

Quest

By Virginia Cassarino-Brown

She came to slowly. Some strange sound woke her. It was a heavy, guttural groan of sorts. Where was it coming from? She heard it again and realized that the unfamiliar moan emanated from deep within her bowels, then slowly traveled upward to her gut till it expelled itself through her very own mouth! Why was she groaning? She opened her eyes slowly only to be assaulted by blinding sunlight. She blinked several times until she could focus on what was in front of her. She was looking at sand. Wet sand. Her head was pounding. What the hell was going on!? As each painful second ticked by, Cassi began to grasp bits and pieces of the present. Her head was pounding because it was positioned below her waist. She carefully righted herself and was shocked to realize that she was loosely tethered to the back of a horse!

She tentatively touched the equine's mane. He or she seemed docile enough. Thank God for that. Then she inventoried herself. She was alive, and could recite her name, age and social security number, but much else was a mystery. Cassi didn't know where she was, or how she came to be on a hot, deserted stretch of tropical beach. She inhaled deeply, felt a sharp pain in her left side. She gently lifted her soiled, tattered blouse and noticed a large, ugly bruise, greenish yellow in color, over her ribcage. An old contusion. Perhaps a broken rib. She began to wonder, does she have any other injuries? She examined the rest of her body. She counted several scrapes and cuts on her extremities. The pink polish on her fingernails was badly chipped. OPI's Cancun Fiesta! She remembered getting the manicure. When was that appointment? Last week, last month? She turned her hands over and noticed what could only be described as filth underneath her nails. Upon closer examination, she saw what appeared to be dried blood under them. Her blood? Someone else's? What else? A white band of skin around her left ring finger, as if she wore a ring there, but where was it? More importantly, was it a wedding band? "Am I married," Cassi gasped?

She shook her head, tried to clear out the cobwebs. Tears began to fall leaving tracks of dirt on her cheeks. She was scared. All of a sudden she felt the hair on the back of her neck begin to rise. She heard a muffled cry from behind her. She turned her head and saw a man on a horse galloping toward her. Was this man dangerous? Cassi was sure of one thing. There were too many unanswered questions. Right now, she could only count on herself, so she kicked the horse with her legs and held on as if her very life depended on it. With each stride the pain in her side intensified. She was lightheaded. The stretch of sand in front of her blurred. She felt herself letting go of the reins. Then everything went black.

