

*"I've been trying to open the door  
To the secret of my destiny  
And every new road I think is the one  
Seems to lead right back to me*

*I've looked for a way to be wiser  
A way to be strong  
Now I see the answer was hiding  
In me all along*

*And I'm ready to fly  
Over the sun  
Like a rocket to heaven  
And I'm ready to soar  
Right through the sky  
Never dreamed I'd find something to lift me so high  
I've always had wings  
But I wasn't ready to fly"*  
~ "Ready to Fly" Richard Marx

I was in the dining room with the other Wildcats. We were eating breakfast. I guess Melanie noticed me acting a little more reserved than normal.

"Jesse, are you alright? You're quiet this morning, even for you." She said.

"I'm fine Melanie." I said.

She looked at me, "Now I know you're lying. You never call me Melanie. What's going on?"

"It's nothing, really." I said.

Just then Michelle walked in to check on us.

"Hey Wildcats. Oh, happy birthday Jesse." She said.

I sighed, "Thanks."

"Today's your birthday?" Melanie asked.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Destiny asked.

"Because, it's no big deal." I said.

"Yes it is, how old are you?" Ellie asked.

"18." I mumbled.

"You're an adult now...that's so exciting!" Ellie said.

"Yet you don't seem happy about it...why?" Melanie asked.

I sighed, "Just because."

"Your aunt is coming to have lunch with you today right?" Michelle asked.

Yeah, thanks Michelle. "Yeah." I said.

"Your aunt? I thought you hated her." Melanie said.

"I do. This is a business lunch." I said.

"What business?" she asked.

I sighed again, I knew they wouldn't let up until I told them. "I'm 18 now which means the money my parents left... what's left anyway...is mine. Aunt May can no longer touch it. She's not happy about that, she wants a percentage and is probably going to try and talk me into giving her something, which I'm not going to do."

"Oh...wow...that's good though...you know that she can't take your money anymore." Melanie said.

I nodded, "Yeah...but it's not going to be easy."

Tommy

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Jason and I were sitting at our desks discussing a case we were working on when the chief walked over.

“Oliver, Scott...I’ve heard good things about you since you joined us here. There’s a special assignment I’d like you to take.” He said.

“Name it sir.” Jason said.

“Over on the north side, there’s been reports of heavy drug traffic, high cost variety. I need you to try to find out where it’s coming from so we can take them out. Keep in mind this is a upscale neighborhood you’re dealing with...not the normal drug dealer HQ.” he said.

“We’re on it sir.” I said.

“Good...and good luck.” He said leaving us.

“Ok, this sounds like a big case, let’s get to work.” Jase said.

I nodded, “Let’s start with an undercover investigation of the area. If we let them know we’re in there too early they’ll just run.”

Jason nodded and we got started.

Anna

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Kristy was getting ready to leave. I was helping her pack.

“I wish you could stay longer.” I said.

“So do I but I have to get back to the Academy. I’ve taken about all the leave I can get away with.” She said. She was a student at a military academy.

“I understand. I’m gonna miss you though. It’s been nice having a friend around.” I said.

“You always have me. I’m just a phone call away...but you have Peg and Maggie back...they’ll stand with you now.” Kristy said.

“It’s not the same. I’m glad I have them back but you’re my best friend.”

She smiled then hugged me, “You’re my best friend too.”

“I’m so scared...how can I raise this baby alone...and how will I keep from being alone? Why guy will want a girl with a baby?” I asked about to cry again.

“Anna, listen to me and listen carefully...you won’t be raising this baby totally alone. You have your family. And any guy worth your time won’t care...have you considered talking to Aaron again? Maybe trying to fix that relationship too?” she asked.

I shook my head, “No.”

“Why not?”

“Because I hear he’s seeing someone else.”

“Oh...I’m so sorry Anna. Any idea who?”

“No. Not a clue...though judging from the way I noticed him staring at Felicity during the talent show I am starting to wonder if it’s her.”

“Future girl? Well that’s a failed relationship.”

“Oh? Logan’s mom stayed in the past.” I pointed out

“That was different. She went back to a time before she lived. Two of her didn’t exist in the same time...and no one knows if there might be some consequences someday for her doing that.” Kristy said.

“Yeah, well even after Felicity goes back to her time Aaron will still hate me.”

“You don’t know that he hates you. I think after Felicity leaves you should have a long talk with him.”

“How do you know I want him back?” I asked

She looked at me, “I can tell by the look in your eyes when you say his name.”

Jesse

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Afternoon rolled around and my aunt showed up at the Academy. I planned on giving her one more chance to be my family before I went off on her. When Michelle notified me she was there and brought her to the lodge I went over to her.

“Hi Aunt May.” I said.

“Jesse.” She said.

“I’d like you to meet my friends.” I said showing her over to the group. “These are my friends Ellie, Chris, and Destiny...over there in that group is my friend Tiffany...and this is Melanie, Ellie’s twin sister and my girlfriend. Guys, this is my aunt May.” I said.

“It’s nice to meet you.” Melanie said. I could tell she was making herself be nice.

“You have a girlfriend?” Aunt May asked.

“Yes ma’am, a wonderful girlfriend.” I said.

“Great, someone to spend your money on.” She mumbled.

“Excuse me ma’am, with all due respect, I’m not like that. I couldn’t care less about how much money Jesse has.” Melanie said.

“That’s what we all say sweetie.” Aunt May replied.

“Enough, leave her alone, you don’t know her so don’t judge her. Let’s just go.” I said. I had a feeling she had little interest in being my family.

We went to a diner in downtown Reefsides and found a table.

“So, why did you come here to see me? You’ve never come before.” I said.

“Well, I want to help you. You’re 18 today Jesse, happy birthday by the way, and with that comes the money your parents left for you. I just want to make sure you know how to handle that kind of money.” Aunt May replied.

“And you wanted to try to get a percentage out of me.”

“Well, now that you mention it, I’ve spent a lot on that school, some of it from my own pocket. I’m broke now, I think I’m entitled to something to making sure you had such good care.”

I looked at her, “Are you insane?”

Tommy

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Jason and I had decided to masquerade as a gay couple looking to buy a home. This would allow us to talk to the residents without drawing any suspicion. We were in the front yard of one house when this lady walking her dog walked by.

“Afternoon.” I said.

“Afternoon...you two thinking of buying this place?” she asked.

“Yeah, we just got married and we’re looking for a place we can call home and raise a family in.” Jason said.

“Oh wow, congratulations.” The lady said.

“You live around here?” I asked.

“Yeah, at the other end of the street.” She said.

“Good...can you tell me, is this a good neighborhood, you know, to raise children?” I asked.

“For the most part.” She nodded.

“For the most part?” Jason asked.

“Well...ok you didn’t heard this from me but I’d hate to see you bring your kids into this...see that house over there...the one with the black car in the driveway?” she asked.

“Yeah.” Jason said.

“Well, there’s been rumors that there’s been some drug dealings in that house. Of course that’s hear say...it might be totally wrong.” She said.

“It’s something to think about though. Thank you.” I said.

“I should get back to my walk...it was great meeting you.” She said continuing on her way.

“Time to pay a visit to that house.” I said looking at the house she pointed out.

Jason nodded and we walked over and rang the doorbell.

A lady holding a baby answered the door.

“Hi, we’re new in the neighborhood and we just wanted to introduce ourselves.” I said.

“Oh, hello, which house are you moving into?” the lady asked.

“That one at the end of the street.” Jason said.

“That’s such a pretty house...you two are together?” she asked.

“Yes ma’am, we just got married.” Jason said.  
“Oh wow, how wonderful.” She said, she seemed perfectly nice, of course that didn’t mean anything.  
“What a cute baby...we’re looking to adopt soon.” I said.  
“Thank you. He’s all I have now.” She said.  
“His father is gone?” Jason asked.  
“He still lives here but he’s so wrapped up in the business...” she said as she seemed to tense.  
“That’s too bad. What does he do?” I asked.  
“He’s a...salesman.” She said.  
“Wow, what does he sell? We’ve been looking for a good deal on a new vacuum.” I said.  
“Um, he’s not a vacuum salesman.” She said.  
“Oh, ok. I guess you don’t work?” I asked.  
“Just around the house.” She said.  
“That’s good, gives you time for your son.” Jason said.  
“Yeah, anyway, I really should get back to what I was doing. It was nice to meet you.” She said.  
I nodded, “Likewise.”

We walked back to the car.

“Thoughts?” I asked.  
“That’s her. I was looking in the background and I noticed some boxes that might have had ingredients in them...I also smelt weed and a couple of other things in the air. I think she’s selling laced weed...I don’t know what else.” Jason said.  
I nodded, “I agree. Let’s use that house for a stakeout. They’ll probably have a bunch of people over at some point for a ‘dinner party’ or something. We’ll take them out then. We’ll need back up when the time comes.”  
Jason nodded, “Another dangerous take down.”  
“Probably so. That’s probably why we got the case. We can handle that sort of thing.”  
“I just hate doing this kind of thing since last time I got shot. I saw how that affected Kat and Alex and I don’t want to put them through that again.”  
“Hey, I don’t want anything to happen to me either, I’m a new grandfather and I haven’t even gotten to see my granddaughter yet, but this is the job we signed on for.” I said.  
“I know...it’s just not always a walk in the park.”  
“If it was everyone would do it.”

Anna

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I got Kristy to the airport.  
“Ok, well have a safe flight.” I said hugging her.  
“You be safe. I’ll call you soon.” She said.  
“Thanks for everything.”  
“Anytime.” I watched her go into the airport then I headed for home.

As I drove I thought about everything that had happened and how stupid I’d been. I’d lost everything because of Trent. How did I let myself fall for him? I knew what he was...I knew what he did to Mom...I knew the kind of man he was...yet I fell for him...hard. It was like I’d been possessed. I didn’t even know why I fell for him like that. I had to be the world’s biggest idiot.

I got home and noticed Jasmine’s car in the driveway. At least Josh was happy. I knew it was only a matter of time before they got back together. And that was just as well...Jasmine treated him better than Harley ever did anyway. I looked down at my stomach as I headed for the door. I was just starting to show a little bit now. Just enough for remind me all the time there was a baby inside me...just on the off chance I forgot. I went inside and then up to my room. I started thinking about Aaron. Maybe Kristy was right...after Felicity was gone maybe I should talk to him. Peg and Maggie forgave me...maybe he would too.

Jesse

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“What did you say?” Aunt May asked.

“Are you insane?” I repeated, “You didn’t take care of me. You sent me off to a school for troubled youth when I wasn’t even troubled. You sending me there instead of being my family is what gave me my troubles. You have no right to anything that’s mine. And as for you spending your money on me, that’s bullshit. You took the money that should have been used on me, that my parents left, and you spent it on you. That’s all you cared about after my parents died. You didn’t care that your sister was gone and left a son behind you needed to care for...you just wanted the money she left. You’re a sick, sad person. I’m not even angry at you, I pity you...”

“Oh you do? Any why’s that?” she asked.

“Because I won’t be alone after today...I have Melanie. But you...you will have no one and nothing after today. You will be all alone without anyone that cares if you live or die.” I said.

“You think Melanie cares about you? She probably found out about your inheritance. She wants money...it’s all about money.”

“Only to you. Only to you...Melanie knows there’s more important things in life.”

“You’re a foolish young boy.”

“No, you’re foolish...someday you’ll wake up and realize how foolish...and if you don’t you’ll die alone. Aunt May, I didn’t want it to be this way...you’re the only family I have left...but if that means nothing to you then I’ll walk away and never look back.”

“Why would I want to be your family? Your mother and that rich husband of her’s always looked down on me. Her and her perfect family...it made me sick. She deserved what she got but I got stuck with you. I was entitled to that money for all the times she stuck her nose up at me.”

“Fuck you. My mother was a million times the woman you could ever dream to be. I will not sit here and listen to you put down her memory. You’re just a jealous and bitter woman. And my mother loved you...you’re a bigger fool than I thought if you didn’t see that. Do you realize that before she died she’d been trying to convince my father to let you move in with us. She knew you were having a rough time and she wanted to help you get back on your feet. She loved you so much...it would hurt her so much if she could hear what you think of here now.” I said standing up.

“Where are you going? We’re not finished.”

“Yes we are...yes we are. Goodbye Aunt May...I think it’s for the best if you just leave me alone from here on in.” I said turning and walking out. I started heading for the Academy when I saw Bridge and Savannah driving by. They pulled over.

“Jesse? Hey...what are you doing?” Savannah asked.

“I had lunch with my aunt today and it didn’t go so well. I’m headed for the school.” I said.

“Want a ride?” Bridge asked.

I nodded, “Sure.” I said getting in the back. We went to the Academy. I knew when we pulled up that it was where I belonged...the idea of graduating soon scared me like crazy, but as long as I had Melanie I had a feeling I’d make it through.

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Tommy

We were staking out the home of the drug dealers and we noticed cars parking in front. We were going to have to bust in soon. We called for back up and had them on standby. They were sitting on neighboring streets just waiting for a call. Jason and I went to the door of the house and rang the doorbell.

“You again?” the lady asked when she opened the door.

“Good evening ma’am, Reefside, PD, we have some questions for you.” Jason said showing his badge.

“Police!” Someone inside called out. We heard a gun shot then the lady slammed the door.

Jason pulled out his 2-way radio, “Move in, now.” He said as he and I took cover. I went to the car and pulled out the megaphone.

“This is the Reefside PD. We don’t want to hurt you, just come out peacefully and nobody will get hurt. We have the place surrounded and there is no place to run.” I said.

No one came out of the house.

“You have 30 seconds to surrender or we’re coming in.” I said.

30 seconds passed with nothing.

“Ok, move in.” I told the squad. We all pulled our weapons and were prepared to shoot if we had to. We went to the

door and it was locked. Jason kicked it in and we went in. No one was there. The place looked empty. Suddenly we heard a gun shot. It was aimed at me. I managed to move out of the way just in time. I fired back. This started a shootout. This shootout went on for a couple of minutes before all of the drug dealers were shot. It was a bloody mess. "There's no survivors...2 officers were wounded but we had no other casualties." Jason reported.

"What about the baby, was he here?" I asked.

"I don't know." Jason said.

We went to the bedroom and found the baby's room. He was in his crib sleeping."

"How did he sleep through that?" Jason asked.

"He might have been sedated." I said.

"What do we do with him?" Jason asked.

"Child services." I said.

We turned the baby over then went for a bite to eat. It had been a long day and tomorrow would be a long day of paper work.

After dinner we decided to go to the Academy and see Michelle. It had been awhile since we saw her and after today I needed to see my sister. We went to her house and explained everything that had happened.

"So everyone got killed?" she asked.

"Yeah...it wasn't the plan but there was no choice." I said.

"I feel sorry for the poor kid. Both his parents are dead." Jason said.

"He's probably better off without them." I said.

"Wait, whoa, kid? A little boy?" Michelle asked.

"A baby...he was in his room when all this went down." I explained.

"What happened to him?" Michelle asked.

"We turned him over to child protective services." I said.

Michelle seemed to go into thought.

"Michelle, what are you thinking? I know that look." I said.

"I want the baby." She said.

"What?!" I asked.

"You heard me. I want the baby. Take me to him." She said.

"What? Why?" Jason asked.

"Because Hunter has always wanted a son. I'm Sataurian royalty, I can only produce female offspring. It's not fair to him. This is my one shot to give Hunter a son. Now take me to the baby." She said.

"You know there's no talking her out of this." Jason said.

I sighed, "Fine, if we hurry we can get there to talk to someone before they close the office."

We got to the office building and found the director. Michelle knew him from working with him with some of the Starlight children.

"Mr. Jenkins, so nice to see you." Michelle said walking in his office.

"Mrs. Bradley, what a wonderful surprise. What brings you here?" he asked.

"Well, my brother here, Detective Oliver, told me that there was a baby brought in today that was orphaned." Michelle said.

"Yes, we were unable to find any legal records on him. It's almost like the mother just had him in her home and didn't tell anyone." Mr. Jenkins said.

"She might have if she were taking drugs and didn't want to be caught." I said.

"That's horrible. Mr. Jenkins, I was wondering if there was a chance I could take this baby." Michelle said.

"You mean to adopt?" he asked.

Michelle nodded, "Yes sir."

"I don't see why not. I know how wonderful you and your husband are with kids from your work at Starlight. I'll draw up the paperwork tomorrow." Mr. Jenkins said.

"Would it be ok if I took him home tonight? I could have him back here first thing in the morning and we'll do the legal stuff." Michelle said.

Mr. Jenkins laughed, "Only for you Mrs. Bradley, I trust you but this has to stay between us."

Michelle nodded, "Of course."

A couple minutes later Mr. Jenkins walked in with the baby.

Michelle took the baby and smiled. “Thank you.”

Michelle

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When Tommy and Jason dropped me off I went inside the house. Hunter was in the living room.

“There you are, I was wondering where you took off to...who’s baby?” he asked.

“Hunter, meet your new son.” I said.

“What?” he asked.

I explained the whole story to him. “...and so I thought this was the perfect chance for you to finally have a son.” I finished.

“Oh my god...you’re serious aren’t you? I really have a son?” Hunter asked.

I nodded, “It’ll become legal tomorrow.”

Hunter was speechless but he was tearing up, “Can I hold him?”

I nodded and handed the baby to Hunter.

“We should name him.” Hunter said.

“You’re right. How about Hunter Daniel Bradley Jr.?” I asked.

“No. I want him to have his own identity...not live in my shadow. Anyway, I want to name him after Blake.”

“Right, cause that’ll give him his own identity. What about Hunter Blake?” I asked.

“No...ok what about this, Blaine Daniel Bradley? Blaine is kinda like Blake but it isn’t and he’ll have my middle name.” Hunter asked.

I thought about it, “Yeah...I like that name...Blaine...”

Just then Felicity walked in with Harley and Arissa.

“Oh hey, a baby!” Arissa said.

Felicity looked at the baby, “Blaine?” she asked.

Hunter and I laughed. Obviously we’d picked the right name.

“Yes, this is your new baby brother Blaine.” I said.

“A baby brother? How?” Harley asked.

I explained it all to them. “And Harley, I expect you to be nicer to Blaine than you are to your sisters.”

“Of course...he’s a baby...and he’s not a secret that’s being kept from me.” Harley said.

I nodded, “Good. Now if you’ll excuse me I need to get Blaine to bed.”

I took him to my room and put him in Felicity’s old crib. As I watched him go to sleep Hunter came in.

“This feels right doesn’t it?” I asked.

He nodded, “Yes it does...it feels like our family is complete now.”

I smiled and leaned back into Hunter’s arms. It finally felt like I had everything I ever wanted.