

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. Jean LeBrun, Francois LeBrun, Marie LeBrun, Gabrielle Ryder, Theodore Bigglesworth-Farthington von Salzburg the Third, Roxanne Bigglesworth-Farthington von Salzburg, Timothy Bigglesworth-Farthington von Salzburg, Malcolm Grazer, William Pongo, Captain Archibald, Peter Spermophilus, Miranda Spermophilus, ArseNick/Nicholas Babouin, Mr. Hammond, Leo Leon, Vincent Leon, Sergeant Otetiani, Lieutenant Black, Julie Black, Miriam Redtail, Lizzy Doe, Emma Grey, Rowena Spyke, Professor Nutkin, Professor Moose Nicholson, Lance Gulo, Henry Hippopotamidae, John Ferret, Charles 'Mouse' Mombay, Paul Donkey, Harley Davidson (Not the motorcycle manufacturer, obviously) and Pethouse Magazine is © Joan Jacobsen, 2005.

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.

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.

LXIV – The whys of love

Yohni sat in her kitchen. On her own, with a cup of tea in front of her. She didn't know how to go about this. She knew she had to talk to Gabrielle, and she knew she needed some answers. But she wasn't sure how to get them, without upsetting the bronco.

Upsetting her was the last thing Yohni wanted to do. Unfortunately, she knew it would be impossible to avoid.

She looked into her teacup and tried to concentrate. She knew how she felt about Gabrielle, and she knew how Gabrielle said she felt about her. And deep down, she didn't doubt it. She just didn't understand it.

There was a notepad on the table, with a few scrawled words on it. She sighed, shaking her head. It was difficult. It had started out as an attempt to analyze her relationship with Gabrielle but she'd quickly realized that wasn't possible.

"Stupid mongoose, you can't analyze the heart," she told herself and shook her head. But the doubts were still there.

She hated those doubts. The feeling that she was always on the brink of losing Gabrielle. She had tried telling herself, several times, that feeling that way would only

make her act desperate or possessive, and that WOULD drive Gabby away from her, eventually.

It was very hard to make heads or tails of it all. She wanted to talk to Gabby about this. She wanted to put her mind at ease. At least she knew exactly why she was so uncertain. There were two simple reasons for that.

Firstly, Gabrielle had been so reluctant to give it a shot, initially. And secondly, she wasn't used to her relationships lasting more than a few weeks.

Despite these things, the mongoose couldn't help but feel guilty. It wasn't right to doubt Gabby like this. It wasn't like the bronco hadn't tried to alleviate these fears a dozen times already.

She put her head in her paws and sighed, quietly.

Conflicting emotions were tearing at her. On one paw, all she had to do to feel warm inside was to think of Gabrielle, holding her. On the other, all she had to do to worry, was to look in the mirror.

She tried to clear her mind. She didn't even know why she doubted this so much. It wasn't as if she and Gabrielle hadn't been together a while now and they'd already seen a lot of ugliness and come out of it stronger. The more she thought about the whole scenario, the more she realized these doubts were idiotic. But she couldn't shake them. And for that reason alone, she knew she had to sit down with Gabby and talk to her.

There was a knock on the door. It snapped her out of her thoughts and she got up to answer it.

###

Leo put his feet up and wriggled his toes. He smiled, widely, and wriggled them again. There was a kind of childlike wonder to the experience, he realized. He'd never really looked at his own toes before. After all, they'd always been there. Why bother? Now he did. He wriggled his big toes...one going back while the other went forward.

"You're bored, Leo. You're sitting here, contemplating your own *toes*!" he told himself, aloud.

The question was, what he was going to do about it? His parents were at home and he knew he wasn't exactly Mr. Popularity with them at the moment. Going to a porn convention was not their idea of good publicity. He didn't care. He'd had fun. And he'd

met Lizzy. That had really been something. For once, an intelligent femme that he could go out for pizza with, and not have her look at him in complete confusion when he used words longer than two syllables.

Most of the dates he'd gone on so far had included French cuisine and female counterparts with more teeth than brain cells. Trophy wives in the making. It had reminded him of what Gabrielle had tried so hard to avoid becoming.

It wasn't that all society femmes were stupid. All he had to do to get proof of that was look at his own mother. But he did see an unpleasant tendency to breed for physical beauty and disregard brains.

"I wonder if that's what happened to the royal houses in Europe before the revolutions," he asked himself and wriggled his toes again. Revolutions...now there was something he could talk to Lizzy about.

He smiled. It started as a quirk at the corners of his mouth, but kept growing until it was a full blown grin. He reached out to his side and picked up the telephone, dialing a long distance number.

It took a while before the phone was picked up at the other end.

"Hey there Lizzy. It's Leo. I'm sitting here, in my temple of capitalism, wriggling my toes in a study of absolute, complete boredom...and I'm sure you're the cure," he said.

Lizzy fell quiet at the other end of the line for a moment. Then she chuckled. "I think that goes down in history as one of the oddest opening lines ever, Leo. Anyway, what can I do for you today?"

"Weeeell...you can talk to me for a start?"

"Any time."

Leo grinned to himself. He let his mouth run a bit. It didn't matter what he was saying, nor what Lizzy replied. What he wanted was to hear her voice. The words spoken were less important right now. Listening to her not only made his boredom go away.

It made him less lonely.

It made him feel like a normal fur...

###

Jean put the kettle over. Hot tea was definitely a must in the morning. She didn't feel like she was properly alive before she'd downed the first cup of Earl Grey. The world always seemed to scowl at her through some indefinable haze of half sleepiness until she got her first cup of tea. Admittedly, it was easier waking up, when the vision meeting her was that of Esteban's face.

That reminded her that she needed to talk to Gabrielle. In fact, she needed to talk to Gabrielle *today* or she'd forget it again.

She sat down at the table and ran a paw through her hair. It wasn't going to be easy. She'd lived with Gabrielle since they moved away from Denver. They'd come so far together.

Now it was time to go further...on her own. And deep down, she knew she owed Gabrielle the chance to live her own life as well. That didn't make it any easier, though.

She shook her head. It was like standing on the edge of a ravine so deep she couldn't see the bottom...and jumping off, blindly trusting that there'd be a net to catch her, or that she'd learn how to fly before she hit the bottom. Some would call it downright stupid. At least foolhardy.

No. No more co-dependency. She'd lived her whole adult life measuring herself based on the impression of others. She was sick and tired of it.

Thinking back a few months...half a year...made that thought seem ridiculous. Half a year ago, she'd been a walking wreck. A nervous collapse waiting to happen. Now she'd not only grown a backbone, but she had a life to live. It was almost frightening in itself. She had to keep telling herself not to get her hopes up too high. She had a lifelong struggle ahead of her.

Esteban came out of the bathroom, with just a towel wrapped around himself for modesty. He smiled and headed over, kissing the vixen's hair.

"Good morneeng, Chica. Sleep well?" he asked.

"Like a rock. Can you take a seat for a moment, Esteban. I've got something I'd like to talk to you about," Jean answered with a little smile.

"Sure. Ees aneetheeng wrong?"

Jean shook her head and rubbed her face. "No. No, in fact, everything is great. Everything is wonderful. And I'd like to make sure it stays that way."

"What do you mean?" Esteban said and sat down.

"You asked if I'd like to move in, remember? Around the time we visited your mother..."

Esteban nodded, not entirely sure where this was going.

"If I were to get a hold of Gabrielle and get my things moved over here...when can I move in? I spend more time here than with her anyway. She can easily pay the rent on her own now...and somehow, I don't think it'd BE 'on her own' for very long. I think it's just a matter of time before she and Yohni move in together. Either there or elsewhere," Jean said, softly. She smiled a bit, still not quite awake.

Esteban blinked a few times and his ears perked up. "You could move een thees afternoon, chica. You don't need to wait! Are you *sereeous*??"

"Quite serious."

The maned wolf grinned. So widely it looked like the top of his head was going to fall off. "I'll get the males from the studeeo to help move your theengs. You just..." he began and shook his head. "I don't have the words, Jean...I reallee don't have the words. Gracias."

Jean reached over and took Esteban's paws in her own. "Don't thank me. You've literally given me hope. All I want...is to wake up, every morning for the rest of my life, and see you there."

Esteban felt his words get caught in his throat. Again he blinked. The vixen's voice was so sincere that he didn't really know how to best respond for a moment. Finally he got up and beckoned for her to please wait where she was.

Slightly confused, Jean obliged. There was an odd look on Esteban's face as the wolf headed into the bedroom. It took a while before he came back out, fully dressed. He headed back to the table and sat down, taking a small box out of his pocket.

"I've been meaneeng to geeve you thees for some time," he said and placed it on the table.

Jean felt her head start to swim. "E...Esteban...is that what I think it is?" she asked, hoarsely. Suddenly she didn't need tea to wake up.

"I suppose that depends on what you theenk eet ees, chica. But open eet and take a look."

Jean took the small box and opened it. A silver ring with a small diamond looked back at her. She didn't know what to say. Every word caught in her throat and she looked back at the wolf, eyes wide and clear.

Esteban smiled a little. "Do you like eet?"

"Like it? I...I don't know what to say. It's beautiful, Esteban. It's...wonderful," Jean said, softly.

"I theenk I can hear a "but" comeeng..." Esteban said, quietly.

"No...you can't. I just don't know what to say..."

"I love you, Jean. I can't ever marree you...and we both know why. The laws of thees countree steenk sometimes. But you made me realize where I belong. And weeth who. All you deed was look at me that first time we met. I fell eento your eyes, chica. I fell...and I'm steell falleeng. I don't theenk I'll ever stop falleeng. And you know what?" Esteban said, keeping his voice very soft and quiet.

Jean shook her head. She still couldn't find the words she needed.

Esteban got up again and went around the table. He offered her a paw and she took it, standing up, into his embrace.

"I don't *want* to stop falleeng," he said and brushed the vixen's hair back from her face.

Neither of them said anything for a long time after that.

###

It was nearly noon when Zig Zag pushed open the doors to the studio. She knew she was running late, but the traffic had been sheer murder all the way. She sighed and felt like mentally slapping herself. It was the first day of the big holiday rush, and she'd totally, completely forgotten about it.

Sabrina looked up from her work. She too had a look of stress and irritation on her face. "You look roughly like how I feel, Zig..." she said and removed her glasses, rubbing the corners of her eyes.

"How do you mean?" Zig Zag asked.

"Like if anyone says anything remotely annoying, you're going to give them a piece of your mind," Sabrina said, sighing.

"Pretty much. What's gotten you so down?"

Sabrina leaned back in her seat and sighed, motioning at the computer. "Someone sent me an email this morning with an attached file. I opened it...now the whole system is infected with a virus."

Zig Zag blinked and put her head slightly to one side. "I know I'm not exactly the resident computer-expert, Sabrina, but I do know enough to not open attachments from strangers..." she said, surprised.

"Please...don't admonish me for this. I'm annoyed enough at myself as it is. You know how some furs send out virus-emails under false names?"

"Yeah...I always thought it was particularly amusing when I received emails saying "Size matters" in the title, asking me if I wanted my genitalia elongated," Zig Zag chuckled.

Sabrina blinked, then covered her muzzle and giggled. "I can see why. Anyway...this false name actually happened to fit a friend of mine. So I thought it was from him, of course and I opened it. The mail itself was empty except for an attachment saying something about holiday photographs..."

"Sneaky, in other words. Well, you can't be blamed since the name on the mail fits a real friend of yours. How bad is the damage?"

"Irreparable. Thankfully, I take backups of the whole system every second day. We won't lose anything...I backed up yesterday evening before going home. I'm reinstalling everything now. It's just *really* annoying. What's gotten *you* so down, anyway?"

"Traffic. Driving anywhere today gives you the feeling that Columbus is depopulating. It's stupid of me. I get caught by surprise by that every year," Zig Zag muttered and shook her head. "Have I missed anything?"

"Ohh just two million dollar business proposals, four new applications by major movie stars and half your crew resigned," Sabrina said, smiling crookedly. "In other words, nothing at all."

"That's always something..."

Sabrina nodded and rubbed her face. "Well, there's nothing more I can do here while all this reinstalls. I'll go make a cup of coffee. I'll try to get us some better firewalls too, to protect against future attacks."

"How much do you need?" Zig Zag asked.

"Not a lot. Software like that isn't terribly expensive, especially since we're not buying it for some huge company with two thousand machines. I'll look into it."

"You do that, and while you're making a cup of coffee...please make me one as well. I could really use that."

Sabrina nodded and got to her feet.

###

"Honey I'm hooooome..." Gabrielle called out as she opened the door to Yohni's apartment. She grinned slightly. That expression was so cliché she hadn't been able to stop herself. She pulled her jacket off and listened. No answer. She frowned, having expected Yohni to be home.

She entered the apartment and looked around. "Yohni? Are you here?" she asked aloud.

Still no answer.

Gabrielle shook her head. Perhaps the mongoose was out shopping. But that didn't make any sense. The front door had been open. It wasn't like Yohni to forget to lock her door. Something was starting to feel wrong. Yohni couldn't be asleep, Gabrielle told herself. It was early afternoon and the mongoose never napped like that.

She sighed and opened the bedroom door anyway, just to make sure.

It was dark in the room. But not so dark as to completely obscure Gabrielle's vision. Yohni was sitting on the bed with her face in her paws.

"Honey!?! What's happened?" Gabrielle burst out, hurrying up to the bed.

She didn't get an answer right away. She sat down, wrapping her arms protectively around the smaller femme. A feeling of complete confusion and helplessness rushed over the equine. She had no idea what had prompted this in her girlfriend.

"Yohni...please talk to me?" she asked, quietly. "I'm here, and I'll listen and I'll try to help if I can. Please don't shut me out?" she whispered, deeply worried.

Yohni shook her head and finally removed her paws from her face. "I'm sorry. I didn't want you to see me like this..." she said, quietly.

"What *happened* Yohni? Please, talk to me?"

"Nothing happened. I just...woke up this morning and you weren't there next to me, that's all," Yohni said. Her voice was barely a whisper.

Gabrielle went cross-eyed for a moment from confusion. "Erhh...I slept at home. What do you mean?" she asked.

Yohni sighed and tried to collect her thoughts. "It's stupid. I don't want you to think I'm just being a whiner..." she said and rested her head against Gabrielle's chest.

"Will you stop that? I come in here and I find you a total mess and now you're trying to make it look like nothing's wrong? I'm not buying that, Yohni. Please... *talk* to me. Tell me what's wrong?" Gabrielle said. She immediately reproached herself for sounding so harsh.

The mongoose closed her eyes. "I just woke up and looked at the empty pillow next to me and I started thinking that...you know..." she began. She wanted to lay it all on the table but she was scared of what would happen.

"No, Yohni...I honestly don't know," Gabrielle whispered, holding the mongoose a little tighter. "Explain it to me. Is it because you're worried that I'll end up leaving you again?"

Yohni just nodded, swallowing.

"It won't happen. I won't lie and say I understand what it is that keeps frightening you so badly though. I am not going to leave you. I'm happy with you, Yohni, don't you understand? I'm *happy* with you."

"So you say...but...but one day...you might get tired of me...and then I'll be alone again," Yohni whispered. Her voice turned into a wheeze and cracked.

Gabrielle sighed and rocked her girlfriend in her arms. "Eeeasy...eeeasy, I'm right here. Feel that? That's my arms around you. Does that feel like I'm on my way out the door, never to return?" she asked, quietly.

Yohni shook her head.

"I wish I could make you believe me...when I say I don't want to leave you. That I'm not just here out of pity or because I can't find something better. I don't *want* something better. Frankly I don't think it exists. *You're right for me*, Yohni, you hear me?"

The mongoose nodded a little and sighed. "And what about tomorrow, Gabby? When I wake up and see an empty pillow next to me? What then?" she asked.

"You're that terrified of being alone?" Gabrielle asked. "Sweetness, why didn't you tell me about this?"

"Because...I didn't want to seem clingy, and because I never had this problem until you came around. I am scared to death of losing you to someone who's smarter or better looking or nicer... *something* I'm not, at least."

Gabrielle blinked and went cross-eyed again. "Errrhhh...Yohni, you need to listen to me reeeeeeally carefully for a moment, alright? You're not clingy. I can't abide clingy furs. You're just frightened of something there's no need to be afraid *of*. And as for someone being smarter, nicer or better looking...for God's sake, honey...we just came through a porn convention where every last one of us could have had our pick from hundreds...even *thousands* of star struck fan-furs. I'm pretty sure some of them are smarter, and a few of them are probably even better looking than any of us at the studio. And Hell, some of them might even be *nicer*. But you know what?"

Yohni shook her head and looked up at the equine, swallowing.

"They're not *you*. They're not the combination of things that make up *you*," Gabrielle said, softly. "And you're what I want. That's the bottom line of this."

It took a moment before Yohni responded. Then she nodded and looked down. "I didn't mean to doubt you. I'm sorry..."

"Stop right there a moment, hon. Right there. Listen to yourself. You're apologizing for doubting me...but in truth, the only one you doubt is yourself. You doubt if you're good enough for me. All the time."

Yohni nodded again and hid her face in her paws again. "I know..."

Gabrielle smiled a little. "You're good enough for me. And you know what? You're not going to have to wake up to see an empty pillow next to you anymore..."

"Why?"

"You'll see. It'll all work out. Now...please look at me and smile? No more being upset and no more doubting yourself, okay?"

Yohni looked up and smiled. A very tiny smile, but it was there.

Gabrielle nodded. "Much better," she said and ran her paw over Yohni's hair. "I love you. And I'll keep reminding you of that until you believe me."

###

Leo looked at the oak door to the office. A small plaque on it said 'Vincent Leon'. He chuckled. It said a lot about his father that he needed his name on a plaque on a door in his own home. Mostly, it said that he received a lot of business associates there. Like his mother. She had her name on a door further down the hallway too. He shook his head at the thought of a plaque on a door, saying 'Leo Leon'. Somehow it seemed unreal to him. That was why he was here, too. He needed to talk to his father about this. Sighing and straightening his back, he opened the door to the office and looked in. He'd been told he could find his father there. Behind the desk, an older lion was looking through a stack of paperwork. Leo nodded to himself. His father was indeed there.

"Hello Dad. Got a moment?" he asked.

"Of course. Come in, Leo. What's on your mind," Vincent Leon responded.

"Well...several things really. And I don't know how you're going to take some of it," Leo said and took a seat.

His father blinked and leaned back in his chair. "That's certainly an interesting way of starting a conversation, son."

Leo nodded, running a paw through his mane and pulling it back. "I know, Dad. Look...you know I love you and Mom. And that I don't *want* to disappoint you..."

"Listen...if that's what you're worried about, you can relax. We're all young at one point or another and while I may disapprove of some of your habits..." the older lion shrugged, "... well let's just say I know times are changing and as long as you don't get in trouble with the law, start doing drugs or something similar, then it's your life to live."

Leo breathed a sigh of relief. He'd dreaded having this conversation for a long time. But it seemed to be going well. "Thanks Dad. It's just...I know you and Mom are both extremely successful and I know you're expecting me to carry on the family businesses and all that. But...let's face it...you could send me to Harvard and pay as many millions as it took to hire the best private tutors in economics for me...but I still wouldn't have a tenth of the talent with money you've got. I really don't want to be a failure..."

Vincent folded his paws on the desk and looked at his son for a long moment. "I see what you're saying. And yes, I agree. Big business is...a cutthroat world and frankly you don't seem to have your heart in it. No...no, stop. Don't start apologizing. I'm not angry. I'm not even disappointed. Look, what I ask of you is not really all that much. Keep a

formal facade, since your actions do reflect back on me and on your mother. I know it's a shitty deal, but that's how it is. If you were to do something stupid, it'd be all over the gutter press in a matter of moments, and it'd hurt business for the family. That's the *reason* why I ask you to at least keep up appearances. But frankly, I can't say I'm surprised we're having this conversation...I've been expecting it for some time."

Leo nodded again. "And believe me, I understand. I might feel like a fish out of water in a suit, but I understand why it's necessary to maintain a front. And I'll do that. As I said, I love both you and Mom, and I don't want to be an embarrassment. It's just, I seem to have a bigger talent for spending money on charities than for earning it."

"I know. Charity is good, though. It's not as if I don't spend a sizable sum on it myself every year. I've raised you to remember that there are those who are less fortunate, and that it doesn't do to look down on them," the older lion said, matter-of-factly.

"And I'm grateful that you raised me that way. What I mean...is...how do I put this?" Leo said and searched for the right words. "I'm not capable of taking over the family businesses and running them soundly. I will need help. A lot of it. Even though I try to learn...Dad...honest...I open "The Wealth of Nations" and either I fall asleep halfway through page two, or I end up disgusted. Capitalism is all good...in *moderation*, y'know. Gahhhh...I don't know how to explain this."

"You don't need to. You're a thinker. If you'd been born two hundred years ago, you'd probably have grown into one of the philosophers that students read about today. Don't worry too much. Both your mother and I have many years left in us yet, and I'll make sure you have all the help you need when the time comes for you to take over. I *am* glad, though, that you finally broke the ice on this. As I said, it's not unexpected but I thought it'd be best to let you make the opening move..."

Leo smiled. He'd been worried that his father would get upset or angry about this. But he wasn't done yet, of course. "There is one more thing, Dad..."

"What's that?" Vincent asked.

"I've met a femme..."

Leo noted the change in his father's expression. The older lion went from momentarily confused, to grinning in a matter of seconds. "Leo, you meet hundreds of femmes, but from the way you said that, am I to assume this is something more serious?"

"I think so. But...you're not going to like this..." Leo said and rubbed his neck.

"Son...give me some credit here..." Vincent said, chuckling. "So, what's she like?"

"She's intelligent. I mean...she really has a remarkably keen mind. We can really *talk*, dad. She's a university student...from Ohio, of all places."

"Sounds good so far? What's her major?" Vincent asked.

"History," Leo said. "Her name's Lizzy."

"History eh? Good, time honored topic...literally..." the older lion chuckled. "So...why shouldn't I like this? So far you haven't told me anything bad."

"She's not a lioness. And she's...well...let's just say Karl Marx has a prominent place on her bookshelf," Leo said. He cringed inwardly. He felt ready to make a run for it.

Vincent's face darkened somewhat and he leaned back again, folding his paws and tapping the thumbs together. He frowned, clearly in deep thought. "As for her not being a lioness...well...I'm not going to lie and say that I wholeheartedly approve but I haven't stayed on top of the business world by not moving with the times, Leo. Mixed species couples are increasingly commonplace. I'll just have to get used to that. However...if she's a proclaimed communist, I honestly don't see how you and she could ever really make a future for yourselves. I mean, the differences are just too great."

"*Dad*...you're talking as if we're engaged already. I've been on one date with her and I've talked to her on the phone and that's about it. I'd just like to see if there is more to this."

"Sorry, you're right. I'm getting ahead of things. Well then...if you want to see if this can grow into something real, then I suggest you go pack and take a trip to Ohio, son," Vincent chuckled. Then he narrowed his eyes and wagged a warning finger at the younger lion. "And don't say a word to your mother about this, until you know for sure. I'll back you up if this is what you want to do. But I want you to be *certain* first, you hear me?"

Leo nodded. "Yes Dad...I hear you," he said and got up, smiling. "Thank you."

"No need to thank me. You're my son. You're a wild, often rebellious young lion, you're a dreamer and a thinker, and you have a big, soft heart...quite frankly I think I'd be an idiot to not be proud of you. Now get out before I grill you about this young lady you've met," Vincent said, mock-gruffly.

Leo grinned and left the room in a hurry. When he closed the door behind him he shook his head. "You learn something every day..." he muttered to himself with a crooked smile on his face. He'd expected his father to react differently to all of this. He felt rather

guilty all of the sudden, for having been so wrong about his father. He stopped walking, halfway down the hallway and laughed to himself, arms akimbo.

"You're growing up, Leo. Teenagers always think their parents are idiots. Adults realize they probably aren't that bad..." he mumbled and headed for his room. He had to pack.

###

Marvin sat on the hood of the car he'd rented. He'd popped open a can of beer and he was looking at the kind of landscape that you only ever saw in movies. The thought made him chuckle. That was the entire idea, after all. In front of him, six hills spread out. He was parked on top of the seventh. Between them, a river flowed like a snake. There were no houses. Just grassland. The nearest road was a mile and a half behind him. Getting here had been slightly bumpy, but worth it. Rhonda was walking up the hill. The sun was setting on the horizon.

"This is an awesome location, dear..." the female badger said, leaning against the hood next to Marvin. "It's absolutely perfect."

"I think so. Question is if the owner will let us use it," Marvin said with a shrug.

"Why shouldn't he? It's money in his wallet."

"Not everyone likes the idea of blue movies being filmed on their property, let's face it."

Rhonda nodded. That much was certainly true. "Well, I'm sure you'll be able to get to an arrangement with him. We'll go talk to him tomorrow, right?"

"Yep. Strictly speaking we're trespassing by even being here but...look at that sunset. I don't think we can find a better location anywhere else."

Rhonda smiled and looked at her husband. "We'd better get a move on. Otherwise we might soon be introduced to the pointy end of a pitchfork and that won't really improve our chances at renting this area for a few weeks, hmm?"

"I hate it when you're a realist," Marvin chuckled and got off the hood. "You drive. I'd better not after drinking."

Rhonda caught the keys that Marvin tossed her way and nodded. "How right you are. Well, tomorrow's the big day then," she grinned.

"ZZ Studios or bust..." Marvin said with a chuckle.

"Marvin...love...you really need to learn how to phrase things better..." Rhonda said and shot out her bosom.

Marvin facepawed. "Alright. ZZ Studios AND bust..." he mumbled.

"That's more like it..." Rhonda giggled and turned the key in the ignition.