctive sound... the sound of water dripping.

“You heard that?” –Maddie said. –“We must be arriving to one of those caves.”

“Only one way to find out, Blondie.” –London said. –“We have to keep heading down.”

As they headed down, the dripping sound grew louder and louder, echoing. And then, the stairs
ended, with the tunnel widening, becoming a small cave, or at least it looked like one. Without the proper lighting, their eyes could be playing pranks on them. The air was cold and musty with a distinctive trace of sea water and seaweed, and the ground felt irregular and it was muddy.

“Well, we’re here, wherever here is.” –Anastasia said.

“Wherever we are, I don’t think the maid has found it yet.” –London joked, as she checked what she had stepped on... mud.

“Watch where you put your feet. It’s really slippery.” –Caitlin said, as carefully pointed her cell phone’s light onto the ground.

“Maybe there’s a light switch around here.” –Zack said, as he tapped the cave’s walls to his right side, in search of a switch.

“Yeah, right... Zack, we’re in a cave. There’s no electricity here.”

“Found it!” –Zack exclaimed, as his hands found what he felt was a switch and pressed it.

As if by magic, light flooded with cave, courtesy of a few light bulbs that had been placed on the cave’s roof, as part of some kind of rudimentary lighting system. Still, as rudimentary as it seemed, it was enough to light the whole cave. This was a little bit bigger than they thought, and it lead somewhere else, through another tunnel that followed straight. They noticed that along with that rudimentary lighting, there were also a few other things scattered around the place, like an old table with what looked like an old map, a few pairs of yellow galoshes and rain coats hanging on an a few nails that had been nailed to the cave’s walls. Quickly examining the map on the table, they quickly realized that it was an old map of the caves, or at least it looked like it. It depicted a swirling labyrinth of caves and tunnels that extended for what looked like miles underground. A few places were x-marked in black ink, some looked like they had been written just yesterday, while others looked like they had been written years earlier. Judging by the yellowing paper and its conservation state they quickly assumed that it was incredibly old, with possibly 8 or 9 decades old.

“What do you think these x-marks mean?” –London asked the others, as they leaned over the document.

“Who knows? It could mean just about anything.” –Barbara answered. –“But this one here, seems close to where we are.” –she pointed to the X in question.

“One things is for sure, someone’s been exploring these caves for years now. Take a look at it. This map was hand drawn and furthermore, the handwriting is different on every scribble. This leads me to think that more than one person has used this map over the years.” –Maddie said.

“Guys! Come here, you got to see this!!!” –Zack exclaimed. They all looked but did not see him, when he showed up, coming from the straight dark tunnel in front of them. –“Come on, it’s the most amazing thing you guys have ever seen!” –he kept shouting, as if had discovered the Philosopher’s Stone.

They all wasted no time and followed him. All, except for Caitlin, whom, afraid of them getting lost in the caves, decided to use an old trick in order to prevent that from happening. Using her teeth, she undid one of the threads of her cardigan, and began to untwine it. Tying it to one of the nails in the cave’s walls, she began to weave it as she went down the tunnel. This way, they would know which way they needed to follow in order to come back. She could not help but to feel a little like Theseus,
the mythical Greek hero, who among other things had slayed the Minotaur, and had used that very same strategy in order to get out of the labyrinth where the fowl beast lived.

Following Zack, he led them to what was their biggest surprise yet. Exiting the tunnel, they saw themselves in a huge, fully lighted cave that went on as far as their eyes could see. The ceiling was filled with stalactites, while the ground saw stalagmites sprouting as if they were trees. There were pounds of water all over the place and you could hear the water dripping from the stalactites. In fact, the only other sound you could hear was the humming of the neon light bulbs that had been installed on the cave, illuminating with a greenish dim light the dark rock that had been worn off by time and water, the very same water that over the millennia carried the minerals that created the beautiful stalactites that adorned the ceiling and the stalagmites on the ground, occasionally fusing the two into glorious columns. The whole setting made the cave look like an immense ballroom or perhaps one of the enormous caves seen in one of the Lord of the Rings trilogy movies.

“This is… amazing…” – Barbara said.

“I’ve never seen anything like this before.” – Anastasia said, baffled about what her eyes saw.

“Do you realize we’re watching something that maybe a handful of people have seen since the beginning of civilization?” – Maddie asked them. – “I don’t think anything can topple this right now.”

“Still, this doesn’t explain why all this is down here. All the lighting and all the secrecy.” – Mark stated. – “There’s something we’re not seeing here.”

“Or maybe they just wanted this place for themselves. Rich people usually do that. Why do you think rich people are always buying stuff that should be on a museum?” – Maddie said.

“Because it’s fun to have something unique…” – London said in a playful tone, blinking her eye to Maddie. – “Still, a painting, a sculpture or an expensive car is one thing. This is something else… it’s like one of those exclusive clubs that only a handful of people can enter.”

“I thought you loved those places.” – Cody said.

“And I do, but most of them don’t let you guys in, even if you’re with me, and I hate when my friends can’t enter a place I can.” – London declared.

“I can imagine why they don’t want this place to be known. Just look at it. It looks almost as if we’re in a whole new world.” – Caitlin declared.

“Or maybe it’s because they have the Loch Ness Monster in their basement!!!” – Zack exclaimed.

“Zack… for the last time…”

“No, look over there in the water!!!” – Zack pointed out to something moving in the water, something that was really moving.

There was something in the water. For once, it was not just Zack’s wishful thinking. But the question everyone was asking was what was it really? It was probably a fish, but it could also be something else. The answer was given when the thing in the water slowly emerged to the surface. It was no fish; instead, what came out of the water had a long elongated neck, just like a swan. From the size
of its neck and head, which was reptilian, they estimated it would about the size of a goose, a really plump goose. The dim lighting did not allow them to fully see the creature or its colour from that distance, but it was enough to make them think the same thing: “That’s something you don’t see every day.”

“W-W-What the fuck was t-t-that?!” –Anastasia stuttered, still no believing her eyes.

“That… was… the… Loch… Ness… Monster…” –Cody said, practically speechless.

“See?! I told you I was right!!!! Say it, Cody! Say it!” –Zack practically started to scream on top of his longs. –“Say, “I was wrong and you were right, Zack!”’, go on, say it!”

“Stop shouting like that, you’re going to scare him away!” –London hushed him.

“W-What do we do?” –Maddie asked.

“We follow it, of course.” –Mark said. –“Don’t you guys want to find out where that baby plesiosaurus is heading?”

“Baby plesiosaurus? How do you know it’s a plesiosaurus, let alone a baby?” –Max asked him, while still processing what she had seen.

“First, I’ve seen enough documentaries and scientific recreations about dinosaurs to identify one, and two, it’s too small to be an adult. Adult plesiosaurs were said to be as long as 15 feet long, and that thing is hardly 3 feet long, so it’s most likely an infant.”

“A baby Loch Ness monster?” –London asked. –“But then… that must mean…”

“It means that there could be more… and where there’re babies, there’s a mother. The real Loch Ness Monster…” –Maddie declared, excited with the possibilities.

“Then, come on, there’s no time to lose. Get down and follow that creature, silently.” –Mark said, with the last part being spoken to Zack, almost in a hush.

Following Mark’s lead, they all crouched and followed the creature as quietly as they could in order not to scare it away. This proved to be a slightly difficult task, for there were not many good places they could use to hide themselves. Still, the dim lighting from the caves helped them to conceal themselves from it. They were still marvelled and a little bit in shock with what had happened to them. They had found proof that the Loch Ness Monster was not a hoax and they were following it, hoping to see where its nest was.

“I still can’t believe what’s happening. We just solved one of the biggest mysteries ever. Do you realize what all this means?!” –Maddie asked them.

“Yeah, we proved that not all dinosaurs became extinct 65 million years ago, as well as proving the existence of Loch Ness Monster. We’ll be on the front page of National Geographic if we get a couple of shots of the creature.” –Cody said eagerly. You could see by the look in his eyes that he did not care anymore if he had been wrong about the creature’s existence. All he wanted now was to get a closer look at the creature.

“And this time, we’ll get a decent photograph of it, not like the ones everyone is always taking and in the end is just a log in the water.” –Zack whispered, excited about it.
“Don’t count your chickens before they hatch. We still have to find the nest. I just hope it’s not too far from here… your mother and the rest will get suspicious if we take too long.” –Barbara said.

“Forget about that. It won’t matter if we get the photo.” –Zack told her. –“Even my mom wouldn’t have the heart to ground me once she sees what we’ve found.” –he said, confident about the outcome of the whole situation.

They kept following the creature for another 10 minutes or so, when the pursuit finally stopped. From all the crouching and crawling, they were wet, muddy and cold, but they did not care, they had found the nest and were amazed with what lied in front of them. There were not just one baby Loch Ness monster, but three; three beautiful baby plesiosaurs. Their black and dark green scales reflected the dim artificial lighting of the cave, as the played with each other. You could see what was left of their meal laying all over the place… fish and crabs, or better, what they had been once, for the babies had pretty much eaten just about everything, leaving just a few pieces left like a fish head.

“They’re so cute… they look like huge puppies.” –London said. All she wanted to do was to approach them and pet them.

“They sure are.” –Maddie agreed. –“They really look cute. Still, don’t you think it’s strange they’re left alone by their mother?”

“Not really. Crocodiles and alligators are known to leave their infants alone for days, in order to catch food for themselves, and they are the closest thing we have to dinosaurs nowadays, not counting birds of course. Maybe they are like the crocodiles and behave like them.” –Anastasia said.

“Who cares about that? I’m scoring some major photos right now.” –Zack said in hush, as he kept taking photos with his cell’s camera. –“Still, I need to get closer to get a few close-ups.” –he said, as he straighten himself up, when someone grabbed him by the arm.

“Where are you going?!” –Max asked him.

“I’m going there and photograph the little guys a little closer.” –Zack said, as it was the most natural thing in the world.

“Are you nuts?!?” –Mark yelled at him, but then realised he might have scared the babies, and hushed his voice. –“We don’t know if they’re dangerous. What if the mother comes back? Or better yet, what if the mother and father come back?” –he emphasized the word father. –“We don’t know how they’ll react when they see one of us. For all we know, they might even attack us!”

“Don’t be such a spoil-sport, man. I bet my lucky sneakers that the Flinthearts have been raising Loch Ness monsters for hundreds and hundreds of years. If not, then why the secrecy and why putting all these lights down here? And if so, they’re bound to be accustomed to seeing humans, and being near them.”

Once more, Zack did have a point. Why do all that in the first place? In fact, he’d been right about most things surrounding that mystery, and that was both amazing and scary at the same time. It was usually Cody who had the bright theories and ideas, but this time, it was Zack who was having them. Still, being one of the oldest members of the gang, Mark felt responsible for his safety and decided to not take any risks.

“Forget it! Even if you’re right about it, we don’t have any guarantees that nothing bad won’t
happen.” –he told him, signalling Maddie with his eyes, in order to give him a hand.

“He’s right, Zack, we shouldn’t be pushing our luck. Right, London?” –the blonde turned to face the heiress, but she was no longer next to her.

Looking to the sides, she saw London a few feet from them, jumping from one rock to another, looking for the best way to get to the baby plesiosaurs. Maddie kept signalling her to come back, but she paid no attention. All she wanted was to see the creatures up close, and of course, pet them, if she saw it was safe.

“O-kay… let’s see if I don’t fall into the water…” –London thought, as she slipped on one of the rocks, and landed on her knees, splashing the water. Luckily the water was shallow on that part, so she did not get hurt… only wetter. –“Well, there goes the part of not falling into the water… I hope I didn’t scare them away…” –she sighed.

“London!” –Maddie exclaimed, fearing she might have gotten hurt from the fall.

“It’s okay, I’m okay!”

It was then that they all heard a sound they had never heard before, the screeches of the baby plesiosaurs. Their screeches sounded like a mixture of dolphin screams, walruses bellowing and geese hissing. One of them seeing London kneeled on the water, slowly approached her. Entering the water it swam towards her, stopping just a few feet from her. It tilted its head to the right and then to the left, as if it was waiting for London to make the first move.

The heiress kept looking at it, waiting for it to react, but when it did not do anything, she decided to take the first step. Smiling tenderly, she raised her arm and slowly reached for the creature’s head. With her heart beating like a hummingbird, she began to have second thoughts about what she was about to do; but then it was too late to turn back. Stopping just a few centimetres from the baby plesiosaur, she waited for it to touch her hand. The touch of the creature’s skin was like nothing she had ever felt before. It was wet and slippery, and surprisingly soft to the touch. The closest thing that came to her mind was the feeling she had when she touched a snake’s skin during a trip to the zoo years before. She caressed its head and neck, and was presented with a screech of happiness from the small creature that proceeded to lick her hand, making her giggle.

“You’re cute.” –London smiled, as she kept caressing it. –“You like this, don’t you? I bet your brothers will also like it.” –she said, turning to the others. –“What are you guys waiting for, come on, they don’t bite.”

Not knowing what to do, it was Zack who stepped up to the plate and joined the Asian-beauty first, petting the little Loch Ness Monster in the head, while snapping a couple more photos, some with London posing with the creature. The others also joined them, and in a couple of minutes, they were all playing with the little guys, and snapping photos, while holding them in the arms. Caitlin was the last one to join the fun. She took off her sweater and placed on top of a rock after making sure the thread was well pulled and had not broken; the last thing she was for them to get lost.

All that was happening was just too much to believe. Some of them even asked themselves if that was just a dream… a dream from where they would wake up once the alarm clock rang. Still, if it was just a dream, they intended to make sure they would make the most of it, without any regrets.

“I guess Zack was right about it… Heck, I still can’t believe I’m actually saying that.” –Cody said, as he snapped another photo of Barbara, who was sitting on a rock, petting one of the three baby Loch
Ness monsters. —“And I better not say it too many times, or I might get used to the sound of it. God knows just how inflated his ego is right not.” —he chuckled to himself.

“He sure was. These creatures are absolutely domesticated… and are absolutely adorable.” —Anastasia said.

“Who would ever thought that I would see this… if my sister was here right now she would be the one telling that to me. She has always believed in the creature, while I haven’t.” —Caitlin said.

“Not bad for a day’s work… we solved two mysteries for the price of one.” —Mark said, as he snapped a few photos at Anastasia, while she was petting one of the creatures. —“And, as a bonus, we get to see some really cute dinosaurs.”

“Okay, little guy, smile for the birdie!” —Zack exclaimed, as he snapped a few more photos of one of the babies. —“Old Rufus MacLeod was right all along about this! I’m as good a millionaire!!! The only thing that could topple this was if the mother, the real Loch ness Monster showed up and let me snap a photo of it.” —he laughed out loud.

He kept laughing for a couple more seconds, when he heard a noise. The noise of something splashing in the water… something big. Slowly raising its head from the water, the enormous creature looked at them, and they looked back at it. The babies’ mother had arrived… the Loch Ness monster had arrived.

They were all petrified, without knowing what to do next. Physically, the creature was a bigger version of the little ones, but that meant that it had bigger teeth, and quite possibly a very strong maternal instinct, which meant that if it felt that her babies were being threatened, it would not hesitate to open its huge jaws and bite them all into half in a matter of seconds.

“I-I-I think you j-j-just g-g-got your wish, Z-Z-Zack…” —London said, as she pointed to the creature.
Standing in front of the gang was the Loch Ness monster. Needless to say the sight of the fully grown plesiosaurus was enough to render the twins and the rest of the Tipton gang speechless and terrified. The majestic creature was even larger than they thought it would be and its long snake-like neck made it even look more imposing. None of them knew what to do, and that was starting to scare them. They were all asking themselves what to do next.

“What do we do?” – Barbara whispered to Cody.

“I don’t know… I’m too scared to come up with a rational idea.” – Cody whispered back at her.

London and Maddie were so scared, they did not even notice they gave hands to each other, and the rest of the others did the same. They wanted to run, but to where? They were in some dark caves, and even though they were somehow lighted, the chances of escaping a creature that size without dropping into the water or breaking an ankle while running were pretty low. And on top of that, the fear that was running through their bodies froze them in place. Holding their breath, they all waited for the creature to make the first move; the last thing they needed was for it to feel antagonized. Swinging its head from left to right like a snake, the creature never took her eyes from the group of scared teenagers. Then, the babies began to screech and the creature’s maternal instincts got the best of her. Paying attention to the little ones, she lost interest in the Tipton gang, who felt relieved.

Exchanging looks with one another, they silently agreed that that was probably their best chance to escape. But before they could move, mommy turned its attention back to them. Once more holding their breath, the creature started to sniff them. They wondered if she was seeing if they were good to eat, or not. And then, the unexpected happened. The creature opened its mouth and began to lick them. She licked them like a dog licks its master to show its appreciation.

“Eeww… dinosaur drool…” – London cried out, as she cleaned her face. –“Her mouth smells like dead fish!”

“D-D-Does this mean she’s c-cool with us?” – Anastasia asked the others, still a little bit in shock.

“I think so…” – Max said, not too sure about her own answer.

“As long as she doesn’t try to eat us, I’m cool with it.” – Mark said, as he was licked once more. –“Ahahahah… her tongue tickles.”

“I don’t think she’s going to eat us… if she wanted to, she would have done it by now.” – Caitlin said, as she saw the little baby plesiosaurus approach them once more.

“Don’t worry. She won’t hurt you… especially since you’ve taken care of her babies while she was way.” – a serene and paused voice said.

Turning around, they were all shocked to see the person who was standing behind them; Dame Emilia Flintheart. She was still wearing the same clothes she was wearing at the party, but what stood out this time was the fact she was wearing a pair of rubber galoshes and one of the yellow rain coats they had seen hanging on the first cave’s walls.

“We’re so busted!” – Maddie thought to herself. In fact, it was the only rational thought that went
Passing by them, she approached the mother plesiosaurus and petted her on the head. Smiling, she kept petting its nuzzle, making her let out a few harmonious screeches.

“There, there… they’re friends.” –she told the creature. She then turned her head to the Tipton gang.

“I think you and I need to have a little word about what you’re seeing here right now.”

In utter silence, Zack, Cody and the rest of the Tipton gang heard what Dame Flintheart had to tell them. She told them how they had found about Nessie, or better yet, Nessie’s existence. It went back to the early days of the Flintheart clan, in the early 9th century. Having found a territory that suited their needs, they quickly looked for a place where they would erect a fortified fortress in order to defend themselves from the rival clans that wished to possess their lands. While building the foundations, the clan’s chief, Angus Flintheart discovered the existence of caves beneath the place that would house the fortress. Along with some of his most trustworthy men, he entered the caves in order to explore them and to his surprise he found a creature that looked like a dragon. They had heard the legends about a creature that lived in the loch, a creature that was most likely a sea serpent or perhaps a dragon, and they all assumed that was it. Attempting to slay it, they were surprised to find others surrounding them. But, instead of trying to eat or kill them, the creatures just stood there, watching them. Both factions stood there looking at each other’s for what looked like an eternity. Who would make the first move? Finally, one of Flintheart’s men approached the creature that was closest to him. With his sword in hand, he approached it, awaiting for it to either attack him or back away. But, the creature didn’t back away, nor did attack him.

Being an experienced hunter as he was, he looked into the creature’s eyes, and he saw in its eyes that it did not wish him any harm. Touching its head, he caressed it as if the creature was just a simple dog. It was clear from that moment the creatures were wild, but were no blood-thirsty monsters as they initially appeared. Not knowing what to do about the creatures, the clan’s chief talked with his warriors and they all agreed to not talk about them with anyone, and to prevent anyone from finding them, they sealed the cave’s entrance and built a new one, which could only be accessed from one of the fortress’s rooms. Needless to say, that throughout the times, only a handful of members of the clan were chosen to share the burden of such secret. Centuries went by, and more and more people began to catch glimpses and eye sights of the creatures. It was then, in 1278 that it was decided by the time’s clan chief, Arthur Flintheart that the creatures existence had to be protected and in order to do so, they would come up with ways to discredit the sights anyway they could.

“Then, the Surgeon’s photo…” –Mark started.

“Absolute bogus, of course, and yes, we were the ones who fabricated the whole thing, with some help from certain people, who we have decided to share the secret with.” –Dame Flintheart declared.

“In fact, that was one of the cleverest hoaxes we came up with to hide the truth… who would think that a balloon attached to a raft on the water during a foggy morning would look like the real deal?”

–she chuckled, obviously proud of that stunt.

“So, you’re saying that for centuries now, your clan has done everything it could to avoid people from finding the truth about the Loch Ness Monster?”

“Exactly.” –Dame Flintheart answered. “And we have done a decent job coming up with hoaxes, and bribing the right people into not revealing the truth.”

“That explains a lot… creating hoaxes that look real, only to then reveal them as absolute hoaxes is a
good way to make people think the creature doesn’t exist.” –Maddie stressed.

“Then your reluctance to talk about the Loch Ness monster and you negating that your clan has ever had anything to do with the local legend…” –Cody said.

“Yes, it’s a way for us to keep the truth. By denying it, we have created a way to protect their existence, without compromising it.” –she admitted.

“But why? I mean, people have been asking themselves if these creatures even exist for more than a century now, or even more… Why would you hide the truth from everybody?” –Zack asked her.

“Because they would be in danger, isn’t that right?” –Barbara asked.

“Danger? Danger of what?” –Zack asked, confused about that choice of words from his brother’s girlfriend.

“Danger of becoming extinct… this time for good.” –Max sighed.

“Don’t you see, Zack? If people knew about the existence of these creatures, not only they would disturb their natural habitat, but they would most likely try to hunt them in order to sell them to a zoo, or in worst case scenario, to some private collector.” –Maddie told him.

And it was then that it hit Zack. They were right about it. He had been so obsessed with finding the Loch Ness monster and taking its photo, that he had not think about what would happen after it. Sure, he had thought about how his name would be known by everybody in the globe and how famous he would become… but he had not thought about the creature’s fate. How they would be disturbed… how they would be hunted, without regard for their well-being by greedy men. As those thoughts crossed his mind, Zack felt terrible about it.

“I’m so… so selfish. Now I wish I’d never found them.” –he thought to himself. –“I-I didn’t even didn’t even think about that.” –the twin sighed.

“Do you understand now why my clan does this? We know that if the world finds out about this, every single theory regarding the dinosaurs extinction will be put into cause, and in order to solve that mystery, they would disturb the creatures to observe and study them… and of course, that would be just the beginning. Poachers and hunters would come along and try to hunt them.” –Dame Flintheart insisted. –“I believe that one day the world will be ready for this unveiling, just not yet… Mankind still has a long way to go, before these creatures existence is made public.”

“So, what’s going to happen to us now? We know about them and we have tons of photos of these four.” –London asked her.

“Are you going to lock us into a dark dungeon until the end of our days in order to protect the secret?”

“ZACK!!!!” –all of them shouted at him.

“What?! I’m being serious, okay? It may not sound like I am being serious, but I am this time!”

“Of course not. I cannot stop you from leaving here and telling everyone of what you just saw, as well as showing the photos you took. In the old days, my ancestors would most likely do what the young rascal has said, but these are different times.” –the old woman went on. –“The only thing I
can do is to ask you to keep all of this a secret. You’re wise and sensible young people, otherwise, you wouldn’t even had let me finish my story.”

“You mean… we’ll become some of those people that you shared the secret with?”

“If you want to, yes.” –Dame Flintheart told them.

“Then, I guess we’ll be keeping this secret among us. We won’t even tell our parents what we saw here tonight, right guys?” –Maddie asked them.


“Totally.” –Max declared.

“Without a doubt.” –Barbara waved her head in compliance.

“Undoubtedly” –Mark agreed.

“You can trust us.” –Cody stated.

“These photos will never see the light of day, as far as I’m concerned. In fact, I think I’ll destroy them.” –Zack sighed. After hearing all their friends had said about what would happen if people found out about the creatures, he felt that the photos they had taken should really be erased.

Hearing those words, the head of the Flintheart clan humbly smiled at them. This had been the first time someone had been able to find the only access to Nessie’s caves in all these years. Needless to say that when she found out that someone had entered the caves, she feared the worst. She did not know who had found the secret entrance, and was afraid it had been someone who would not care about anything except having its name on the papers as the one who had discovered the truth behind the Loch Ness monster. But now, she was certain that the young men and women in front of her understood what her clan had been doing for so long and would not reveal a soul what they saw there.

“Thank you for understanding.” –she smiled to them. –“And you, young man, don’t destroy those photos. I can see by the tone of your voice that you really do care about them, and I think you should save those photos. And that applies to the rest of you. They’ll be your reward for keeping the secret a secret.”

“T-Thank you.” –Zack thanked her.

“Don’t thank me, thank yourselves for choosing to do the right thing.” –Dame Flintheart told him. –“But, before I forget, and this is mostly out of curiosity, which one of you found the hidden passage?”

Quickly, they all explained that it was London and Maddie who had found it, but the ones who were looking for it had been Zack and Cody that had been following a clue of sorts given by Rufus MacLeod, who’d been filling Zack’s head with stories, or so Cody thought, and that was how they had arrived there.

“I see… I should’ve known. I should have known that that old Rufus MacLeod and his big mouth would one day get us into trouble. He should know better than to start talking about this place with foreigners. Fortunately, you youngsters are good people.”
“You mean that he’s also one of the people that know about Nessie’s existence?” –Cody asked her.

“Indeed… and sometimes I wish we would’ve never told him in the first place.” –Dame Flintheart answered Cody, who upon hearing this, finally understood how Rufus’ stories were considered by people to be the best; he practically told people the truth. It was the people who thought they were just stories, because if they knew they were true, then things would be very different for Nessie and her cubs.

“There’s just one last thing. The old map we found with numerous markings scribbled on it, what exactly were those marks scribbled on it?” –Barbara asked her. Since they had seen that map, she’d been asking herself what was the map signalling.

“They are the locations where there are or were nests of the creatures.” –the old woman answered her.

“You mean, they aren’t the only ones?” Zack asked, pointing out to the mother plesiosaurus and her babies.

“Of course not, young man. That would be silly. Just think about it, in order to reproduce over the centuries you would need a colony of a few hundreds of these creatures.” –Dame Flintheart explained to Zack. –“It is only basic science, my dear boy.”

“You have to forgive my brother, he sometimes forgets how the world really works.” –Cody excused his brother. –“But, just how many are they?”

“The last time we checked, there were more than 700 plesiosaurus living in these caves.” –the old woman answered them .-“Still, there are always new ones being born and older ones dying that sometimes it’s hard to keep track of them, especially because we’ve decided to interfere as little as possible in their habitat. We mostly just feed the youngest when their parents don’t and of course, make sure they are healthy.”

“It must be quite hard to keep an eye on all of them.” –London said.

“Indeed it is, but fortunately, I’m not alone when it comes to it.” –Dame Flintheart, as the baby plesiosaurus approached them, with their mother. Kneeling down, she grabbed one of them and held it in her arms. –“Besides, there are certain advantages to this kind of job.”

“Holding those little guys in your arms is quite the reward.” –Barbara said.

“It sure is.” –she smiled at Barbara. –“Tell me, would you like me to take a photo of you all with them?”

“Would you do that?”

“Of course. I trust you when you say that it won’t end up on the Internet. And besides, the mother seems to have liked you. Plesiosaurus only let people they trust approach them or their infants. My husband used to say that they, like every intelligent creature, are able to sense those of pure heart.” –she smiled. –“Now come on, gather around and get ready for the photo.”

Gathering around, they all gathered under the neck of the mother plesiosaur. Maddie, Anastasia and Barbara grabbed one of the baby plesiosaurus each, holding them in their arms. Smiling to the
camera, the photo was taken, and what a beautiful photo it was. They were all smiling and striking a pose, but so was the mother plesiosaur. The dinosaur looked like it was smiling and that made the photo ever so much special. After the photo was taken, they all said goodbye to the babies and the mother; the bravest of the gang even hugged the mother, who licked them affectively.

“I guess it’s safe to say that she sees us as surrogate sons and daughters.” –Caitlin stated, as she too was licked by the creature.

“I’m gonna miss you, momma Ness.” –Zack said. He had only met the creature about a quarter of an hour before, but it was clear to him and everyone else that they had been marked by those majestic creatures. Right then, he only regretted that they did not have more time to spend with the Loch Ness family. Still, the photos he had taken of the babies and the mother herself would always be a token of that amazing story; a story which he would tell one day to his children and grandchildren, while making them swear they would never tell anyone outside the family. It would a secret that would remain a secret from the rest of the world, but that would always be a conversation theme whenever he would be with his brother, or his girlfriend or his best friends that were there with him.

“Try to avoid the cameras, okay? And be sure to tell the other Loch Ness monsters and your babies the same, okay?” –London cheerfully told the creature, as she petted it. –“We wouldn’t want the rest of the world to know about you, now would we?”

“We’ll make sure that won’t happen in the near future, I can guarantee you that.” –Dame Flintheart said.

“Goodbye!”

And with that, they all said goodbye to the majestic creature and her babies who shrieked in unison, as if they themselves were also saying goodbye to the Tipton gang.

When they returned to the party, Carey, Stephen and Felicia seeing them all wet and muddy, asked them what had happened. They all lied saying that they had decided to get some fresh air and ended up falling into a mud pit that there was in the moor. The adults thought that it was strange for all of them falling in the pit, but did not raise any further questions about it.

The next morning, the gang packed their things and got ready to leave. Their time in Loch Ness had ended and it was time for them to go back to the S.S. Tipton and proceed with their trip around the world. Still, it was hard for them to say goodbye to such a beautiful and mystical place as Loch Ness was. During their say there, even if it was a short one, they had made good friends and it is always hard to say goodbye to them.

“Wish you could stay a little longer.” –Caitlin told the gang, as they waited for her sister to come back with the bill.

“So did we, but unfortunately that ship doesn’t wait for anyone.” –London sighed.

“I know, you have to continue your journey. Still, I had a really nice time with you… especially when it comes to, you know what.” –she winked her eye at the gang.

“You ain’t the only one.” –Anastasia said. –“But, I can tell you that thanks to you and others, this has been the highest point in our voyage so far.”
“It’s true, and even if something else in our voyage surpasses it, we’ll always remember the days we spent here and what we have seen.” –Barbara told her.

“Besides, we’ve exchanged phone numbers and emails. If you ever want to talk with us, we’re just a click away, alright?” –Maddie told her with a cheerful voice. She was feeling really glad she met Caitlin.

“I know… and, let me just tell you that I’m glad I got to meet you two… not just the two of you.” – she told London and Maddie. –“… but the whole gang as well.” –she looked at the rest of them.

“We’re the ones who were lucky to know someone like you. “ –London smiled at her.

“Yeah, she’s right.” –Zack told her. –“You be sure to take care of you.”

“I will, don’t worry. Oh, by the way, last night, before we left, Dame Flintheart gave me something to give you all. Here.” –Caitlin took something out of the backpack she had with her.

In her hand, she had eight silver lockets. They were round, flat and had the size of a walnut looked ancient, but were also incredibly beautiful, with a figure of Nessie carved on one of the sides, while on the other side there was a message carved on it, which said: “Guardians o’ th’ secret”. They each took one and held them in the air, admiring them.

“She told me that these are offered to those who know about the creature’s secret. She also gave me one for me, and another one for my sister. She told me that when the time comes we’ll also reveal the truth to her.” –she smiled –“She also said that if you wear them, wherever you go, those who also know about you know what, will recognize you as the holders of truth, or something like that.” –she declared.

“They’re really pretty.” –Cody said.

“One of a kind I would say.” –Max declared.

“Tell her thank you from all of us.” –Maddie told her. –“We’ll cherish them forever.”

“Hey! Can you kids help us with the bags here?” –Carey asked them, interrupting what was a candid moment between the gang and young Caitlin.

Helping Carey out, the boys quickly placed the bags in the vans, while the girls stayed inside. When they came back, they noticed that Karen was back behind the reception counter and was talking with London.

“Alright, here’s your bill.” –Karen handed it to Stephen, when it was snagged by London.

“I’ll take that, this one is on me.” –London smiled at Mark’s father, as she looked at the bill.

“And, how are you going to pay for it?” –she asked the heiress.

“Check, of course… and I’ll add a little extra to it as a tip. After all, the bed was really fluffy and the service was worthy of a five-star hotel.” –the Asian-beauty chirped in an amused tone, as she wrote the check. When she finished filling everything in it, she handed it over to Karen. –“I think you’ll be very happy with the tip I’ve given you.” –she smiled.
Looking at the check she noticed that the amount on the check had an extra 200,000 Sterling pounds to the bill’s amount. Looking at it, Karen’s eyes almost popped out its sockets. She had never seen that many zeroes in a check before. Looking at London, the heiress just smiled.

“Surprised aren’t you?” –London giggled.

“M-Miss T-Tipton… I can’t take this check. It’s too much!” –Karen exclaimed, as she looked at the check once more.

“Sure you can. Caitlin over there told us that it’s been hard for you and her ever since your parents died, and I want to help. You’ve got such a beautiful inn here and I believe that this place could become the best inn in Loch Ness with a little financial help. Plus, you want Caitlin to go to college, well, now she can, and so can you.” –London smiled.

Hearing what she said, all of London’s friends were taken by surprise by that gesture of kindness from the heiress’ part; all of them, except Maddie, with whom she had discussed it the previous night.

(Flashback sequence)

The girls had had an amazing night. Now, back on their room at the Hidden Nessie, they were getting ready for bed. As Maddie finished brushing her teeth, she noticed her girlfriend looked rather pensive. Approaching her, Maddie smiled and asked her:

“Still thinking about momma Nessie and the babies?”

“No… I mean, a little bit, but… that’s not what I was thinking about right now.” –London sighed,

“Then, what is it that you were thinking?” –Maddie asked playfully, as she sat next to London. –“Come on, tell me.”

“Well… I was thinking about what Caitlin told us the other night, you know, the fact that it’s only her sister and her taking care of this place, and she wants to help Karen, but Karen wants her to study and go to college… I mean, I wish I could help them somehow…” –London sighed.

Hearing her say that, Maddie gently kissed her on the lips, and then gave her a big hug. Once more, London managed to surprise her with that selfless act.

“I may have an idea on how you can help them.” –Maddie smiled at her girlfriend.

(End of Flashback scene)

“I understand, but still… I can’t take it, Miss Tipton.” –Karen kept saying, as Caitlin joined her behind the desk and saw the amount that was written on the check.

“Please, call me London and I insist…” –London smiled. She really wanted her to take the money. For her that amount was nothing but spare changes, but for the two sisters, it could mark the beginning of a better life for them. –“Look, let’s make a deal. You accept that money, and in exchange, every time I come to Loch Ness, I can stay for free, and believe me, I will be back, and I won’t be alone. Plus, I’ll be sure to tell everyone I know about this place. What do you say?” –London kept insisting on the matter. She was determined to have her way with that.
Karen looked at the check again and again, seeing all those zeroes. With that kind of money she could really improve the inn and turn it into the best lodge in Fort Augustus, and still have enough for Caitlin and herself to go to any college, a very pleasant thought to have. Looking at her sister for a couple of seconds, she sighed and said:

“Very well, I accept it, but I’ll treat this as an investment.” –Karen said, as a tear rolled down her face. –“When you come back, you won’t even recognize the place.”

“I hope not, after all, it’s the simplicity and warmth of this place that gives this place its uniqueness.” –London smiled. –“But I understand what you’re saying, and I’m glad that you have decided to accept it.”

As she finished talking, both sisters came from behind the reception desk and they hugged London, thanking her for that present. The rest of the gang still surprised about what was going on, just clapped their hands, joining the celebration. As that happened, there was only one thing that ran through London’s mind… money, the power that money has; but not in a bad way. She was thinking how money, when used wisely and in a moment of pure selflessness, could change things for the better. Thanks to Maddie and the idea she gave her the previous night, the Taylor sisters could dream with a better future, a brighter future for them.

“That was a real beautiful thing for her to do for the two sisters.” –Felicia thought to herself.

“Once more London has surprised us all.” –Carey thought. –“This girl keeps doing that again and again. It just shows that the little spoiled girl that she once was isn’t there anymore. In its place is a young woman who cares about others and who wishes everyone to be as happy about life as she is.”

“Thank you, thank you so much!” –Caitlin exclaimed.

When the celebration finally died, they all exited the Hidden Nessie heading to their vans, followed by the Taylor sisters, who were still in awe with all that happened. Karen tried to look cool, even though you could see in her eyes that she was absolutely ecstatic about all that. As for Caitlin, she kept thanking London for it, while jumping up and down out of excitement; the girl did not know how to properly react, after all, she and her sister had won the lottery in more than one way.

“I know I already said this, but thank you, thank you so much, London!” –Caitlin kept exclaiming, as she tried not to cry out of joy.

“It was nothing, really. But I can’t take all the credit. Maddie also helped.” –London looked at the blonde, who smiled back at her.

“Oh, I merely suggested it, you made it happen, Princess.” –Maddie smiled.

“Even so, we can’t thank you enough for everything.” –Caitlin told her.

“You want to thank us? Then, take care of your sister and make sure you live a happy life.” –London told her, as she hugged her –“Do that, and make sure to pet a few certain plesiosaursuses for us all, and we’ll be even.” –she whispered at her ear.

“I will, don’t worry.” –Caitlin said, as she hugged them once more.

After a few more hugs and goodbyes, they all got in the vans. Starting the engines, they waved
goodbye as they left their friends behind. They had not rode more than 200 metres when Zack spotted someone he recognized on the side of the road, old Rufus Macleod. Asking his mom to pull over, she did that. Pulling the window down, Zack saluted the old timer.

“So, ye laddies are leavin already?” –Rufus asked them.

“I’m afraid so. The ship doesn’t wait for anyone.” –Zack answered him.

Weel, ah hate tae see ye depairt lik’ that, bit ah jalouse if ye wee laddies thave tae go, then ye mist.” –Rufus told them. –“Bit afore ye go, answer me this, did ye fin’ whit ye wur lookin fur?”

“Let’s just say we found what we needed to find, Mr. MacLeod.” –Cody told him.

“A’m glad tae hear that. Weel, then, ah wish ye a’ a safe return ’n’ ’til we catch up wi’ again, if we dae. Cheerio!” –he waved at them, as the vans proceeded with their march.

“Goodbye.” –both twins waved at him.

“What did you mean when you said that you had found what you needed to find, boys?” –Carey asked the boys, as they closed the car window.

“Nothing, really, mom. It’s just something we talked with him.” –Zack winked his eye at his brother, who smiled back at him.

And with that, they hit the road, on their back to Edinburgh, where the cruise ship awaited. Rocked by the van’s movement, everyone tried their best to memorize every little detail about Fort Augustus and that part of Loch Ness, so as to not forget what it was like, thinking that if they did that the sadness that was inside of them for leaving would not be so great. Still, they all knew one thing, both kids and adults that they would come back, one day… not sure when exactly, but that they would. And of course, that new destinations awaited them in that crazy voyage of theirs.

End of Book 1

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