

Laura

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Chapter 17 - Empire Garage

We were standing around socializing over coffee and munchies after my AA group meeting when my cell phone went off in my purse. It was playing a pop-country song I only used for calls from Laura. By the time I had dug my phone out of my purse I had to call back.

Laura answered. "Mindy. You know the 24 hour pancake house near the old kitchen appliance store next to the Ecuadorian restaurant on Dinwiddie?"

"Uh." I had to think. "Yes."

"Come quick."

"Are you hurt?"

"No; I'm fine. This may be good. We're sitting at a table. Don't fret about a leak. The chairs can handle it. Come now." She disconnected the call.

How was I going to weasel out of standing around? When all else fails try to the truth. "My partner called." With that I wished I hadn't wet my diaper quite so cavalierly that evening.

The parking lot was full even at this late hour. I did not appreciate waiting for a space to become available.

Inside Laura waved at me and pulled out the chair next to her as a way of saying where I should sit. Across the table was a woman whose thin face and creased skin instantly proclaimed to me she had been drinking heavily way too long. "Mindy, this is Leslie; Leslie, this is Mindy."

Laura barely paused for breath. "Mindy is my t-girl domestic partner. We each have our own separate businesses. She has a medical equipment delivery service. She is in a transgender AA group, so put everything on the table of what you just told me."

Leslie put her hand out to Laura to hold it for comfort. Leslie's voice was rough from the damage of too much drinking alcohol over too many years. "Just before I was laid off by a big accounting firm they had a project for salvaging the building of Empire Cab Company. You know it?"

My face gave me away. "No, actually, tell me."

"It's one of those yellow brick things from the 1930s when yellow brick was a popular fad. It was originally a Dodge auto dealership, then a Ford, then a Checker dealership, but manufacturing Checker automobiles failed. It has a concrete ramp inside for auto repairs on the second story. Empire Cab ran their fleet out of there. They have failed, and are in bankruptcy."

I was about to ask 'so?' But Laura must have had a reason. I added more warmth to my soaking wet diaper, but Laura had me in a washable skirt.

Leslie continued. "Every bidder so far has been turned down by the Bankruptcy Court for one reason or another. No qualified bidder has made an offer. Go see your banker and make a bid."

I almost said 'surely thou jest'.

Laura interrupted. "The banker doesn't know us; not really. Mindy built her business up from scratch with a nothing more than a phone, a computer, a website, and fliers. If this is so good, would you parlay our computer records into something the bank can use? This would have to be a contingent fee from the bank loan, but is this as good as you say?"

Leslie scowled.

Laura's furrowed her eyebrows. "Well, is it?"

Leslie's clamped mouth stayed shut.

Laura glared. "You don't need rented office space to start your own practice with just one customer. And what are you going to do, anyway? Go into a thirty day program for the second or third time? Or would that be a fourth? You psychic can't take the hit."

Leslie stirred in her seat.

Laura was faster out of hers, around mine, and blocking the way out of the two chairs on Leslie's side of the table. "I've heard what you have said at the group, and you collapsed on yourself. You had a binge and came back thinking everybody would welcome you with open arms. Yes?"

Silence descended on our table as if there was an ice storm inside the restaurant. The nearest tables became quiet.

"Well, it is true they didn't block your arrival, but you didn't ask them what you should do for your recovery. Did you?"

Leslie began to rise from her chair, but Laura pushed her back down and took the chair beside her.

I asked myself would I be brave enough to do anything like that at my group? I had doubts I would.

Laura put on her strongest facial expression. "If you kill yourself I'll find your grave and piss on it."

Leslie's jaw dropped open in shocked surprise.

Laura took Leslie's hand. "We can't help you if you wont let us. Are you going to let us? No, that's the wrong question. You're a train wreck waiting to happen out there. You are coming to my house and sleep on the sofa."

That idea was straight out of the story of what started AA.

After changing my diaper in the nursery at her house Laura went back downstairs. She was so distracted she didn't lock the crib, or tell me what to do, or where to sleep. I closed the nursery room door and fell asleep in the crib.

In the morning I woke up and wet my diaper before going back to sleep. Laura woke me up a second time, changed me, and dressed me in an adult styled denim shirt dress.

Downstairs Leslie's face was wet with tears from crying.

Laura herded us all into the kitchen where she gave Leslie and myself each a large glass of orange juice. Leslie only drank about half of hers as Laura and I had a breakfast of bacon, eggs, and waffles. Leslie only had some toast.

Laura took us into her office, sat Leslie in front of a computer, and opened the accounting software on Laurel Delivery. "Work on it."

Late that morning Leslie had an unaudited financial report, which spooled off the printer. Laura dressed both herself and me in our best skirt suits with the makeup, jewelry, and pantyhose of the same eloquence. We visited the bank in those spiffy clothes with the financial report, and was handed a loan application.

Laura drove all of us to a lunch time AA meeting. She told me to drive home, check the phones, and return in an hour and a half. She went in with Leslie.

At home I removed my clothes, changed myself, and redressed myself in something less expensive looking. There were several calls needing immediate attention which they received. After picking up Laura and Leslie and returning home Leslie helped us with forming a new corporation which I delivered downtown. We named the new corporation the TransBalto Cab Co. We knew the Trans part stood for transsexual. Everybody else could think it meant it served both the City and the County.

The Empire Cab Company building was a wreck. Everything that could be sold had been carried away by someone. Lights were broken and fixtures were rusty. Crack heads had broken in and had been living there. The water had been cut off. In retaliation they had selected a corner of the lower floor to pee and crap in.

Two weeks later we told the Court all that and dropped the price to One Thousand Dollars up front with the rest over time.

A month later we had approval from the bank and the court. We arrived at the Empire Cab Company garage with police to run everyone out and a door company with their locksmith.

I was there a few days later seeing what might be done when a young man in

shabby clothes walked up to me. "You the new boss girl?"

Well, I thought, good for Laura making my attire so credible it fooled him. But what does he know of life that I would want to know? "Buyer is TransBalto Cab Company."

"No matter. When do we start?"

"Start?"

"Working. You owe us jobs after taking over the old company." His face was scarred, and his tattooed forearms and meaty hands were too.

My stomach clenched up. "Not yet. We have to get building inspections first. What's your name?"

"Jaws."

"How do I reach you?"

"I be around. Friends too. When's the opening?"

"When it passes inspections."

His eyes were darting around as he looked in the big open garage door.

"Enough. You get out of here." I expected to be attacked.

He lingered before sauntering away.

The next day I called in all the staff and said what I thought. Several of us bought revolvers. Mine easily fit in my big shoulder bag under a pair of spare diapers.

A few weeks later the building was gutted by arson.