

Chapter Six

Minneapolis, Morning in March 1975

Gary brushed the snow off his Pontiac Bonneville then shivered as he slid into the leather seat. Damn why wasn't it warm by now. January and February had been killers for weather, but he figured by now the worst would be over. He smiled to himself. Stacey had made her court appearance yesterday and everything went as planned. In thirty days, he would be free to marry Lisa.

A part of him wished the divorce had taken longer. Lisa had left her husband shortly after they'd met and now she was planning their wedding. Frankly, he wasn't ready to be tied down, but he'd lose her for sure if he didn't go through with it. She'd made that perfectly clear from the first night he'd slept with her.

The whole affair was all Stacey's fault anyway. Running off with her sister after Edward's death. He was glad Vicki was too young to remember all those times Lisa slept at the house. Guess he had Edward to thank for the convenience. The old guy really knew his stuff about women, that's for sure. He recalled how Edward had told him the secret to controlling a woman – finding her Weakness.

It hadn't taken him long to find Stacey's weakness - her child. It was an Achilles Heel he had used to his advantage. Stacey had been forced to agree to live in their home in Duluth until Vicki was grown. It was a convenient set up should he ever need to use it to his advantage. He did wonder, however, why she seemed so relaxed and happy the last few months. He glanced at his watch and flipped on the radio. Another snowstorm was blowing in. He'd better head back to Duluth. Tomorrow was Saturday and he could see his daughter.

He drove down Highway 100 towards the freeway and suddenly had an impulsive thought. He should stop and say good-bye to Katherine. That bitch had wreaked havoc on his life from the moment he'd met her. It seemed a fitting end to his marriage to finally tell her what he thought of her interference.

Katherine took another swallow of wine and tossed the mail down on the coffee table. It

was snowing again, and she would spend another night shoveling. She wished the boys were old enough to take over the job. All they could lift right now was one small shovel full at a time. The last storm had dumped ten inches on them and downed the phone lines for two days.

Katherine closed her eyes and stretched out on the sofa. A nap before the school bus arrived would do nicely. Then she'd have the energy to shovel.

When the doorbell rang, she flinched and looked at the clock. Did they close school early?

Panic surged through her when she saw Gary standing on the step. She yanked open the door. "Is Stacey okay?"

Gary let himself into the entry. "She's fine last time I checked."

Katherine eyes widened. His arrogance made her sick. "So why are you here, soldier?"

Gary smiled wickedly. "I thought it was time to clear the air between us. I mean now that we're no longer relatives, all bets are off."

Katherine shrugged and turned to walk up the stairs into the living room. "My air's the clearest it's been in years now that you're out of Stacey's life."

Gary followed close behind her. "Why don't you come clean and admit you've hated me from day one."

Katherine turned, her eyes blazing. "Guilty as charged, soldier. I knew you were just like Sonny the moment I met you."

Gary's face twisted with rage. "I'm not like that son of a bitch! I'll never abandon my daughter."

Katherine's head wagged as she sneered back at him,

"Well, you certainly filled his shoes in the virtue department."

Gary crossed his arms; a smug look enveloped his face. "What gives you the right to judge my morality? You're nothing but a drunk. I could smell you the minute I walked in the door."

Katherine's eyes darted towards her glass of wine sitting on the coffee table.

"Okay, soldier, I'll bite. Let's have a drink together."

She opened the hutch and took out another glass. After filling it with wine, she shoved it into Gary's hand.

"You came here to say all the things you ached to say to me for the past ten years. Well, here's something I'm dying to say to you. I toast Stacey and her new-found happiness. May Wil always fulfill her needs better than the loser she was married to."

Gary's eyes narrowed and he smashed his glass down on the table, shattering it into tiny pieces and splattering wine in every direction. "So that's why she's been so happy lately! She's been cheating on me!"

"Cheating on you!" Katherine was laughing uncontrollably. "What a joke! She's just discovered how much better sex is with a real man!"

Gary seized her shoulders, shaking her violently. "Who the hell is he?"

Katherine seized the letter opener from the table, her leg bolting against his groin. "Get out of my house or I'll call the cops!"

He groaned in pain, then lunged at her.

She pointed the letter opener at his chest. "I mean it, you bastard!"

Gary's face was crimson with anger as he backed away. "You're nothing but a drunken bitch and someday everyone will know it!"

Katherine cringed as he slammed out the door. She wiped the perspiration from her face. God, what had she done to Stacey? She had to warn her. She moaned in agony when the phone line was dead.

Chapter Seven

Duluth, March Night 1975

Stacey put Vicki to bed and curled up on the sofa next to the fireplace to await her nightly phone call from Wil. She picked up the phone and checked for a dial tone. At least the lines were still up in Duluth. She'd tried to call Minneapolis earlier without any luck.

Sighing she closed her eyes. Officially divorced. It didn't feel any different, but it meant she could see Wil whenever she wanted. Was Gary happy now that he had his freedom?

Her eyes opened to the sound of a car in the driveway. She bolted up from the sofa when the back door flew open.

Gary rushed into the living room, his face flushed with rage. "So, you've had yourself a boyfriend before our divorce is even final!"

She stood paralyzed her mouth gaping. "I—how--"

"Your drunken sister gave me the happy news!"

"Katy would never betray me!" Stacey quickly calmed herself. "It doesn't matter anyway. I'm no longer your wife."

"Forget it," he screamed, pushing her down on the sofa. "For thirty days I still own you, baby!"

"How dare you accuse me when all you've ever done throughout our marriage is screw other women!"

"Was it my fault you weren't woman enough for me?"

"You're crazy!" Stacey attempted to get up from the sofa.

Gary shoved her backwards. "Yeah! Maybe crazy to give you full custody of Vicki!"

"I'm her mother!"

"And I'm her father! Maybe the judge wouldn't be so willing to give you custody if he knew what a slut you are!"

Stacey was shaking from fear and anger mingled together, both fighting to overtake the other.

"I won't let you threaten me." She reached for the phone.

Before she could touch the receiver, Gary pounced on her, pinning her hands to her sides.

"You think you're real smart, lying to me all these months. I'll just fix you up with another baby and see how the boyfriend likes that!"

Fear had finally overshadowed all anger, all sanity. She began screaming hysterically. "Get off me! You're an animal!"

Gary's vicious laughter covered her screams. "What's the matter, baby? I'm your husband? I have rights, remember?"

She gasped as his lips scorched her neck. *Why did she go off the pill? She had to fight him. Think, Stacey, think!*

"I'll never have your baby again! I've been on birth control pills since Vicki was born."

His face darkened with fury. He clamped his hand over her mouth.

"Shut up, bitch! I want to know who he is and where he is! Because when I find your boyfriend, he won't be screwing my wife or anyone else ever again!"

Stacey's eyes widened in terror as she struggled beneath him, his overpowering strength sending tears streaming down her face.

"Go away, Gary," she sobbed. "I've found someone who loves me for real this time."

Gary lowered his mouth to whisper in her ear. "We'll see about that after I'm done with him. I can hurt him really bad, you know I can." His hand moved to stroke her breast. "Just like I can do anything I want."

Stacey was squirming beneath him. "Well, I want you out of here!"

Gary licked a teardrop from her cheek. "And I want your little affair over tonight or I'll end it myself - the hard way!"

Weeping uncontrollably, Stacey crouched in the corner of the sofa as Gary slammed out the back door. Clutching her arms, she stared at the clock and waited for the phone to ring.

Wil wanted to come over the minute he heard her voice, but she convinced him Gary would be watching the house. Sobbing, she told him everything about Gary's threats and how Vicki had been conceived. When she finished, she sat in disbelief listening to the silence at the other end of the phone.

"Wil, please say something."

"Stace." He took a long breath. "Look, I'm sorry. I can't deal with this sort of thing."

She hung up, stunned. How could she have been so wrong again? Even Katy had betrayed her. Quickly, she dialed Minneapolis only to slam down the phone when the operator intervened. The circuits were still down.

The phone rang the second it reached the cradle. She grabbed it. "Wil?"

"Didn't you get rid of him?"

She trembled at the sound of Gary's voice. "It's over. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

"See that it stays that way."

Tears ran down her face as the dial tone buzzed in her ear.

The next morning, Stacey rubbed her swollen eyes and stared at Katherine standing at her door.

"God, Stace. I'm so sorry. I tried to call but the--"

"I know," Stacey interrupted. "The circuits were down" She opened the door and waved for Katherine to come in. "Where are the boys?"

"I left them at the neighbors. I've been driving all night." Katherine stretched out her arms. "Come here, kiddo."

Stacey shook her head, her eyes flooding with fresh tears. The stench of alcohol was making her sick.

"How could you, Katy?"

Katherine's own eyes moistened. She didn't seem to know what to do with her shaking hands.

"It all happened so fast. He kept goading me and--"

"And you were drunk!" Stacey turned away.

Katherine choked back her tears. She reached for Stacey's shoulder. "Please, listen to me."

Stacey pulled away. "There's nothing you can say."

"Did he hurt you?"

Stacey spun around, her face filled with contempt. "I'll never be free!"

"What? Your divorce is final in one month."

"It doesn't matter, Katy. He won't ever let me have any happiness."

"You can't let that jerk run your life, Stace."

Stacey's anger turned to tears. "You don't know, Katy. Gary's an animal. He threatened to beat up Wil. He threatened to rape me again."

Katherine went pale. "Rape you again?"

Stacey began to sob. "Oh, Katy, you asked how I could make a baby with Gary after he cheated on me. Well, I didn't. Gary raped me when Vicki was conceived."

Katherine threw her arms around Stacey. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I couldn't. I was afraid he'd hurt me again. Now I know I was right."

"I'll kill him if he ever touches you again!"

"It doesn't matter anymore, Katy. Wil broke up with me."

The threatening tears in Katherine's eyes now spilled onto her cheeks.

"Oh, Stace. I did this. I'm so sorry."

"The liquor did it, Katy. It will destroy you just like it's destroyed us."

"Don't say that, kiddo. Please don't say that. I'll quit. I promise." Katherine brushed the tears from her cheeks. "Just say you'll forgive me."

Stacey reached up her arms to embrace Katherine.

"Don't cry, Katy. I needed to know the truth. Wil's no different from the rest. All men put their own needs first. I'll never allow myself to be fooled again."

As you can see if you're following the Rubies Family Saga that our story has now revealed the deterioration of Stacey and Katherine's lives and what unhappiness they now must bear living the curse placed upon them. It is truly revealing that the sins of past generations are now haunting the future.

To read about all four books in the Rubies Family Saga, check out [my authors page](#) on Amazon.com