

Zig Zag is Copyright © Max Black Rabbit. Sabrina, Darke Katt and R.C. are Copyright © Eric W. Schwartz. James Sheppard, Marvin Badger, Rhonda Badger, Yohni, Alexi, Michael, Esteban, Mia, Wanda Vixen and Tamara Rabbit are Copyright © James Bruner. Alex O'Whitt is © Tigermark. The B-Team is © Silver Coyote. Jean LeBrun, Gabrielle Ryder, Timothy Bigglesworth-Farthington von Salzburg, Malcolm Grazer, Doctor Fox Jones, Peter Spermophilus, Miranda Spermophilus, Dina Spermophilus, Leo Leon, Miriam Redtail, Lizzy Doe, Emma Grey, Professor Moose Nicholson, Professor Erica Belge and Pethouse Magazine is © Joan Jacobsen, 2005. All other characters appearing in this story, except where otherwise specifically noted, are likewise © Joan Jacobsen.

Legal Notice: This story is Copyright © 2005 by Joan Jacobsen. This story may not be sold or used for commercial profit in any form or fashion. This story may not be modified in any way. This story may not be posted on a mirror site or any other Internet site without the written permission of the author. This story may not be distributed on print, magnetic, electrical or optical mediums.

Permission to use characters that are Copyright other individuals was obtained prior to the appearance of said characters.

The author, Joan Jacobsen, hereby asserts moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

This is an independent work of fiction with no connection whatsoever to Max Black Rabbit, Eric W. Schwartz, E.S. Productions or James Bruner and is in no way meant to imply any connection with Max Black Rabbit, Eric W. Schwartz, E.S. Productions, or James Bruner. This story contains characters created by Max Black Rabbit, Eric W. Schwartz, James Bruner, Tigermark and Silver Coyote. Events and characters occurring in this story should not be considered part of the storylines for either 'Zig Zag', 'Sabrina Online' or 'Sabrina Online - The Story'.

In fact, as far as 'Zig Zag', 'Sabrina Online', 'Sabrina Online - The Story' and 'Zig Zag the Story' are concerned, this story does not exist. The artists disavow any knowledge of and do not officially sanction the events in this story.

W-Day minus One.

It had been a while since Esteban found out that his stag-party wouldn't simply be a matter of him and Fox getting a few beers and chatting about married life. Not long, but long enough for him to get seriously worried about what Rafe, Marvin, Alexi and all the other males from the studio might have in store for him. He had to hope that Fox would be a moderating force, at least.

He told himself that, as he was laying in bed. He'd just woken up. The alarm-clock said it was half past six in the morning.

It was too early and he knew he had to get some more sleep. Jean was fast asleep next to him, all curled up in her quilts. She often slept fitfully, but she would usually stop whimpering in her sleep if he put his arms around her and held her. He'd asked about the nightmares in the past, but she didn't want to talk about it. What the wolf wondered about right now was whether tonight would be a waking nightmare for him. He certainly hoped it would all work out somehow.

He brushed a lock of Jean's ashen hair out of her face and smiled. Then he leaned down and kissed the vixen's forehead. "Eet's just one more day now," he murmured and let himself slip back down on his pillow.

Thinking about his time with Jean made him smile. From meeting a very frightened and desperately insecure vixen with beautiful eyes at a party, to living with a PhD student who wasn't afraid to stand up to a bunch of religious nuts, giving them a telling-to. And it was the same vixen. That was the most amazing thing.

He'd never been this content before in his life. All he had to do was look at Jean and he knew where he belonged, and that was what made tomorrow the right thing to do. What made him regret that he hadn't asked Jean long ago. It was dumb to feel such regrets, though, he knew that. It didn't change anything. Tomorrow, it would all be set right.

There would be a lot of furs he hadn't seen for a while. Chief amongst them, of course, would be Leo. He missed his friend. He got letters from Afghanistan, regularly. Leo wrote to all his friends it seemed. Him and Jean, Miriam and Fox, Emma...Lizzy of course got more letters than anyone. Leo had probably also written to some of his classmates, but Esteban didn't know any of them. No doubt, he'd written loads of letters to his parents as well.

Leo would be there tonight too, but Esteban had already decided to have a talk with the lion about not staying all night. Much as he wanted his friend to do so, he wanted to make sure Leo had time with Lizzy as well. He knew Jean planned on talking to Lizzy about the same thing.

It would probably be very late before he got back home. Getting another two hours of sleep...even one hour...would be helpful.

Sighing contently, Esteban turned around and put his arms around Jean and let himself drift off again.

###

Leo stepped off the plane. He wasn't tired anymore. He was well rested and while he knew he should be exhausted and jetlagged, he felt fantastic. He'd slept every minute he could from the time he had left Karachi until now, and he had needed it. He smiled at the flight attendant at the bottom of the stairs and looked around, taking a deep, badly needed breath of Ohio air.

He was home.

Even if it was only for a few days, he was *home*.

Now all he had to do was get his two bags and he'd be heading home to Lizzy.

Getting through the security checkup was easier than he'd expected. The uniform probably did a lot to speed things along though. He saw furs who seemed to have waited quite a while at least. Nonetheless, he got through his checks quickly.

Within twenty minutes of landing, he was standing at the conveyor belt, waiting for his bags. He was smiling. He wanted to get his bags fast, catch a cab and bound up the stairs to his and Lizzy's apartment. He wanted to hold her...and kiss her...and tell her how much he loved her and how much he'd longed to be home with her. The thought alone made him smile a little wider. Furs around him seemed to give him a lot of admiring glances. Then again, he was still in uniform after all. A couple of older males actually saluted him with grateful smiles on their faces.

It felt nice.

"Leo?"

The lion realized that three letters shouldn't be able to ring so loudly in his head...but they did.

They did.

He turned around. Slowly. He'd probably miss the first pass of his bags but...who cared? He knew that voice. He'd longed for that voice through four months of Afghan Hell. There were eight months to go...but he could bear those...for that voice.

He smiled.

He didn't have to do anything except open his arms. His cap got knocked halfway off his head by the force of the hug, Lizzy enveloped him in. It felt like laughter and happiness was bubbling over from inside him and he swung his girlfriend around, before kissing her...pouring all his feelings into it.

She was there. He didn't have to wait another minute. She was right there in his arms.

"How did you...?" he managed to start.

Lizzy wiped tears of joy from her eyes and looked up at him. "Your Captain called from base...you know, using that unreliable telephone setup you have over there. Lucky he caught me...ten minutes earlier and I wouldn't have been home yet. He said he had my name from you...and he'd asked to be patched through to any Elizabeth Doe in Columbus. He said he'd talked to three others before me...he told me what planes you would be catching..."

"Sneaky of him," Leo grinned. "I'll have to remember to thank him when I get back."

That was the moment where he realized that everyone around them had stopped taking their luggage off the conveyor belt. Everyone was just looking at them. Smiling. A few of those standing around started clapping.

"Awww shucks," he muttered. "We must look like something out of a Hollywood blockbuster or something."

Lizzy smiled. "I don't care. I've got you back in one piece, safe and sound. I don't care if anyone is staring."

Leo didn't need to be told what to do next.

He just kissed her again.

###

Emma was blushing so badly she could barely bring herself to look up. Next to her, Jean was trying very, very hard not to break out in open giggles...and failing. They were carrying two bags of groceries back to Miriam's place, where the red vixen was

waiting with tea. Lizzy would join them soon. She said she had to make an important stop on the way over, to pick something up.

"Stop that!" Emma tried. She realized chiding her friend wasn't going to work, though, but somehow she had to say *something*.

"I'm sorry Emma," Jean managed to say between snickering and trying to put on a straight face. "It's just so strange to see you gushing over a male."

"Oh yeah, look who's talking?!" the mink chuckled. "We never hear you do that."

Jean shrugged. "I'm getting married tomorrow...to the only male there is for me, so why would I be gushing over others?"

Emma nodded. That made sense in her book. Besides, Jean was probably right. She wasn't exactly the type to do that, normally.

'Normally' was a word one could only use very sparingly around her or her friends anyway. 'Purposefully different' seemed to be more fitting. Still...just thinking of William made her smile. It felt a little strange that a male could treat her so nicely, but if anything that showed just how awful Jeremy had been all along.

"So, when are you two going to see each other again?" Jean asked, having finally regained control of her facial muscles. "Or hasn't that been decided yet?"

"Next weekend, actually. I mean, the rest of this week is kinda booked up for me. He did tell me to say he hoped you'd have the best day of your life."

"Then please thank him from me when you do see him."

Emma nodded. She would do that. She shifted the grocery bag a bit in her arms and looked into it. If she'd been a canid, she'd have wagged her tail, and she knew it. There were all kinds of good things in there. The largest chicken she'd seen in a very, very long time amongst other things. And fresh berries, and some chocolate, and mushrooms of various kinds. It'd be a meal and an evening to remember.

No doubt Gabrielle would be out there, making Columbus an entirely unsafe place all evening, but Emma actually felt good that Jean had asked them to please keep things pretty quiet. What she wanted was a great evening in the company of her best friends. Going out to a nightclub or even to one of their regular hangouts would mean a lot of strangers around. Tonight, that wouldn't be a good idea. Jean most likely just needed to be around furs where she didn't have to worry about getting the jitters about tomorrow.

"So...is the guest list long?" the mink asked, smiling widely.

"I think so. Not my side of it, mind you but Gabrielle has been quite active with the invitations. You know how she is..."

"Good God, I do..."

Grinning, Jean turned a corner and stopped at a crossing. The apartment was in the building on the opposite side. Currently, though, the 'Don't Walk' sign was lit.

"You're going to knock quite a few furs for a loop tomorrow, Jean..." Emma said as she stopped next to her friend.

"What do you mean?" the vixen asked.

Emma smiled and shrugged. "Your dress, for one thing."

It was Jean's turn to blush next. "Good grief, don't remind me..." she said and smiled. "However I managed to let you three and Zig Zag talk me into this..."

"Well she did have a *point*, Jean..."

"Oh, no argument on that issue. She did, she did. But still...I hate being center stage. You know that. I can't stand being scrutinized."

Emma nodded. That was very true. Jean could make herself the center of attention in many and varied situations if she wanted to, but she didn't. The 'Walk' sign lit up and they crossed the street and headed into the apartment building they were headed for. Still, she had no doubt that Zig Zag was perfectly aware of this, and that the dress that she had helped pick out was, in fact, going to be considerably less outrageous than what the other couple would turn up in.

In fact, Emma was certain that had played a part in the exact choice Zig Zag had made. And it *had* been her choice. She'd come in, taken control of the situation and basically relieved Jean of any choice in the matter. At first, Emma remembered she had been slightly worried about that, but clearly, Jean had been relieved that her stripy friend had taken care of it like that.

Lizzy had later commented that it was probably good that Zig Zag had dealt with it...or they would still have been looking for the right dress fifteen minutes before the ceremony was supposed to go off.

That reminded her of something.

"Jean?" she asked as they ascended the stairs. "Who's going to do the honors? I mean...the ceremony and all? Much as we all hate that fact, you won't find a minister or a priest who would...and even if you could it wouldn't be legally binding. I mean...it stinks, but that's the way it is...so...what are you going to do?"

Jean smiled enigmatically. "Oh, don't you worry. That's all well in paw..."

Emma nodded. That look on her friend's face was one she knew only too well. It told her that Jean did, in fact, have it all under control and that no amount of prodding and asking would change a thing.

###

"He's a bundle of nerves, you know. It's not doing him any good, this..."

Fox had deliberately put his face into the most serious and professional folds he possibly could.

Esteban was whimpering. His ears were flat over his head and his tail was tucked down against his legs.

"Aww, big strong wolf like him? C'mon, do you think Manius Caelius would've backed out of this?" Rafe asked, patting his friend's shoulder.

"Maneeus was a Cabron, compadre!" Esteban replied. His voice showed signs of absolute panic about to set in.

Fox would have stopped it if he didn't know what was to come. He did feel a momentary pang of sympathy for his very worried friend, but he relaxed in the knowledge that what was going to happen next would get a few good laughs.

"Compadres...do we reallee have to go een there?" Esteban asked and sighed. He already knew the answer.

"Absolutely, there is no way around it! Stop being such a worrier...you make a living filming porn-movies, for chrissakes, and your wife-to-be doesn't complain about that!" Michael said and ushered the wolf through the door.

Fox stayed outside as the last. He looked up at the neon sign over the doorway, saying 'Purple Pussycats' in large letters. They did look more pink than purple, admittedly. Thank goodness this was all planned ahead, or Miriam would've skinned him slowly for entering a strip-joint.

Shaking his head, he went in and closed the door behind him.

###

It wasn't often that Paul Donkey had such an extraordinary amount of beauty visiting 'Spirit of New Orleans' at the same time. He wasn't complaining though. The

femmes taking up several tables to the left side of the room were obviously in a fantastic mood, celebrating a big, upcoming event.

And they liked his Irish Coffee. What more could he really ask for?

He wasn't stupid either. He knew fully well where these femmes worked. If Miss Ryder hadn't told him herself a long time ago, he would have known from the fact that Ohio's most famous skunk was present in the company as well.

Someone signaled for him and he picked up a tray and went back down there, a smile on his face.

"Yes Ladies? Would you need another round?" he asked.

A beautiful red panda shook her head and looked at the others. "I think that's a bad idea. If we drink any more coffee we won't be able to sleep at all tonight!"

"Is that a bad thing?" Gabrielle asked, cheerfully.

Zig Zag nodded. "Yes it is. You'd be bleary eyed and look like someone who was still drunk tomorrow evening. At the very least you'd have the death of hangovers."

Gabrielle pondered that a moment, then nodded. "You're right. We're going to need rest, but come on, it's still early in the evening. We can't stop now?"

Paul grinned but didn't intrude. This was obviously an important decision and the femmes all looked at each other. Most of them were tipsy, but in no way drunk yet.

"Good grief," Anna said and shook her head. "Whoever spoke of stopping!?! But I think Zig Zag is right. A prudent break in the alcohol intake might be advisable."

She looked very sincere, too. It got a few giggles, but mostly, the rest seemed to agree.

Zig Zag looked up at Paul and smiled crookedly. "At least we're going to need some peanuts. Salt helps bind the alcohol and I really don't want to see them all unable to stand on their own feet tomorrow at the wedding," she explained.

"Ohhh, a wedding?" Paul said, pretending he hadn't gleaned that much from the conversation going on between the two equines and the feline yesterday. "That's wonderful. Who's the lucky femme?"

"They are," Gabrielle said and nodded towards Gabrielle and Yohni. "It's taken them long enough, too."

She had a warm, happy smile on her face.

Paul stood up straight. "Gabby!" he exclaimed, mock-offended. "How long have you been a regular here? And you too Yohni? And neither of you felt it necessary to tell me that you were getting married? Shame on you two!"

Gabrielle at least had the decency to look properly shameful. "Sorry Paul, I didn't mean to be rude...I guess I just never thought of it when we were down here."

Paul shook his head and flicked his tail in pretended indignation, raising his nose just a little. "I see how it is," he said. "My Irish Coffee is good enough but I'm not..."

"If you'd been twenty years younger I'd have offered you a job," Zig Zag said, dryly.

Everyone giggled. Paul gave up his pretending and laughed along with them. He was happy for the two femmes. They'd been regulars at his nightclub for more than two years...almost three in fact...and they always brought smiles and cheers along with them.

"It was very decent of you to wait until after Harley got married, and properly settled in, Gabby," he chuckled. "The next round is on the house. I've got just the thing...something new I'm going to try out and it's non-alcoholic..."

"Who's Harley?" a golden jackal in the company asked. Paul couldn't remember having seen her before.

"Harley Davidson...and no, don't laugh, please. That's his actual name," Gabrielle explained. "He used to be a bartender here. He had the biggest crush on me. Now he runs a nightclub in Cinci. Same name and concept. Paul is branching out you might say..."

Paul smiled widely and perked up his long ears. "Hey, a donkey's gotta do what a donkey's gotta do!" he said and headed up to the bar, with a detour to the stage.

A few words were shared. Then a laugh went up from one of the musicians...and a few seconds later, the band started playing a jazzed up wedding-march improvisation.

Gabrielle groaned and hid her face against her arms on the table. Yohni patted her shoulder gently, while the rest of the company burst out laughing.

###

Dinner was almost ready. It'd be a fairly late one, but none of the three friends in Miriam's apartment minded that. They'd pulled up some bean-bag chairs and Miriam had made them all something hot to drink.

"God almighty," Emma said with a crooked smile. "Do you remember the first time the four of us did something like this? Get together for an evening of chatting and so on, I mean?"

Jean shook her head in disbelief of the memory. "Oh good grief, do I..." she muttered. "What a bunch of absolute misfits we were."

"We still are! And proud of it!" Miriam exclaimed, raising her mug. "SNF will never die!"

"Hearhear!" the other two cheered and clinked their mugs against Miriam's.

Emma chuckled. "I wonder how many times that night I apologized for something..."

"I stopped counting after the first hour," Miriam smiled. "You grew out of it. We're misfits for entirely different reasons now."

Jean nodded and sipped her hot drink. "That's right. Now we're misfits because we don't want to be mainstream and just like everyone else. It's a conscious choice."

"Speaking of misfits...where's our fourth member?" Emma asked. "She just said she had to pick something up on the way here..."

Jean shrugged. "She'll get here. She could be stuck in traffic, or whatever she was picking up wasn't quite ready yet. And while we're on the subject of what she's picking up...if it's something you three had planned out..."

Miriam shook her head. "Honestly Jean...it isn't. I promise. We all said we'd respect your wishes about this evening and we will. Nothing wild or extreme or anything. We'll just stay here and chat and have a really cozy evening, that's all."

Emma nodded too, and Jean believed her friends. They wouldn't do anything embarrassing if she asked them not to do so.

There was a knock on the door and Miriam got up to answer it. She'd only made it halfway across the room when Lizzy opened it and peeked in. "Ohhh, hey, you're all here. That's good. I didn't mean to take so long but...there was this problem with what I had to go do. It kinda demanded my attention for a little while. I hope you all understand?"

"Absolutely," Jean said with a smile. "The food isn't quite ready yet anyway. Come in and take your jacket off and sit down with us while it finishes."

Lizzy nodded and came in. "Oh, I'd love that. Hey, is that your herbal tea I smell, Miriam? Can I have two mugs?"

"Two?"

Lizzy grinned as the door opened again and Leo stepped in, smiling.

"Yeah, I'm sure this big lug would like a hot drink before continuing on to meet up with Esteban and the others..."

"LEO!!!"

"OH MY GOD!! GET OVER HERE!!!"

Suddenly the lion found himself pounced by three femmes, all wanting to give him a hug. He laughed and tried to make room for all of them in one big embrace.

"I missed you three too," he rumbled and smiled. "My goodness, Emma, you look like a million dollars! Nice haircut. It really suits you."

Emma blushed and fidgeted a little. "Aww, you noticed."

Lizzy practically beamed with pride. "Of course he does. He's my lion!"

Miriam smiled. "Come in, sit down. Forget the army and the uniform for fifteen minutes and have something to drink with us before you run along to join the others."

Leo nodded and took off his shoes. "I'd like that. A lot. It's been a long flight, but at least I slept almost the entire way. No jet lag to speak of."

"That's good," Jean said and gave the lion another brief hug. "I'm so happy to see you again. I didn't think you'd make it back until tomorrow?"

"Neither did I," Emma added. "I didn't think you'd miss the wedding...I mean we were told you had some leave coming up but it IS halfway across the globe..."

Leo winked and put an arm around the shoulder of both femmes, leading them back to the beanbags. "You don't think I'd miss a chance to be here on Esteban's stag-night, do you?" he asked.

Jean couldn't stop herself from smiling. "Depending on what they've got planned for him...he's either going to want to smack you, hide behind you or hug you, Leo."

"Let's hope for the last option, shall we?" Leo chuckled and dropped down in a beanbag, stretching his legs. "Ahhhh...a mug of Miriam's home mixed herbal tea and a few minutes rest...this is just what Corporal Monk ordered..."

"Corporal Monk?" Jean asked.

"Squad medic," Leo explained.

Lizzy leaned down and kissed Leo between the ears. "No more army tonight. The guns are in Afghanistan...not in Ohio!" she chided.

Leo smiled crookedly and saluted. "Yes ma'am..."

"Now that part I *could* get used to," Lizzy purred.

Emma looked at Leo with a gravely serious expression on her face. "You're in sooooo much trouble Leo..." she said and sighed exaggeratedly.

Leo played along and looked suitably worried, until Miriam shoved a mug in his paws. Five minutes later, they were all chatting and enjoying themselves. The food would be done soon and Leo would be on his way to Esteban's party...but for now, he wasn't going anywhere.

###

Esteban was having a blast. All his nervousness had vanished almost as soon as they had made it past the front doors. The place had been empty. No dancers on the stage, no half-drunk males waiting to put dollar-bills down panties or bras of femmes. There was a bartender there, but that was all. A young, smiling, female lynx with large eyes.

The party was now well underway. The entertainment so far had been taken care of by the jukebox but that had been unplugged a few moments ago, and a couple of furs were carrying instruments onto the stage. Esteban really had no idea what was going on, but he was willing to go along with most things by now. His friends weren't going to do anything he couldn't deal with, he was sure of that much. In fact, he felt slightly ashamed for having doubted them.

"Don't mention it, buddy," Rafe had said and slapped his shoulders. "What good would it do to take you to a strip club anyway? You wouldn't notice a good looking femme if she bit you!"

Esteban had to admit that was probably largely true. He downed the rest of his beer and turned towards the stage.

The band was still setting up. Or at least their stage-paws were. Whoever it was needed a good few drums and the loudspeakers were fairly impressive.

"Who ees thees for...?" he asked and looked at Alexi next to him.

The blond canid grinned. "For you, who else?" he asked.

"No no...I mean...who ees thees for...the eenstruments? Who weell use them?" Esteban tried.

Fox held out a fresh beer for him. "You'll just have to wait and see, won't you? It's not the Rolling Stones, don't worry..."

"Bueno. I can't stand their museec," Esteban chuckled and took a sip.

Fox didn't answer. He'd gone off again and Esteban looked back to the stage. It looked like everything was almost ready. There was no band insignia on the drums or the loudspeakers, so strictly speaking, it could belong to anyone. This was no doubt Fox's doing, he told himself. Fox was the only one there who really knew his taste in music.

"Heh...you'd think someone was getting married, with all this festivity going on," a deep, bass voice said behind the bar.

Esteban's eyes went wide as saucers and he turned around, slowly. "Madre de Dios..." he whispered. "LEO!! What een the name of GOD are you...but...and tomorrow...and..."

The lion wiped off a glass and placed it in front of himself, before removing the cap. Then he winked to the lynx. "I'll just fill this and get out on the other side where I belong," he chuckled.

The bartender nodded and smiled. "Sure, Sir...go ahead."

Leo filled the glass with cold beer and took a long sip, nonchalantly keeping Esteban's half spoken question floating in the air like so much smoke, waiting to disperse. Then he slowly put his glass down and looked at his friend.

"D'you think I'd miss this for the world?" he asked and reached out, clasping his paw around the back of Esteban's neck affectionately.

Esteban grinned widely, for once not complaining that someone was messing up his mane. "Get over here on thees side of the bar you beeg eedeet, so I can geeve you a hug!" he burst out. "Deed Leezzee let you go? I mean...you just got home today, no?"

"She did, but I am not staying until it's obscenely late. Nor is she, with Jean. I'm sure you understand..."

"Absolutelee! No problemo. I am just happee you are here at all!"

Esteban's tail was wagging so furiously he was close to knocking over a couple of the bar-chairs.

"You're a wolf, Esteban...you're not supposed to wag your tail!" Rafe chided next to him.

"May I remind you of Meea's assets, Rafe?" Esteban replied without losing a beat.

Rafe's tail started wagging. Everyone else laughed heartily and Rafe deflated some, muttering something about Gabrielle's comebacks being infectious. Leo crossed around to the other side of the bar, taking another sip of his beer.

"So...who's going up on stage?" the lion asked.

"Whoa...that's a lot of nice ribbons you've got there, Lieutenant..." Alexi said, noting the commendations on Leo's chest. "What are those...?"

"Ribbons," Leo answered and smiled. "Tonight's not about me. It's about this guy, falling from our esteemed and honorable bachelor ranks."

He prodded Esteban's shoulder. The wolf blushed slightly and shrugged. "Eet's high time, though..."

"Damn straight. You've taken your dear sweet time in asking her!" Rafe grinned. "Hey...there's the band!"

A group of four femmes took up position on the stage, picking up their instruments. Esteban didn't know them. They were all quite good looking, admittedly, but clearly, they were musicians and not the normal employees using that stage.

"Best all femme cover-band in Ohio," Fox whispered. "Just wait and listen..."

Esteban sipped his beer again and nodded, smiling. This was turning out to be a good evening indeed.

###

Zig Zag looked up at the sky. It was late now. She would be going home soon and both Yohni and Gabrielle had decided they'd rather be ready for their big day than go on partying. It was a beautiful night. Even with the brightening evenings, it still got dark this late at night. But all the stars were out and there wasn't a cloud to be seen anywhere, obstructing the view. The moon was waning...less than half full. It was a beautiful night. It wasn't any less beautiful for the silhouette of Gabrielle and Yohni, holding each other. Gabrielle, being the taller of the two, had this way of looking incredibly protective when she held someone. As if daring the world to try it's worst.

To anyone not knowing the equine or her history, that might be confusing. Zig Zag knew where it originated...and it still took her slightly aback whenever she saw it. She didn't want to interrupt the two of them. Everyone else had gone each their separate ways until tomorrow's wedding. She had walked a while with Yohni and Gabrielle, mostly because she'd been parked in that direction.

She had only just said good night a moment ago. Turning her head she had seen the image of the two femmes in the moonlight. She smiled a little and nodded to herself. They were good together.

She turned a corner and fished her keys out of her pocket, unlocking the door to her car and getting in. She turned on the engine and backed out of the parking space. A moment later, she was on her way home.

There was another reason why she was the last one to leave. She had needed a few minutes to find out if her wedding present would be okay with Gabrielle too. Fortunately, it would be. In fact, the equine had seemed quite relieved at the prospect of moving to San Francisco, to get a fresh start. Despite herself, Zig Zag actually felt a little pang of pain over it. They'd move away, and she would miss them. Both of them. Terribly.

She didn't like friends going away, but at least this wasn't a matter of losing them. Smiling crookedly she reminded herself that this gave her an acceptable excuse to go to San Francisco regularly.

An intersection was coming up ahead. She needed to take a left turn to go home.

Smiling, she turned right.

Tonight, she didn't want to sleep alone. She overtook a slow moving truck and drove towards the edge of Columbus. James would probably not be awake by now, but she did have a spare key.

It wasn't the kind of night where one should sleep alone.

###

Jean sat down at her kitchen table. She was slightly tipsy, but not drunk. Esteban was a little more inebriated, but from what she had gathered when he came home, the males had partied pretty hard. It was all good. They deserved it, and as long as they had a good time, she was perfectly happy with it. Considering that Esteban's tail was still wagging when he came home, she was inclined to believe it had been a really good evening.

She was holding a pill-box in her paw. A small enameled one, with an embroidered lid. It was old. She treasured it...not just because of its age but because of its contents too. It held her hormones. Pills she had to take for the rest of her life. She put it down, looking at Esteban as he joined her across the table.

"I hope you had as good an evening as you look to have had," she said and smiled.

Esteban beamed widely. His eyes were slightly unfocused. Normally, Jean didn't like drunk furs, but in the case of Esteban it happened so rarely that she could deal with it. Especially since she knew him so well and trusted him implicitly.

"Eet was fantastico, Chica! Eet was great that Leo made eet back een time too. And they had me seengeeng...they had thees band and they got me up on stage, seengeeng...and Leo sang...and Rafe sang..." the wolf said and spread his arms out, still grinning.

"You all took turns I take it."

"Twice!"

Jean smiled. "I'm glad you had such a good time. I did too. Imagine that. Tomorrow by the time we'll go to bed...we'll be married. Isn't that...strange?"

"Not strange at all. I don't care about the law een thees matter. I've been married to you..." Esteban tried, then searched for a word and swayed a bit in his chair. "...en mi corazon...for a long, long time."

Jean reached out and brushed the wolf's mane out of his eyes. "Likewise," she said, softly. "We'll get the paperwork on this one day, Esteban. We *will*. Tomorrow is the important day, though. The paperwork can always come later."

The wolf nodded. He set his jaw. "No one ees goeing to tell me that loveeng you eesn't the right theeng, Chica. No one!"

Jean smiled crookedly. "Will you say the same in twenty years when I'm old and fat, though?" she giggled.

Esteban nodded vigorously. "Absolutelee, but you weell never grow old. Old ees a state of mind, Chica, you taught me that yourself. But I don't care about your shape. I love you for what's eenside you. Your speereet...your strength..."

He got to his feet and walked around the table, gently pulling Jean to her feet. Then he kissed her. He tasted slightly of beer and smelled of cigarette smoke. The vixen really didn't care at that moment. It was nice and safe in those arms. As always.

"I weell never stop loveeng you, Jean...that ees one oath I can make right here. I don't need weetnesses to say that."

Jean leaned her head against Esteban's chest and closed her eyes. "I love you too," she said, quietly...contently. This was where she belonged. No matter what anyone else had to say about it. She took a deep breath and listened to Esteban's heartbeat.

They'd go to bed in a moment, but for just a few minutes...she'd like to just stand there and listen.

"I must be the luckiest vixen in the world," she mumbled and snuggled up.

Esteban didn't say anything. He just kissed her hair.