

Thursday, August 1st

Summer arrived in Silver Lake and with it a lot of sunshine, heat and tourists from all over the world. Especially the last ones annoyed Sara a lot today. She had no idea how many rental cars she overtook on her way from Angeles National Park back home. What were all these people doing here? Why weren't they on the Hollywood Boulevard? Marching up and down the Walk of Fame? Stand on the Santa Monica Pier? Places, that were made for tourists, places, where they didn't need a car and - most important - weren't in her way.

Stopping in front of her home she found another tourist sitting in front of the door. One, she knew and was happy to see, who had never been in her way. Quite contrary. She had been very helpful since they met.

"Hey Kim, what are you doing?" She greeted the young Dutch woman, who arrived this noon for another one of her two weeks vacations with Sara and Sofia. Why did she sit in front of the door?

"Waiting for somebody to let me in. Your lovely girlfriend wrote me she'd be here but nobody opens the door. Not even your housemates seems to be at home. I mean, I can understand it, with this wonderful weather they should be on the beach."

"Really? I thought Sofia is back home by now, especially because she said, she'll be here when you arrive. Maybe something came up at work, I'm sorry you had to wait. Let me let you in."

"Thanks."

"How was your flight?"

"Steady, a little bit bumpy over Ireland and the Rocky Mountains, like most times. Nothing special, just like the service. I wonder why they don't come along more often with drinks. I don't need snacks all the time, but more than three times a glass of water would be nice. Especially because their glasses are tiny and not like a large one you get here when you're in a fast food restaurant."

"They only serve water three times on a twelve hours flight?" Sara was shocked. You were supposed to drink a lot of liquid when you sat for a long time in a plane and Kim got only three

glasses of water? That was more than poor service. She had to remember to take a bottle of water with her, when she flew over to Europe. "And then you come here and nobody opens the door. Not the best start in your vacation."

"Depends on how you look on it. I sat next to a more than cute guy, we talked a lot and became members of a nice club."

"Mile high?" Sara grinned. She knew a few things about this club and remembered it was a nice flight when she joined the club. She didn't really care about the service or the none exiting on-board entertainment.

"I didn't say that."

"Your dirty smirk did."

"Hey, the entertainment program wasn't that exciting, I had to do something in these twelve hours. Unfortunately he stays in San Diego, too far away for another get together and we also don't fly back to Europe together."

"Oh sorry about that."

"Doesn't matter, there'll be other cute guys in Los Angeles. Oi, nice and cool, it was hot in the sun but I couldn't get myself to sit into the shade, we had so much rain the last weeks, I'm in desperate need for sunshine and heat." Kim opened the door to her room. After she had been here a couple of times, she knew her way around and was welcomed by the dogs like a long lost friend. "Hey guys, why didn't you open the door for me?"

"It was locked, otherwise these funny creatures will take themselves for a walk. We had that once and we don't need it again." Sara petted Rantanplan and Scooby, who kissed her hand like gentlemen in the old movies.

"Very smart dogs. If your mommies aren't around, you take care of yourself. Oh my bed, I missed you so much; especially during the flight. Give me five minutes for a shower and then I'm all yours for the next twelve hours. Oh no, I have to go shopping first or I end up without breakfast..."

"Don't worry, Steve did that for you. He bought you blueberry bagels, your favorite and there's plenty of coffee in the kitchen. You're all set for your first breakfast tomorrow and tomorrow evening we'll have a barbecue to celebrate your return. If you need something to drink, you know where the water is."

"I love you guys so much." Kim hugged Sara enthusiastically. "Sharing beer and pizza was the best thing I ever suggested. Give Sofia a kiss when she's back, even when she forgot me, I'm sure she had a good reason and I'm off to the indoor waterfall and my first class bed."

"Sleep tight, my flying Dutch."

"Always flying back to you." Kim vanished in her room to get her stuff for the bathroom while Sara opened the backdoor to the garden and stepped outside with the dogs. Home after a long day in Angeles National Forest. Twelve hours, a busy day and tomorrow didn't look any different. Summer was peak season, a lot of people came to the forest and a lot of people meant a lot of work for Sara. Did she regret becoming a park ranger? Not one single day. She was thankful for her time in Las Vegas, knew she made the city safer by being a CSI, but since she was in Los Angeles she was truly happy. Which was only partly because she changed jobs. Mostly she was happy because of her wonderful fiancé. Sofia, the greatest gift she ever got. To love the blonde, to be loved by the blonde, was too good to be explained with any words. Their two kids, Stephen and Susan just made their family perfect. Yes, she had her own family. Who would have thought this ten years ago? She certainly didn't.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry I'm late." Sofia came in the garden a little bit after seven in the evening.

"Don't tell me, tell Kim tomorrow. Although she enjoyed the sunshine." Sara pulled her lover into her arms and kissed her.

"Where have you been? You were supposed to be back two hours ago."

"I know, I know, but there was a huge traffic jam on the 405 and while I was thinking about getting off the interstate I heard somebody calling for help in the car in front me. A woman, highly pregnant, was in there alone and her baby had decided to come out in the middle of rush hour traffic jam. Needless to say that calling 911 and demanding an ambulance was useless and there was no doctor around so another woman and me helped her deliver the baby. When she had her cute little daughter in her arms the ambulance arrived and took her to a

hospital where mommy and baby Sofia Maureen will spend the next two nights."

"Baby Sofia Maureen?" Sara asked amused.

"Yes, she named her daughter after the two women, who helped her."

"I've to say it's a nice reason to be late." The brunette kissed her lover. Sofia helped deliver a baby on the interstate, she was a heroine. Not that Sara ever doubted that.

"Yeah, babies first, I'm sorry for Kim, but I had no other change. And my cell phone battery was empty, so I couldn't call you."

"It all added up. Don't worry, Kim is fine, sound asleep and happy about the blueberry bagels Steve got her."

"Talking about our son, is he still out?"

"Yes, working with Mel and Susan is with your parents. Your mom called half an hour ago and said, she'll keep her overnight so the house is quiet and we can sleep." Susan had been awake for most of the time the last two days, making it hard for both women to get some sleep. Marie saw it as her duty to make sure her daughter and daughter-in-law weren't tired at work and decided to give them a night of sleep. And of course she loved having her granddaughter over.

"Oh, means we have the night off. No guest to entertain, no baby daughter to look after, we can talk about our wedding and practice for the honeymoon."

"Or we can do the laundry, clean the apartment, take the dogs out for a walk and have a look at the books what our financials are saying." Sara suggested mostly to annoy Sofia.

"Seriously? You're such a spoilsport." Sofia made a grimace. They had the night off, no child to look after as Stephen was absolutely fine on his own and her fiancé thought about cleaning and accounting? Was the brunette about to call off the wedding?

"No, I'm sensible."

"Can we find a compromise?"

"How would it look like?"

"We take the dogs for a walk around the reservoir after we started the washing machine, start a second one when we're back, hang the laundry out in the garden, clean the bathroom

and take a bath in the freshly cleaned bathtub. No financial stuff tonight, it will only give us a headache. Oh and we talk about our wedding while we're having a bath. The wedding plan."

"And which one of the ten million wedding plans we made in the last months do you like to discuss?" Sara pulled the blonde into her arms and kissed her softly.

"The nicest. And the realistic one. What do you think?"

"I think I'd like to tell you how much I love you."

"Why don't you just do it?"

"Because there are no words that can describe my love to you. All words, no matter in which language, aren't good enough to describe this feeling."

Sofia pulled the head of her lover up and kissed her passionately. No needs for words, this was the reason why she loved Sara, why she knew, she was the one for her, the one, she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. Her future wife. The most amazing, adorable and wonderful person on this planet and surely also in the entire universe.

"You are so going to marry me, Sara Sidle."

"Well, I asked you to marry me, Sofia Curtis and you agreed, so yes, I will marry you."

"When?"

"We talk about this in the bathtub. For now, you do the laundry, I take out the trash and then we take the dogs for a walk. And don't forget to call your mother, thank her for taking care of baby Sue tonight."

"You're such a good daughter-in-law, no wonder they love you."

"They love me because they know I love you. Come on, keep going, sexy ass." Sara slapped her hand on Sofia's backside. Time to do the duty and then they had all the time for pleasure. The faster they finished the duty the more time was there for pleasure.

Ninety minutes later they were in the bathtub, two bottles of beer and a pizza next to them. In record time they took the dogs out, did all the house duty they agreed on before, called Sofia's parents and prepared the tub.

"I have to say the day seems to end in a very nice way. It didn't look like this in the afternoon, when I was caught in traffic." Sofia leant back and closed her eyes. Sara, pizza and beer. Oh, a beer, how long did she wait to have a beer? It was only her second, she had one last weekend, when her parents had Susan over too and she was sure, when she drank one beer the alcohol was out of her body by the time she breastfed Susan again.

"No matter what happens out there, when we're here at home, we can make the most out of everything. All I need to be happy is you and our family around. Or away but still close to us, so in case I miss them too much, I can drive over within five minutes and see them."

"Our son is more than five minutes away and he won't come home tonight. We're home alone without any child." Steve called them when they were out on the walk that he wanted to stay at Lea's place if that was cool with his moms. Neither Sofia nor Sara had any reason to deny his wish, they had school holidays and could stay up long. Except for the fact both had a job to be in the morning, but they were sure, Lea's parents would tell them to turn off the computer and go to bed in case they forgot their responsibilities.

"Yes, like a honeymoon at home."

"The difference is there are a few more people in the house, who could end up in front of our door any time. Don and Tanya are home, so is Sally. Only Tony is away on a date and he refused to tell anybody whom he's dating."

"Means he's dating himself alone in an action movie."

"You can be so mean. Is that what you did before we met when you told every you had a date but didn't give Don a name?"

"No, when I didn't tell Don whom I'm dating I had more than one date and didn't want to shock him." The blonde grinned.

"Yeah sure, or you had a date with your wanna-be actress bitch." Even when she had been killed, Sara couldn't get herself to talk in a nice or at least neutral way about Ellen.

"How can you be jealous of a dead person?"

"I'm not jealous but I refuse to talk nice about her just because she's dead. She was a bitch, she treated you badly and had no character. She didn't deserve to die, it's good her killer was caught and sent to prison, but that doesn't change the fact, she

was a bitch. So I call her one, no matter what other people might say or think. As a child I had to be nice to people I didn't like, now I don't have to pretend anymore."

"Your honesty is one thing I love about you." Sofia slipped over to be in Sara's arms and kissed her lover. "Let's forget Ellen and talk about something nice. Our wedding. It's August, we wanted to get married in summer. We have to hurry." In late June the American Supreme Court had legalized same-sex marriages and California made it legal for gay couples to get married again. Something they had always hoped for and now they could get married in Los Angeles. Legal and have all the rights they deserved.

"We don't need a huge party, we applied for the marriage license, as soon as we have it we can look for somebody to wed us, have a little ceremony and that's it. Your parents, our friends, the end. We take our son and daughter to Hawaii, get married there again, have our honeymoon and come back, continue our life like nothing had happened."

"Like nothing had happened? You want to treat our marriage like something, that never happened?" The blonde looked shocked at her lover. What happened to romance? Love? They weren't buying a carpet, they were getting married. Commit their lives to each other. "That was never the plan!"

"No, I don't want to pretend we never got married, I want to celebrate with you and our closest friends. A small wedding, then another even smaller wedding on Hawaii, or the other way around. Nothing big and fancy and no big party when we're back. A dinner with your parents and our kids is enough. Let's save our money for something else."

"How can you think about money when we talk about our wedding?" Maybe they had to talk more than Sofia thought. There seemed to be big differences in their thinking.

"Unlike other people in Los Angeles we're on a budget. For you, refusing to take money from me for the house in any other way than the way too low rent I pay, money is tight all the time and I can think of better ways to spend my money than a huge party with dozens of people. People invite too many people to weddings, they don't really like. I'd rather have a barbecue with

our friends and save the money for a family trip or our son's college."

"His marks improved a lot the last months. I like to think it's because of his great mothers and our good influence."

"Or because he wants to become a lawyer. He enjoys working with Mel, knows he can make a lot of money and that would be a nice change for him, after having a childhood with barely anything."

"Can't he become something else? A manager or something like that."

Sara laughed. Sofia hated the idea of their son becoming a lawyer for whatever reason while Sara was sure, if Stephen wanted to be a lawyer, it was exactly what he'd become and both of his mothers would support him.

"He's fifteen, he'll change his mind again, don't worry about it. Can you live with a small wedding party?"

"Absolutely. As long as you marry me."

"I asked you to marry me, so yes, I will marry you. Who, besides your parents and our funny housemates do we want to invite? I'd like to have Shane around."

"Not Grissom?" Sofia had no idea why she asked this. Sara didn't have any contact with Grissom, why would she asked him to come to their wedding?

"Inviting your ex to your wedding is weird, isn't it?"

"Yes. I'd like to have Lynn and Kyle with their better halves here. Greg?"

"Greg and Jules, as well as their kids, go without saying. Neither one of us can imagine to get married without them. What about your movie star?"

"Lou? He can come to the barbecue...like my colleagues. They're not close friends, I can have a little party with them at work, only close friends for the wedding. Which gets us around twenty people."

"Gosh, twenty close friends, that's like having a thousand friends on Facebook." Sara laughed. Who would have thought she had so many close friends? People she wanted around on the most important day of her life. No, the most important day in her life was when she and Sofia fell in love and kissed for

the first time because that was the day when her life changed to good and became something, she didn't dare to dream of.

"You don't have an account on Facebook."

"Or you don't know I have it."

Sofia eyed her lover. "Are you collecting friends behind my back?"

"Of course, with a half naked profile picture and single as status."

"I'll have a look if that's true!"

"Honey, I don't use my real name, you'll never find me."

"I'll hack into your laptop and find out. Or your cell phone or wherever you have your secret account. I'm a CSI, I'll find the evidence I need."

"Don't forget, I used to be a CSI too and know how to make evidence disappear." Sara kissed her lover. "It's like with all the bodies I buried, you won't find them."

"Sometimes you have a strange way to tell me you love me."

"I love you and I look forward to marry you soon. Why don't we start with our second wedding? We have a look when we can get married on Hawaii and when we booked this we can plan our wedding here. I don't believe we can arrange the real wedding before we go to our island."

"Maybe, just maybe, I requested an offer from the page we liked most."

"You did? What did they say?"

"If we answer until Friday we can have our wedding on the beach by the end of the month. It leaves just one week of honeymoon because Steve has to go to school, but we could do it. And all we have to do is be there and say: I do. We could do more if we wanted, go for the big celebration, but we said a small one, so it will be over within thirty minutes...which is kind of sad, I'd love to marry you for hours or days."

"Honey, you'll be married to me for the rest of your life and we can get remarried whenever we like." Sara kissed her lover softly. "By the end of the month, mhm?" If the marriage license for their legal wedding came in soon they could be married, legally married, by the time they go to Hawaii.

"Yes."

"Tell them we'll be there. One wedding on the beach and we have a look for accommodation, book it and the flights and then we can think about our celebration here. A big barbecue. It will be a short noticed party."

"All our friends are waiting for the wedding anyway. Do you think I can lose a few more pounds for the wedding dress? There's still a lot of Susan left on me."

"I think you look absolutely perfect the way you do now. No need to lose a few more pounds. I love you and I want you happy at our wedding and not starved. We'll have a huge chocolate wedding cake when we celebrate here, and I will try positive thinking now and say, we have our marriage license soon and get married before the flight to Hawaii. Do you want to watch how everybody eats white wedding chocolate cake except you because you're on a Hawaiian beach wedding diet?"

"No!" White wedding chocolate cake? Sara wanted them to have a chocolate cake for their wedding? And not a traditional wedding cake? Her fiancé was perfect.

"See. Stay perfect how you are and enjoy our wedding cake. Just because we're in L.A. it doesn't mean we have to be a size zero. In fact, I find size zero very unattractive."

"Would you love me in a size twenty?"

"I love you no matter in which size you fit."

"That's my wife." Sofia snuggled into Sara's arms and got lost in her kiss. Her fiancé was the best. And if everything worked out they were married in four weeks. Legally married. A dream come true. Married with children, life could be so perfect.

Friday, August 2nd

"Did I tell you I love you?" Sara pulled Sofia in her arms just before the blonde could grab her morning coffee from the counter and kissed her passionately. Sometimes she felt like pulling her fiancé in her arms and just kiss her like there was no tomorrow. She didn't need a special reason for it, a move Sofia made, a gesture, a word. Or only realizing how much she loved the other woman.

"Not the last two minutes, feel free to repeat it more often. Same for the kisses. I love you too and I can't wait to marry you. Did I mention this lately?"

"Not in the past..." Sara checked her watch. "Three minutes, almost four. Feel free to tell me more often."

"I will. Do you want to marry me?"

"I do because I love you, only you." The brunette pulled the blonde into a long kiss.

"Oh, I just entered lover's heaven, the place where everything is pink and full of deep red hearts and everybody is sunshiny." Tanya grinned when she came into the kitchen and found the two women kissing, not caring about the world around them. "Don't mind me, I get my coffee and be gone before your lips have...too late, you stopped kissing. Good morning, love birds."

"Good morning, love bird. Where is your better half?" Sara asked, her arms still around Sofia, not willing to let go of the blonde.

"I am the better half, the worse half is on his way. He needs an extra minute in the bathroom to wash away his tears, loser tears. Maybe you have some make-up to cover up the tracks of his tears."

"Have you been playing video games the whole night?"

"Most part of the night, yes. He wanted to play until he wins, around one in the morning he gave up because it was late and we have to work today. Men can't admit when they're not the best, it buggers them big time."

"I think it's more an ego than a gender thing." Sara chuckled.

"Might be. What did the two of you do? I didn't see you downstairs last night."

"We had a children free night and used that for some wedding plans."

"No more details needed, I have a vivid imagination. Honeymoon practice."

"Goes hand in hand. On the twenty-fifth of August we'll fly to Hawaii, means we'll have our pre-wedding party two days before and a big finally married party when we're back a week later, the first of September." Sofia smiled. When she had a look at her emails in the morning the company, who offered same sex marriages on Hawaii, answered already and confirmed their dates. In twenty-five days they'd get married on Hawaii.

"Cool, finally. I thought you'd wait, like Greg and Jules and we get no wedding party at all. They haven't planned a damn thing and I was looking forward to two weddings this year."

"Maybe they wait until you and Don are ready to tie the knot too."

"Believe me, they don't want to wait this long. I suspect another child is on its way and it's the reason why they stopped planning. A pregnant Jules can't celebrate. They didn't get married last year because Jules was pregnant with Louise, maybe this year we have the same reason."

"Jules's pregnant?" Sara looked surprised. That was new to her.

"I don't know, it's only an idea why they stopped their wedding plans."

"Don't put your silly ideas in their heads." Don came into the kitchen. "Morning Ladies, don't listen to her, she's crazy. Jules and Greg said three kids are enough, there won't be a fourth one. I'm sure they did everything to avoid another unplanned child. As much as they love Louise, the house isn't made for four kids."

"Sometimes things happen, things you haven't planned."

"Yeah, the twins. Louise. It won't happen again."

"You never know."

"Like you don't know if your crazy fantasy is real."

"I like her crazy fantasy." Sofia said.

"Me too but I don't believe it. Anyway, I've to go, the forest is calling. I see you tonight, take care of my CSI, detective Flack."

"Of course."

"That is so Sara, there are great news and instead of telling Don all about it, she leaves for work. She'll be married by the end of the month." Tanya cheered.

"Seriously? You've got a date?"

"We do. A Hawaii date, we're still waiting for the marriage license for Los Angeles."

Sara smiled. Sofia would tell Don all about their wedding plans, as they had a few more minutes before they had to leave for work. She, on the other hand, had to hurry to be on time. Another day in Angeles National Forest lay ahead and she looked forward to it. The only downside about her job was, she couldn't see her fiancé and children the whole day, but that was something most people had to put up with. Unless she and Sofia decided to work from home and home school their children, there was a separation time. Not the nicest time of the day but definitely something she could handle. And in a few weeks they'd all be on Hawaii and celebrate their wedding.

"You have this certain smile on your face. It either means you had some nice sex this morning or you have fantastic news - or both." Shane said when he and Sara drove through Angeles National Forest, checking on the area. It was summer time, there was always a high risk of fires and they tried to spot flames as soon as possible so they didn't destroy too much of the forest. Today, their boss sent them further up north, in an area, where they usually didn't work, but due to the summer holidays a lot of colleagues were at home and they had to leave their usual area. They knew the area around the Bouquet Reservoir, had been here a couple of times.

"You're supposed to look for fires and not poke around in my private life."

"Oh, both. Nice, the kids let you have some time with your sweetheart."

"Actually, both kids weren't at home. One was with her grandmother and the other one with a friend."

"Female friend?"

"Yes."

"Oh, little Steven is dating, having sex too."

"I doubt that."

"He stayed over at a female friend's place? It means sex. Face it, mommy Sara, your baby grows up and has sex. Maybe more sex than you have. Did you see him this morning? Does he smile the same way you do? Or is he still with the chick, maybe doing it now while you're at work."

"Lea and Stephen don't have sex, they're just friends. Not friends with benefits and even if they are, it'd be fine too. I like Lea a lot, they're really close and as long as she doesn't end up pregnant and both have to stop high school for a year, I'm fine with whatever they do. Is that smoke up there?" Sara pointed west.

"Could be, lets see and check it out. We don't need another fire, the last one was bad enough." They had a big fire by the end of May, which destroyed a huge area in the west and firefighters needed a whole month to extinguish it and they had a couple of more, smaller fires, too.

"Oh yes, that's a fire." Shane got the radio. "Here's Shane, we're a mile south of the Bouquet Reservoir and have a fire."

"Copy that, firefighters are on their way."

"Thanks."

"We've got a north wind, lets get to the reservoir, see if there're people. It's early, there shouldn't be many." Sara accelerated the car. At the moment the wind wasn't strong, but that could change any second and then everybody, who was close to the fire and on foot, was at risk.

Sara and Shane told all people to move away from the reservoir and keep a big distance between them and the fire, while being alert of wind changes and possible danger.

"You know there'll be stupid dickheads, who'll stay to get nice photos of the fire. Look how close I got to the fire, I'm such a hero, now praise me and eat your barbecue." Shane rolled his eyes. He knew this kind of people, mostly men, as he had sent many of them away since he worked in the forest.

"There's always space for idiots. Otherwise life would be too nice and easy." Sara agreed. They'd be busy driving along the shore, sending people away, even when their colleagues put up signs up and down the road, that there was a fire (which you

could see if still had your eyesight) and it was dangerous and prohibited to come to the reservoir.

"The problem is these idiots do not only endanger their own life, they risk the lives of others, the people, who have to save their asses...just like these idiots over there!" He turned down the window of the car when he saw a group of four men getting ready for fishing at the reservoir.

"Hey, there's a fire, get the hell out of here!"

"Oh come on, it's far away."

"Less than a mile, get lost, the area will be closed soon. Now, keep moving!"

Sara stopped and they watched how the men took their stuff, complaining and swearing just loud enough so they could hear it, and took off.

"We're closing off the roads to the reservoir. All visitors are required to leave." Their colleague informed them via the radio.

"Copy that. We'll take the south road, have a look for anybody who's still here." Sara answered.

"A chopper is on its way, the fire is bigger than expected. Get not too close or out of there soon."

"Don't worry, we will." Sara followed the men in their car until they turn left to get away from the lake and turned her car on the south road. When the chopper was there, it could help them locate people. There were five more cars in the car park, probably hikers. They had to find them and get them away from the fire.

"So, what was the smirk for?" Shane picked up their conversation.

"Huh?"

"The smirk you wore this morning, this great sex or great news smirk. Which one was it? Or was it both?"

"If I smirked every time I had great sex there'd be an everlasting smirk on my face."

"Wow, now I'm jealous."

"Stop screwing around, stay with one woman and you might experience the same."

"First I need to find an amazing woman, for that I've to test many."

"If you had any idea about great sex you wouldn't need to test half of the city. Maybe you need a man."

"Woa, stop right there!"

"Why?" Sara stopped the car and looked around. Did she miss something? Was there one of the missing people?

"I meant your disgusting idea of having sex with men. Guys are not supposed to have sex with each other."

"Like women are not supposed to have sex with each other?"

"No, that's sexy."

"We had this conversation already, get used to the fact that nothing is disgusting when it comes to sex between two adults and both agree on whatever kind of sex they have."

"You sound like a dyke from WeHo."

"I love a woman, I am a dyke, not from West Hollywood but from Silver Lake and you know what? It's good it is this way. I prefer to sound like a WeHo dyke and you sound like a member of the Bush family."

"That was mean!"

"The truth can be mean. Next year you come with me to L.A. Pride, it will widen your mind and a great fun. A lot of nice people, great dancing music and good variety of food and beverages. Just what you like most."

"Guys hitting on me?"

"Probably, you've got such a nice ass."

"I do? I mean...yuck...for the men...but...you think I've got a nice ass?"

Sara rolled her eyes and didn't say a word. Sometimes she wondered why Shane came with her to a club in WeHo when he acted like a homophobic idiot.

"Hey, you owe me an answer."

"I don't...what's that?" She stopped the car.

"Don't try to change the topic, there's nobody."

"There're legs!" Did one of the hiker fall? Broke his leg, lost consciousness? There was no cell phone signal available in this area, but he must have heard the car when he was conscious. She got out of the car and walked off the road. Only a few yards, hidden under a bush, she almost didn't see the legs if they hadn't been in bright red pants. "Hey, are you all right?" Not likely, nobody, who was all right, took a nap in the bushes

or lay down for a little rest. "Sir? Hello?" She stepped closer and before she could get close enough to have a better look at the person she stopped and pulled Shane, who was about to overtake her, back.

"What..."

"Don't get any closer."

"Why? We have to check..."

"We need to call the police."

"Huh?"

"Don't you smell it?"

"The smoke?"

"Iron. And there are blow flies, this is not a hiker, who takes a nap, this is a dead hiker. Get back in the car, stay there, call the police."

"What will you do?"

"Use some of my old skills." So much for no dead bodies around her anymore. Looked like she just stumbled over one. Welcome back, Las Vegas. CSI Sara Sidle was just back on the job until the CSI from Los Angeles came and took over.

"Step aside, CSI will be here soon and they won't like it when you destroy evidence, ranger Sidle."

Sara gave the young officer, who pushed her away, a good look over. The CSI won't like it when you destroy evidence, ranger Sidle? Hello? She secured the scene in the best way she could with the stuff she had as a ranger.

"Wilcox, you don't have to tell her what to do, in fact she knows better what to do than you do." Don stepped out of a car. "She used to be one of the best CSI Las Vegas had before she became a ranger. Be glad she doesn't tell you which mistakes you made." His attention shifted from the slightly blushing young officer to Sara, who stood not very impressed at the same spot, where she had been before. "What can you tell me about the body?"

"Well, in order not to disturb the crime scene, I didn't touch the body. It's a female body, although the pants suggest male first. Slashed throat, there's a finger missing, the little one, left hand. It appears to be cut off. Decomposition suggests she's been

dead for at least twelve hours. It's also what the bugs tell me, from what I saw."

"Does that sound to you like she has no clue about what she's doing?" He turned back to the young colleague.

"No...I'm sorry..."

"You should know how a professional secured crime scene looks like. Never mind." Don got his attention away from the young man. "How did you find her, Sara?"

"We drove past, looking for hikers. There are a few cars left in the car park and the fire might as well get over to here."

"I saw that. How bad is it?"

"Medium sized. As soon as the area is at risk they'll let us know, a chopper is in the air, checking the fire and wind. But it wouldn't be a bad idea to get out here ASAP."

"Okay. Look, L.A. CSI arrived on scene and as requested, it's the Las Vegas team. Will you join them?"

"No, I step aside, it's not my crime scene. In fact, I have to find hikers and will leave you alone. You know where to find me when you need me."

"Upstairs."

"Or you call me when we're on duty. Hey." Sara sent a warm smile to Sofia, when her lover appeared at the scene. The only good thing about this crime scene was her lover was here, she could see.

"Hi. Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, yes. Thanks for coming over this fast."

"You call and we're there." Greg hugged his friend. "Nice work. Want to join us?"

"No, I leave, there are some people out, who might be at risk, depending on the wind. You guys will be informed if there's a danger for you or the scene, the firefighting plane knows about the scene and will stay away as long as it's possible. But don't get too comfortable, don't take your time, you never know when you have to leave."

"Thanks. We keep you informed as far as we can. Was anybody reported missing in the forest the last days?"

"No, nobody."

"Okay, we'll check with missing persons. See you later."

"Hopefully not too late. Good luck." Sara looked at Sofia and pursed her lips for a second to a kiss. This was all of love and affection she could give her lover as long as they were on duty and at a crime scene. No kisses, no gossip for colleagues. They were professionals.

Now it happened. Sofia knew, sooner or later there'd be a crime scene in Angeles National Forest and Sara was the one, who reported it. For herself, as a CSI, it was the best thing that could happen to a crime scene. Nobody was more skilled than the brunette, nobody knew better what to do and more importantly, what not to do, than her lover. But for the sake of Sara, she hoped it wasn't a bad scene.

The victim, a woman in her twenties, was dressed although it seemed to be somebody redressed her. The red pants were at least two sizes too big for her. The throat was slashed and the left little finger missing. A fact, that troubled Sofia most. Not so much that she had to deal with a cut off limb, she saw worse a lot of times, but most times it meant the killer took the finger and when a killer took a souvenir, he or she was likely to kill again. Which made this a possible serial killer case. The question, or one of the questions was, was this the first victim or one of many? It was her job to find this out.

"Cherry is almost there." Greg got off the radio. "Where do you want to start?"

"With her, if that's cool with you."

"Sure. I've a look around, do you think she was here dumped a while ago?"

"She surely spent the night here, from what the insects tell me. Sara was right, she must be dead for at least twelve hours, given the weather conditions, I'd say the killer left her here last night, maybe around sunset. Surely late enough to make sure, nobody found her until the morning."

"Then again he didn't hide her, Sara saw her from the road. This red pants, you see them pretty good."

"They mean something."

"What?"

"We'll find it out and should hurry, if the wind gets stronger we've to leave fast. There's the reservoir between the fire and

us, but it doesn't mean we're safe or have a lot of time. In fact, we could have less than one hour." Sofia had been once at a crime scene in a forest and a fire was two miles away. First the wind was perfect for them, sending the fire in the other direction, then suddenly it turned and they had to grab everything and leave fast or they'd become a new crime scene for their colleagues.

"There's Cherry." Sofia spotted the medical examiner.

"Great, that will get us out here faster." Greg waved at Cherry and left to work the perimeter while Sofia took a couple of photos before the other woman arrived.

"Now, what do you have for me today, Honey?"

"Female, I'd say mid-twenties, slashed throat and a missing finger. The rest is to you to find out."

"Well, sounds like you found out a lot already. Who found her? Ranger or hikers fleeing the fire?"

"Sara."

"Seriously?" Cherry looked surprised. "I mean, it is her workplace...means, we won't have to worry about evidence added to the scene and body by whoever found her. A nice change. Why isn't she here anymore?" The medical examiner looked around if she had missed Sara standing somewhere.

"Because there're still hikers in the forest, if the wind changes, they might be at risk and she needs to find them. It's up to us to save the dead, she takes care of the living ones."

"In my eyes she has the better job. Okay, lets get started before we all turn into crispy ribs with some additional meat. Did you take your photos?"

"Yes."

"All right." Cherry bent down to have a closer look. "There are marks on her wrists, looks like she had been tied up with something, I'd say a rope." She had a look at the feet and ankles and found similar marks on both ankles. "Somebody made sure she stayed wherever she was. Give me your tweezers, please." Carefully Cherry picked up something and dropped it into a small evidence bag, Sofia offered her. "Not sure what it is, trace will tell you. Here's a hair, long and blonde, might be her own hair." The hair followed into the next bag. "How do you like your bugs?"

"Alive in different container."

"Then give me the container, I give you three bugs each." While Cherry collected various bugs while Sofia managed to catch a fly.

"Liver temperature suggests she's been dead for around fourteen to twenty hours, I've to check weather conditions before I can narrow it down and do the autopsy."

"There is not much blood around, she wasn't killed here, only dumped. How about her fingernails? Can you see something that might help us?"

"Nope, clean, she never scratched her attacker. I'm going to take her with me now. You come along later?"

"Yes. Cherry? The missing finger..."

"Don't evoke something we don't want. Her finger is missing, at this time it doesn't mean a thing. People do lose fingers while working at home. Hundreds of these accidents happen every year."

Yes, it could mean it was an old injury. If this was their explanation the medical examiner would find out about it. To Sofia a missing finger meant a lot more and she knew, to Cherry it meant the same. The medical examiner knew the indications of serial killer, she didn't need Sofia to tell her about it. Fingers didn't just fall off, they weren't just left behind like an umbrella or hat, they had to be cut off by something. Accidentally or on purpose. And it was up to them to find out, what happened to the finger and the rest of the dead body.

"Are you sure she was killed?" Shane looked at Sara. He was pale and not the self-assured man, he had been an hour ago.

"Yes."

"Maybe it was an accident."

"How often did you hear somebody went for a hike in the forest, wearing pants two sizes too big, slashed her throat, cut off a finger and dropped dead?"

"Never. Fuck. What happened to her finger? Did an animal bite it off?"

"I've no idea but I'm quiet sure she didn't cut it off herself."

"Because people don't these things?"

"Well, Van Gogh did cut off his ear, he was mental unstable when he did it, but no, people don't just cut off their finger. And the wounds looked too fresh to be an old accident."

"When you were a CSI, did you ever have a case when somebody cut off a limb?"

"I had a case when a woman bit off her own hand."

"Seriously? Why?"

"Because she was held by a serial killer and it was the only way she could escape the chains and her death." The daughter of Lady Heather, Sara remembered the case more than good. Grissom had been with Heather a lot during this case, they had some argument about his and her relationship, like a few weeks later when he stayed with Heather after the dominatrix got attacked and almost killed, but the case was worse than their arguing. "This man, the serial killer, he brand his victims, numbers on their shoulders, he transferred eyes and other things. The young woman was the daughter of a friend of my boyfriend, the case was hard for him."

"Oh, it was personal."

"Not for me, for him. I didn't know his friend personal."

"Why didn't you know the friend of your boyfriend?"

"Because we kept our relationship private, he was my supervisor, so we weren't allowed to be together and...well...it was complicated." Like most of her life had been. Very complicated and not all that happy. Until she came here and met Sofia again.

"Do you know Sofia's friends?"

"I assume I know most of them, yes. At least the ones, who live in Los Angeles. Why?"

"Just curious. Does she know your friends?"

"Besides the people I work or worked with, there aren't any friends. And Jules." Sara smiled. Jules was a very important friend.

"Your shrink."

"Former therapist, that's a long time ago."

"Is one of her other patients her friend too?"

"No and if she hadn't fallen in love with Greg we wouldn't have become friends."

"Although you get along this good."

"If you stick to the rules very strictly it's forbidden. Or not appreciated. Another thing I'll thank Greg for forever."

"What is the other thing?"

"That he's a wonderful friend and gave me the cutest godchild ever. Look, this could be one of our hikers." She pointed to a man a few yards away, sitting under a tree, having a break.

"Good morning, sir, did you park at the reservoir?"

"Good morning rangers, I surely did. Why? Is there a problem?"

"You might have noticed the smell of smoke in the air, there's a fire north of the reservoir and when the wind turns, your car and yourself might be at risk. We'd like to take you back to your car so you can drive out of the forest. This area is closed until the firefighters have dealt with the flames."

"Is it this bad?" He had honest concern in his voice.

"It's not good."

"Then it's better I come back another day. What a pity, I was doing quite good. Thought I might be able to walk around the reservoir."

"There'll be a better day for this, one without fire."

"Absolutely." He packed his belongings into the backpack and got into the backseat. "Are there many people out? I noticed another car when I started."

"We're still looking for people, so is the chopper."

"Hopefully you find them."

"Did you take the road to here?"

"No, I took the trail, walking over a road isn't much fun, I hoped to see some wildlife and for that the trails are always better. Why?"

"Just wondering." What if he was the killer? He wouldn't be the first one, who stuck around to see what the police was doing, if they had any clues. Sara checked the man out in the rearview mirror. He was in his late sixties, solid built but she doubted he could have carried the woman to the bushes and she had been carried, that she could tell.

"Did you take your lunch with you? And enough water?" Sara stepped behind Greg, making sure she stayed far enough away from the crime scene to disturb nothing.

"We do have some water in the car, my lunch is at the lab." He paused and walked to her.

"I've got some salad and sandwiches for you, Sofia and Don. Also chocolate bars, the selection of food isn't big at the ranger's station."

"Sandwiches are always appreciated. Sofia is over there, she has the area around the body, worked the body. Did you find all owners of the cars?"

"I did and I got the license plates for Don, in case he wants to check them out. They were around the scene, they might have seen something or one of them can be the killer too."

"Your smart head is still involved in law enforcement."

"It was my life for many years, how could I forget about everything I learnt within two or three years?"

"You couldn't. Where's Shane?"

"At the station, coordinating firefighters. It's at the lake, you should leave here within the next hour, it might reach the road and cut off your way back out of the forest."

"I don't suppose you have a camera in this area?"

"No, sorry."

"Bugger. The people you found, did you have the feeling one of them had anything to do with this?"

"No. Which came to my mind was the question, what if the person, who killed the woman also set the fire? To cover his traces."

"If the fire had gotten her we'd have been unable to get anything useful, but if he set the fire, why set it on the other side of the reservoir? It's too far away to be a real threat and with the fire he should have known you guys are here and look for other people."

"Right."

"We'll find whoever did this to her, Sara."

"Of course, you and Sofia are the best, the killer has no chance."

"No and dumping the body in an area where the best former CSI works, somebody who knows how to make sure no evidence will be destroyed, was a big mistake. We get him and make him pay. And now go and talk to your sweetheart for a minute before you have to take off and we leave the scene."

Sara smiled and went to Sofia. "Your boss with the crazy hair told me to talk to you before you go back to the lab."

"My boss with the crazy hair? First of all he isn't my boss, second his hair isn't crazy anymore and third you don't need his permission to talk to me." Sofia stepped off the crime scene and hugged Sara. "How are you?"

"Angeles National Forest is famous for being a great place to dump a body and leave. We all knew sooner or later I'd stumble over a body and had to call you. Actually, it's the second body I saw here."

"The first one was an accident."

"Suspicious accident, which makes it half a homicide. I'm sure the husband had something to do with the death of his wife, he was too calm, too much a man of facts. Plus she had the money, which became his with her death. Pretty good reasons to kill."

"Like he had a pretty good alibi with being in Vegas." Sofia hadn't worked the case but kept an eye on it as Sara had been involved and she wanted to be sure everything was running fine; or as fine as possible murder case could run.

"In dubio pro reo. You'll work overtime with this, won't you?"

"Probably. Sorry."

"Hey, it's summer, I do overtime all the time. We meet for late dinner or some snack on the sofa, have our baby daughter in our arms, maybe our teenager son around and watch a movie, fall asleep like any other very boring family."

"We're not a boring family but I do like the idea." Sofia took another look around, made sure nobody paid attention to them and kissed Sara briefly. "I love you."

"Love you too. Take care of my CSI, will you?"

"Always."

"How is your leg?"

"Good, no problems. Why?"

"Just checking, knowing my future wife tends to ignore pain until it's too big and the doctors get angry with her. Promise me you go to your doctor as soon as there's a little bit of pain. I want to get married by the end of the month and I want my wife free of pain and take as less medication as possible. No

wedding champagne and beer if you're on strong painkillers. Understood?"

"Yes my dear. I promise as soon as there's an unusual pain I see the doctor."

"Good. And now go and catch a killer, I like my forest safe and a happy place for families to have picnics and walks. They're supposed to spot deer and birds, not dead bodies."

"I do my best." Sofia squeezed Sara's hand and sent her one last smile. Gosh, she loved this woman and wished, they could work together the whole day so she could see her all the time, watch her and just sneak up every once in a while (or more often) to kiss her.

"I can smell a lot of questions - and a burrito." Cherry said when Sofia came into the morgue.

"First of all there's no food allowed in here, second I don't have a burrito and third, you're right, I do have a lot of questions and you're just that kind of woman, who can answer them all. Or most of them before she works hard to get all the answers she can't give me right now. It's what I like about you, Cherry."

"I like the burrito, since you don't have one, I'm not sure how much I like you, Sofia."

"Don't break my heart, doctor. Tell me about my DB."

"Hey, did you know there's a guy running the Las Vegas crime lab, whose name is DB? Pretty weird for a CSI, don't you think?"

"Why? Doc Robbins can write in his report: DB found a DB, pretty handy."

"You've got weird sense of humor. Anyway, our DB, who still has no name, died due the loss of blood from her slashed throat. This was one with a single bladed knife, around six inches long. Unfortunately the tip didn't break so I can't give you anything to work with. Cut from the left to the right, from behind, so you're looking for a right-handed killer. The ankle also suggests he was taller than she is. She's five foot four. The missing finger has been cut off postmortem, my guess with the same knife. You don't have to be very strong to cut off a finger. Any questions so far?"

"You know, basically you're telling me anybody could have killed her. Anybody taller than five foot four, which is probably ninety five percent of all men in Los Angeles. Plus a good amount of women, as you haven't told me anything so far, that rules out a woman as a killer. Can you give me something more...I don't know, something to narrow down the killer? At least to a gender?"

"Oh, I can. She was raped, no semen found, he suited up. Also he raped her postmortem. The bruises on her wrists and ankles are from ropes, I took several photos for you and my best guess is, the rope is about an inch thick, looks like twisted rope to me. I swapped the bruises, gave the swaps to trace, hopefully they can tell you more.

Now to get to something that's on both of our minds: I don't have a similar case to this, asked my colleagues, they also didn't have a female DB, raped with a missing finger. We do have raped females, we have people with missing limbs and DBs with slashed throats, none of them has all three together, which is good. If, and I'm only saying it because there's always a possibility and it's better to be prepared than don't look at every angle, if this is a serial killer he has just started or his other victims haven't been discovered yet. You might want to check in your smart computer for nationwide crime cases. Are there people checking the area where her body was found?"

"As soon as they've dealt with the fire the ranger will check and so will some recruits from the police academy. At the moment their focus is on the fire."

"Then we focus on her. There's a little tattoo on her left buttock, a rose. I took a photo and sent it to Don so he has more details for missing persons."

"Did he feed her?"

"Difficult to say as we don't know when she went missing. Her stomach was almost empty, I found some salad and dressing, if he fed her it was a while ago and if she made the salad herself, it was close before she disappeared. She died twenty hours ago, the salad lunch must have been from around yesterday morning, an usual breakfast. So if she disappeared before work her boss or colleagues should have noticed this."

"Which could help us. Anything else?"

"Not yet, I keep you posted."

"Thanks." Sofia was almost out of the room when she stopped and turned. "Cherry?"

"Yeah?"

"Is it normal this kind of killing gets to you more when you're a mother?"

"Sure, especially when you have a baby girl. You know the world is bad and girls/women are more at risk. This includes your own baby. So whenever you see a young woman or a girl dead, it reminds you it could be your child."

"So what are you doing? Go home, make the security of your house even better and lock your children in the house until they're forty?"

"That's one way, but I'm afraid not the right way. You go home, make sure your home is a safe haven, talk to your kids about possible danger without scaring them too much and then you hope, pray if you believe in God, and go on with your life, come home every night and hug your kids when you find them there happy and alive."

"You know how to cheer me up."

"Honey, you've got two kids and a fiancé to cheer you up, I'm here to deliver the truth and it get served most times pretty bitter."

"Life's a bittersweet symphony." Sofia managed half a smile before she left the morgue. She had to send Steve a text and call her mother how Susan was. There was no reason to believe her children were anything but fine, but sometimes you needed a proof.

"Where's the most beautiful little girl Los Angeles has ever seen? There she is!" Sara picked Susan up and kissed her head. After a shower, because she smelled like a walking barbecue, that served everything very smoky today, she went to Sofia's parents to take their daughter home. "How was the last night?"

"Better. She woke us up twice for a few minutes and went back to sleep." Marc said with the pride of a grandfather handling a difficult task. And Susan was a difficult case when she had her crying hours.

"Good. You're coming with me and are a good girl. Your mommy has a new case, one that will keep her busy and she needs her sleep. So do I because I have to be back at work at six tomorrow morning. We need to be alert the whole time, there are fires, one big one today. This biiiig." Susan started laughing when Sara lifted her up high over her head.

"Is it under control?"

"Yes. It won't be the last one, the fire season isn't over."

"No. What about the body? I heard about it in the news."

"Sofia was there, it's her case."

"Sounds not good."

"No, it doesn't. Hopefully Sofia closes the case soon. It's a bad, bad world out there, you have to be careful, Susan. Can you promise mommy to be careful?" Another laughter. "I take this as a yes. Hey, say mom."

"She did make a sound that sounded a little bit like mom this afternoon, Marie was all over her, trying to make her say nana. It didn't work out but I'm sure she'll continue to try it until Susan says it - or Marie understood Susan said nana, which is more likely."

"It will keep both occupied, but you are so young, take your time with your first word, no need to rush. Where is Marie?"

"Out for a yoga lesson with a friend."

"Oh, she deserves a break. Monday I've the day off, you can stay with me the whole time, baby girl. Some time with your mommy before you forget her."

"Don't worry about that, she doesn't forget you. When you're on the phone we have you on speaker, she looks around like she's looking for you and when you come inside and call out for her, you have her full attention. She knows who her mother is and misses her. Which makes it not easier for you to leave her with us and go to work."

"No, not at all. Although it's good to know she misses me too. Thanks for taking care of her."

"You're more than welcome. Is Sofia taking her over tomorrow?"

"Actually Stephen will take care of her, you can sleep in. He and Lea will look after Susan and the dogs tomorrow, as they

both don't have to work and want a lazy day. I'm not sure how that works with a baby and two dogs."

"They'll be fine and it will be a pretty good training for them."

"Marc, they're not planning on having a family together." At least Sara didn't know about this plan and hoped, if there was a plan like this, or even close to this one, it would be realized in ten years or so.

"I'm not saying this, I only say it's good training. Shows them how much work a baby is and how many responsibilities you take. Makes them appreciate their mothers more."

"Or their grandparents, who do most of the work with Susan." Sara sat her daughter in the child car seat. "I'd love to invite you and Marie over for dinner tomorrow but I've no idea when Sofia and me will be home."

"Why don't you give us a call until six?"

"Delivered Thai food?"

"Why not, it's a change. If you won't be home until seven, Marie and me will have dinner here, otherwise we come over."

"Perfect. I call you. Say goodbye to your grandfather, Susan."

"Da!" Susan said, which could mean anything but for Sara it meant: goodbye granddad. Her daughter was such a wonderful and intelligent baby.

It was after seven when Sofia came home and the first thing she checked was how Susan was. Relieved to see her daughter on the thick carpet in her room, next to Sara, she sat down. Back with her family. Well, most parts of her family.

"Where is our son?"

"With Lea, they'll be back soon."

"Good, I like to have my family together. Greg will come here soon, with his family. I invited them over to some Chinese food. Are you hungry?"

"Yes and I invited your parents over for dinner tomorrow if we come home before seven. Thai and delivered, your dad was cool with that."

"He appreciates good delivered food sometimes. How are they?"

"Your mom was at a yoga class, he entertained our daughter, who said goodbye grandfather."

"I beg your pardon?" They were joking around the last days Susan said some words, or something, that could be a word, but a whole sentence? Real words?

"She said: da and it meant goodbye grandfather, I had a really nice time with you and I appreciate all your time and attention. I love you and look forward to see you again."

"For a second I believed she really said a word."

"With her four months she starts to say things, that might sound like a word, but they aren't words. Before she says mom we have to wait a little bit. If we're lucky she says it on our wedding day. Says YES before we do."

"That would be fun." Sofia picked her daughter up, lay her on her belly and placed her own head on Sara's belly. "I'm so glad she's fine, that we're fine."

"You worry Susan might be one day the girl we find in Angeles National Forest." Sara read Sofia's fears, as they were the same as her own fears. A picture of Susan, laying dead in the forest and her, Sara, stumbling over her one day, came to her mind more than once.

"Or anywhere else, yes. So do you. The worst thing is, there's nothing we can do to make sure it will never happen. We can only protect her to a certain point unless we lock her in a cage and that's not much of a life. Then she needs protection from her parents."

"The next years she won't be anywhere alone, there's always somebody around her, even when she's in the garden and we leave for a second. One of the dogs is there and take care of her. We both have the baby kidnapper on our mind, we both learnt how fast your child can be taken away from you, but Susan is in a secured garden, with a high fence and two protective dogs. She is safe." Sara knew she said these words not only to comfort Sofia, she said these words to comfort herself.

"I know and still...I want to see my family happy together when I come home."

"So do I. We do have a happy girl, she didn't stop smiling and laughing since I picked her up from your dad. Is your bad mood phase over, Susan? Does that mean you sleep at night again?"

"Let's hope she does, we both have to work tomorrow."

"Is your case closed?"

"No, we're far away from that, don't even know her name."

"Oh, shame." Sara kissed her lover. They agreed on not talking about cases in detail when their kids were around. It was one thing for them to know cruel details about murder, how deadly life could be, but their kids didn't have to hear this.

"Yeah." Sofia made a grimace. "How can a beautiful young girl like our daughter manage to stink this bad? Come on, stink bomb, I get a biological hazard suit and clean you."

"Must be Don's genes, you know she has my looks and the rest is him."

"Right." The blonde laughed. Susan looked exactly like a little Sara, which was for Sofia still the best thing ever happened to her daughter. Her own baby Sara, now she knew how Sara looked when she was a baby and she was so adorable. Both of them were.

"If I ever fall for a woman, it will be you."

Sara felt how lips touched her ear while these words got whispered to her and made her smile a little bit. She was on a sun lounger in the garden, taking her five minutes to rewind and get her energy back. It had been a long day and she needed a few minutes to recharge her batteries and keep going. Sofia had decided she wanted to give Susan a bath and sent her lover away for a few minutes.

"If you ever fall for a woman we'll have a huge problem because it will break my best friend's heart and I have to hate you for that. Plus you can't have me, I'm in love with a beautiful blonde." She opened her eyes and pulled Jules in her arms. "I missed you, where have you been?"

"Down the road, always close to you. Or in my office, the door always open for you. Where have you been? I heard you were back to your old life, working with bodies."

"No, I secured a crime scene for the CSI and police, I didn't touch anything nor did I pay attention to anything." Kind of.

"Liar. I bet when I ask you for details, you know them all. Are you all right?" Jules slipped next to Sara, stayed in her arms and kissed her cheek.

"Yes, I'm fine. Thanks. What about you? Your fiancé has been away for hours, don't you miss him helping plan your wedding?"

"The only wedding in the near future is yours. Sara Sidle, the woman who disappeared for a few days from a worried blonde, will marry just this woman. After she realized it's not bad nor wrong to be in love with a woman. Praise to myself, my therapy worked perfectly on you. In every possible way."

"It did and does, honor to whom deserves it and you certainly do. You're the best thing that happened to me in Los Angeles, Jules."

"Shouldn't that be Sofia?"

"Sofia happened to me in Las Vegas, I was only too blind and stupid to see her. She had been right in front of my eyes for years and I was...occupied with somebody else."

"Good things need their time."

"That's true. Where's my baby?"

"Susan is with her mother."

"I mean my Eric baby. Why isn't he here? He should be here in my arms."

"Sorry, the place in your arms is taken by his mother. My son and his sisters are with your and my fiancé. Leaves you in my power."

"Being in your hands never scared me...or it doesn't scare me anymore since I know you. It scared me at the beginning, you poked around in my head, shrink."

"Read your mind, such a nice thing to do for me. There's always something interesting going on in your mind, Sara."

"Is it? Oh well, then you know my next question, do I get a yes?"

"It's something serious, something that bothers you and you haven't told Sofia yet. Why don't you ask me, test how it feels to ask the question you have on your mind?"

"How do you know I haven't asked Sofia the same question and that it bothers me?" Sara wondered. This should scare her, it really was like Jules could read her mind. Which of course was nonsense, nobody could read her mind but damn, the therapist got so damn close to it very often.

"It's my job to notice this, Honey. What is it? Must be about the wedding."

"You do know the question!"

"Sara." Jules's words were softly, like a gentle tease, that meant nothing else than that the person, who teased you, loved you a lot.

"We...we have a wedding date for Hawaii and want to celebrate here before we leave and when we're back...can you make sure I don't blow the whole wedding off? I really don't want to blow it because I might get crazy or whatever. What if we stand in front of the priest, or whoever will be on the beach, and I don't say a word. Or the wrong words. Or get second thoughts out of the blue? What if I run because I'm scared? I don't want to hurt Sofia, don't want to risk anything. She's the love of my life, more than anything else I want her happy, be with her for the rest of our lives and be her wife, but...what if the stupid old Sara shows up and ruins it? Can you do anything to prevent that? And please, don't send me to your cousin, I know she's good but she isn't you and it's you I want to get my head organized and normal and not her. You're the best and I need the best to be the best for Sofia."

"Honey, you're the best for Sofia, you're the mother of her child, you're the love of her life."

"I know but...please?"

"You want to be back on my couch?"

"The armchair would be nice too."

"You know the rules, no more therapy for you with me, but." Jules stopped Sara before she could interrupt her. "We can meet in my office for a coffee and some muffins, talk. Nothing official, only a conversation between friends. After my office is closed."

"Therapy is nothing else than talking."

"Depends on the therapy. Do you agree? We meet once a week for coffee. Or twice?"

"Twice sounds better. Can we start ASAP? I'm really scared."

"We start tomorrow. Be at the office at five, can you arrange that?"

"I start at six and work until four, five should be fine. But it's Saturday, won't you be at home?"

"No, the month ended this week, I have some paperwork to do and my parents want the kids over for an afternoon grandparents - grandchildren program, so I've time to dig myself in papers until you come and rescue me."

"I pick up the muffins and coffee."

"We have an appointment."

"Yeah." Sara smiled. "Thanks Jules, I really appreciate it."

"Honey, that's what friends are for. And now get that worried look out of your face and smile. You're so much more beautiful when you smile and I can see the cute little gap of yours."

"Stop hitting on me, you're straight and I'll marry another woman." Sara laughed and buried her face in Jules's shirt, snuggling into her arms. Gosh, she loved this woman and had no idea, how often she had saved her ass so far. Quite often.

"Sometimes I feel like I should be very jealous and then I wonder if I should be jealous because you have my fiancé in your arms Sara, or because she has you in her arms. Why don't you never cuddle me the way you cuddle Jules? I'm your oldest and best friend, it's not fair." Greg said when he came into the garden and found Sara and Jules.

"Because she made me do it, it's one of her therapy magic tricks. I can't do anything, it's all part of her hocus-pocus."

"And you just love when she does her hocus-pocus to you."

"Absolutely. I love your fiancé, Greg and she loves me."

"Is there some love for me left?"

"There is a tiny little bit left for you, most of it is taken by Sofia."

"Honey?"

"Well." Jules got out of Sara's arms, got up and pulled Greg in her arms. "There's a lot of love for you, not left, but exclusively reserved. For you, our three wonderful children and the rest of our family. Where are the kids? Sara misses her baby boy."

"He's occupied. There was a good looking brunette, who got all his attention and he forgot about Sara."

"What? Impossible! I've to see him, save him from the other woman. I'm the only one for him!" Sara jumped up and left the garden.

"She's crazy for Eric, Susan didn't change that." Greg kissed Jules's hair. "Is everything all right with her?"

"Why do you ask? Was she different today?"

"No, is never different, even when she is haunted by something, she's very good in hiding her feelings. But I know that look of you, you worry about her a little bit."

"I do and I can't give you any details, it's a secret."

"Therapist-patient secret?"

"She isn't my patient anymore, it's a friend secret. Sorry Honey, you have to live with the knowledge she tells me things, you have no clue about. Which doesn't mean she loves you less."

"I know she loves and how important I am for her. Will you fix her problem?"

"She'll fix it herself, only needs some advice, like we all do sometimes."

"When was the last time you needed some advice?"

"This afternoon when I had no idea why there was a strange light blinking in my car and the guy at the garage fixed it within a minute."

"The guy at the garage? Why didn't you ask your fiancé?"

"Because I was worried the car wouldn't take me to my fiancé and our children. I didn't want to risk coming home late or let my family wait because of a stupid blinking light. Especially because I knew my fiancé is busy working a murder case. You're still my hero." She kissed Greg amused.

"I should be, I'm your fiancé."

"Are you about to give me the male ego thing? If so, save it for some other time and lets go back to our kids and the soon married couple. Have you picked what to wear on their wedding, best man?"

"A black suit, as men always do?"

"Seriously? Oh come on, it's not a church wedding, not an average wedding, it's the wedding of your best friend. You have to come up with something else, something better. Think about what would Sara and Sofia make very happy."

"Not a black suit. What will you wear on our wedding day?"

"A white dress. We should come up with a date for that too. For the next summer." First they had plans to get married this summer, but a wedding needed more time than they thought

and there were a lot of things they had to take care of. Too many to organize everything within a few months so their wedding had to wait until the next year.

"I like springtime, when everything is full of blossoms and it comes before summer. I want you to be my wife rather sooner than later."

"Then springtime it is. Why don't we start planning after Sara's and Sofia's wedding? Maybe they inspire us."

"The beach wedding is a nice idea, but our family won't like it when we take off. They expect us to have a huge ordinary wedding, in a church and a party with all our family and friends afterwards and I kind of want the same. A huge celebration with all of them."

"You kind of want the same or you want the same?" Jules cocked her head.

"I want the same, don't play therapist with me."

"Never."

"Mhm, you do it sometimes, but you think being a doctor makes you very smart so I don't realize what you're doing."

"Sweetheart, I was very smart before I became a doctor, the title doesn't make me smarter, it only shows the world, they're dealing with a smart woman, makes it obvious for all the dumb people, who wouldn't realize it without a title."

"Now you sound kind of arrogant."

"I know, I picked that up from Sofia, she wear her arrogance in an adorable way, nobody else does. Pretty inspiring, I like that about her. A positive arrogance, self-confidence, pretty nice and unfortunately very rare on women. Men tend to be more arrogant and most of them don't suit it."

"Am I arrogant?"

"No, you're plain cute and smart, that's why I love you so much. Mister Wow-are-you-single?"

"I got you with this question, it was one of the best questions I ever asked. Like the one when I asked you to marry me."

"Yes, sometimes you ask pretty nice questions, pretty important ones too."

"All without a doctor title."

"Which you could get if you tried it."

"No need to, my woman loves me without a title. I save the time for something more useful, like playing with our kids. I'm sure they prefer when their daddy spends the days off with them in the park or on the beach instead of sitting in the office, writing about something, nobody really needs only so he's doctor Sanders. Although, doctor Sanders sounds pretty cool. Maybe one day I get a doctor title. When the kids are grown-ups and don't want to spend time with their boring daddy anymore. These days will come way too soon."

"When daddy will be busy chasing off boys, who wants to date his little girls."

"No dates before they're twenty-one."

"Of course not, darling." Jules laughed. No dates before Jorja and Louise were twenty-one? In which world was her fiancé living?

"Where is the mean woman, who stole my little man?" Sara asked when she entered Don's living room.

"Sasa! Sasa!" Immediately Eric got up from his chair at the table, where he drew something with Jorja and Tanya. With arms wide open and flying hair he ran to his godmother and jumped into her arms. "Sasa! Love!"

"I love you too, my wonderful boy. So much." She kissed him.

"You're the cutest boy I ever kissed, do you know that?"

"Sasa kiss."

"Yes, another kiss is a pretty good idea." She kissed him again.

"I missed you, why can't you be here every day?"

"Because our daughter keeps us quite busy too." Sofia said with a smile. She had Louise in her arms, fed her with the bottle while Susan was in Steve's arms and got her bottle.

"Some of us are busy with our daughter, you aren't. You're either out snuggling up with another woman or prefer to kiss boys. Not a very responsible woman/mother."

"Says the mother, who feeds another child than her own."

"Our son takes care of our daughter and he's doing pretty good."

"After four months of practice I should be good in doing this."

Steve grinned. "You and me will spend the Sunday in luxury, do you look forward to this, baby sis?"

"Who says you're not spending your Sunday in poverty with your mothers?"

"Mom, you and mom are working, you have Monday off, mom has...I don't know, with the new case she'll have a day off when she closed it. So your son and daughter will get into an amazingly expensive car, joined by Lea and Louise and we spend the day in a villa with pool, tennis court, basketball court...which reminds me, you're all welcome to join."

"Oh, sounds great. My boyfriend is at work too, I take my niece and nephew and join you." Tanya said. "Jules, do you come with us? Or will you enjoy a day without your kids?"

"My parents take the kids tomorrow so I think I join you and have a day with my children, my boyfriend is working too. I had no idea Lou is in town. Shouldn't he be somewhere filming a new movie?"

"He came back today from New Zealand and wants to see us. It's so cool to know a movie star and be invited to his place in the Hollywood Hills. I love the view you have from his pool, especially when it's dark. I want a villa like this one day."

"You have to improve your marks for that." Sara said dryly.

"Or become a movie star. Maybe he can take me with him to audition and I become famous too. The new James Dean."

"Jules, he has some kind of mental illness, I'm not sure which one, but can you make sure he gets the right treatment?"

"He's a teenager, let him dream, dreams are important. What happened to the lawyer career? I heard you're doing pretty good in your part time job."

"I am and Mel makes some good money too, but Lou makes serious great money. Ten million dollar for his last movie."

"And he wastes it for expensive cars, tennis courts, swimming pools and houses with a view over the city instead doing something good."

"Not true!"

"Steve, your mother will never say anything nice about Lou, she's still jealous he hit on me years ago, which is so sweet. Honey, I love you and I marry you and not Lou Lee. He never had a chance, no matter how much money he has and how wonderful the view from his pool is. We'll get married this month."

"Yes we will and I booked the flight tickets today. We leave Los Angeles on the twenty-sixth and be back seven days later. These tickets were much cheaper than the other ones, it's all organized with the company on Hawaii. Tell your boss you won't be available for the two last weeks, Steve and no, she's no invited. It's a close family wedding."

"Very close, not even the best man is coming with you. How is wedding supposed to work without the best man?"

"He can come with us if he wants." Sara blinked at Greg.

"Seriously?"

"Well, Steve is right, we can't get married without a best man, Steve holds the rings, we need somebody over twenty-one to be the legal best man and if there's a best man for us, it's you."

"What about me?" Don asked. "The father of your child?"

"Do you want to come with us to Hawaii? In a gay holiday resort? With a lot of men looking for nice fresh meat?"

"I'm not homophobic and I..my girlfriend can't leave, I shouldn't go to Hawaii without her. Greg can have all the men."

"Thanks, I'm fine with my fiancé. Can you take a week off?" Greg asked Jules.

"I'll have a look tomorrow. If I can get a week free, your or my parents have to look after the kids, we won't take with us. It's too much stress."

"My parents will be delighted to have their grandchildren over for a week. We go to Hawaii! I always wanted to go to Hawaii!"

"Yeah, I remember a case when you wanted to ask Grissom if he sends you to Hawaii to compare sand, which he - surprisingly - didn't support." Sara chuckled. Greg had some weird ideas during his first years in the lab and she so much loved thinking back them. Her friend had been very special and was one of the highlights of work.

"He has a way with questions." Jules smirked. "Sometimes they get him what he wants."

"They got him you, that's much better than a trip to Hawaii. And thanks to this question I have this gorgeous young man in my arms. Can you draw a nice picture for me, Sweetie? I could use a new painting for the fridge."

"Ya." Eric kissed Sara and went back to the table.

"You never ask me for a painting, I feel unloved." Steve complained.

"Honey, you draw me a picture and I put it on the fridge, I promise. Go, draw your family, our house and whatever you feel like."

Lea started laughing. "I bet he feels like burgers, he always feels like burgers."

"So what? Triple Burger is great, we should ask Lou if we get some the day after tomorrow."

"That's my son, he goes to a millionaire, could ask for any kind of fancy food and all he wants are burgers. No wonder we adopted you, you're just a perfect match." Sofia sighed satisfied. Who needed fancy food when you could have a real good burger?

"And he is into movie stars, just like you are." Sara added.

"Depends on the movie stars. Can't say they all impress me. I like the TV stars we meet sometimes down at the reservoir, they're nice."

"Oh yeah, the last time we saw Carla Wolfe Zoe almost fainted."

"Shut up, Steve!"

"What? Just saying."

"Shut up!"

"She's hot."

"Honey, when a woman tells you to shut up, you better shut up because otherwise you may find yourself in big trouble. Believe me, they don't like it when you ignore their demands. You can tell us what happened with Lea when she's gone, as long as she's around, you do what she told you and shut up." Don advised Steve. "Just imagine she starts talking about who you like...how you behaved the first time you saw Lou Lee here."

"I was cool."

"Like ice in the sunshine. You almost peed in your shorts."

"Shut up, Lea."

"Kids, they're so entertaining. Do you remember the time we did nothing else than fighting, Honey? And look where we're now, about to get married. It's what happens when you fight

and tease each other all the time." Sofia sat next to Sara and kissed her.

"Mom, Lea and me will never get married."

"Exactly what I always thought about Sara and me back in the days, when we were in Vegas. Time changes so many things."

"Steve isn't into me, he's into older women. I'm not old enough."

"Oh, who is it?" As far as Sofia knew her son was over Tanya, who was the new woman in his life?"

"Shut up, Lea!"

"Selena Gomez."

"I told you to shut up!"

"Does she go to your school? Senior class?"

"Mom, she's a singer."

"She used to date Justin Bieber."

"And who is that?"

"Mo-om!" Steve rolled his eyes. Did his mother know anything about teenager stars?

"What? Sara?"

"Don't look at me. The first one sounds like a kind of burrito and the second like a cartoon figure, a beaver."

"I love your mothers." Lea laughed out loud.

"You should watch some MTV."

"Are they back to show music videos or do they still show whatever the names of the crap was. When I was young, back in the last millennium, MTV aired music videos, charts, you could call and vote for favorite videos...Honey, did you watch three of one? When they showed three videos in a row of the same artist?"

"Sorry, I never watched much TV."

"Oh, anyway, back in the days MTV was a music program. If they ever go back to this I will watch it again. But Honey, if you want to go to a concert of this burrito girl, you can do that. We don't mind, do we Sara?"

"No, we take you to the concert and pick you up afterwards. Maybe buy some tacos and nachos."

"Thanks, somehow I don't want to go there anymore." Steve grumbled. Burrito girl. His mothers could be so embarrassing sometimes.

"You know what we need?" Sara asked when she switched off the light and went to bed.

"A million dollar to pay all the debts and get a pool in the garden? Plus some more acre to our house?"

"No, it's a nice idea but not exactly what I had in mind. We can save for the pool."

"Like I put aside the hundred and fifty dollar that magically appeared more on my account the last times I checked?" The blonde pulled her lover in her arms and kissed her. "Who told you the rent increased?"

"I did the math. Silver Lake got voted as the hippest area in Los Angeles, electricity and water gets more expensive, life costs more, rent goes up."

"You increased your rent money already last year; without me telling you to do so."

"I moved from one room with attached bathroom to three rooms, two bathrooms and a large kitchen - living room area. A bigger place means more rent. Now we live in a two bathroom, five bedroom apartment, rent increased again."

"You're engaged to the owner of the house."

"Being engaged to me doesn't pay your bills, doesn't stop your accountant from telling you to come up with more money."

"You pay over a thousand dollar every month now."

"So? Tony and Sally pay almost a thousand every month and they have less space. This is an expensive area, didn't you read the newspaper? I can give you a link to the report about the rent in Silver Lake and now stop complaining, I won't reduce the money. Pay your debts and save for a pool or a vacation."

"My honeymoon?"

"There you go, your honeymoon is a good way to spend money."

"After my fiancé paid the flight tickets...I owe you money or I pay the room."

"Will you ever stop worrying about money? I'm not broke and when I increase the rent money and buy flight tickets without complaining I can't buy dinner next month, I'm fine."

"Okay. So tell me what we really need?"

"Now I want a pool too. Just kidding, don't order builders, please. We need more evenings like today, with our friends together. Work leaves us not a lot of time and most evenings we're too tired to socialize but I love it when we all have dinner together. Like a big family."

"We are a big family, we were surrounded by godchildren, their parents, the father of our child, our kids and their better halves. Well, Lea isn't Steve's better half but she feels like a daughter. They're together all the time, I feel a little bit bad about her staying here when we go to Hawaii."

"Me too but I'm sure she'll survive a week without Steve and we find a nice hula girl for him. An older one. Did you look up this burrito girl on the internet? Whatever her name was."

"I did and I have to say, our son has a soft spot for black haired woman. Latinos. Poor Lea is blonde."

"According to some people it's possible a man and a woman are just friends."

"In 'When Harry meets Sally' didn't work it out. You and Greg are also not a good example, he had a crush on you."

"We were never more than friends, like you and Don."

"I met Don when I decided I want to date women...okay, that doesn't count, if I had been attracted to him, I would have forgotten all women, but he's a brother, my little brother, a cute one. All right, men and women can be friends. I'm glad they're friends, when we adopted Steve, I was worried first he might have problems finding friends, being an adopted kid with two mothers. So far he doesn't have many friends, but Lea is with him all the time and I think it's better to have one good friend, you can really rely on than a group of friends who let you down when it gets hard on hard."

"Absolutely. If Greg and Jules come with us, is that all right?"

"Well, he had a point, he's the best man and we need a best man for our wedding. They're both the godparents of our daughter, we're the godmothers of two of their kids, so yes, if they join us it will be fine. Not quite sure how I explain my mother why they can come while she and dad are supposed to stay at home...we've to figure something out for this problem."

"I'm sure they'll understand plus your dad can't come, he has this university thing at the end of the month."

"Right. Oh, my boss told me I can have the week off. A wedding is always a good reason to stay away from work, he said. Not quite sure of he says the same to Greg."

"Maybe not. My boss wasn't that happy but our wedding convinced him. He knows we need the school holidays for it, no wedding without our kids. And a wedding in winter isn't much fun, although Hawaii has no real winter. So it's a summer wedding with our kids."

"They have to be there with us. What will we do if we get our marriage license before the Hawaii trip? Do you believe we can get legally married before and use Hawaii as a kind of honeymoon - second wedding trip?"

"I doubt we get an appointment within this short period of time." Sara sighed. "It would be great to be already legally married when we have our beach wedding, but the most important thing is, we can get married. If it's not in August, I marry you in September too. It was September when I asked you to marry me, it's a good month for wedding plans."

"A wedding on your birthday?"

"No, not my birthday, that would be weird. Any other day. First of September, when we are back from Hawaii. I don't know and until we don't have our marriage license it makes no sense to plan it. This date isn't entirely up to us."

"No, but it doesn't change the fact we'll get married." Sofia smiled and kissed Sara. It still sounded like a dream sometimes. They had a wedding appointment on Hawaii, flight tickets and a room. Life couldn't get any better.

Saturday, August, 3rd

"I can't promise I'll be home on time."

"Neither can I. Give me a call when you know what time it is so I can let your parents know if we meet for dinner or not." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her. "I love you. Take good care of my CSI."

Sofia responded the kiss. "I love you too and you take care of my ranger. Don't go too close to fires, if there are some, don't let naughty kids annoy you and make sure you're here tonight to kiss me goodnight."

"Always. Okay, I'm off, give Susan a kiss if she wakes up before you leave, Steve won't get up until his sister requires him loudly, so you won't see him. If you do, give him a kiss too."

"What about a kiss for me?" Don asked when he entered the kitchen.

"I can kiss you myself, no need to let Sofia do that." The brunette kissed the cop. "Take good care of my cop, love you and want to see you tonight."

"Ditto. Stay away from crime scenes, they're not your responsibility anymore."

"Catch all the bad guys before they do something bad and I don't have to worry about crime scenes anymore. I know you can do it, Yankee."

"Thanks, Hippy Chick. See you tonight."

"Bye." With one last blown kiss to Sofia Sara left the kitchen and was gone. It was quarter past five in the morning, way too early for Sofia and Don to go to work. Usually.

"So CSI Curtis, why are you up this early? Did our daughter wake you up?"

"No, I wanted to have breakfast with my fiancé as I have no idea if I can be here on time for dinner. In case I'm not here I've to apology to my parents too, they'll be here. What is your excuse? Why aren't you with your dentist in bed?"

"Because I start early, we haven't found out the name of our victim and I want to change that. Not to mention her killer is still out there somewhere, I want him behind bars."

"A lot of good reasons to start early. Lets have another coffee, another muffin and get started. I do have some evidence left to work on."

"We'll get her killer."

"Of course we do."

Her confidence grew smaller when she didn't have a hot trace that could lead her to the killer. Almost all evidence was worked on and she stood there with empty hands. Something she never liked.

"Got something for you." Don came into lab.

"Please tell me it's a trace, something we can work with because I came up empty and Greg doesn't look like he had been very successful."

"That's why you have me, I'm a successful man. Her name is Charlene Flemming, age twenty-seven from Inglewood. How is that?"

"Sad for a young woman to end up like this, good for us that we have her name. How did you find out who she is?"

"Her mother reported her missing. She and Charlene were supposed to have breakfast together, when her daughter didn't show up, she went to her place, nobody opened so she used her own key. The cats in the house were hungry, almost dehydrated, there was no food or water in their bowls, so it was obvious Charlene hadn't been home in a couple of days. She didn't answer her cell phone so her mother called us. The description fits our DB, the mother is on her way to here."

"Does she know since when her daughter has been missing?"

"No, they don't talk every day. Will you come with me to the interview?"

"Yes. Her mother can tell us where she worked, we contact her boss, they can tell us when she showed up for work the last time and we have a timeline. Have you talked to Cherry?"

"Not today. Does she have any new evidence?"

"I haven't talked to her. Don, if we're dealing with a serial, there's likely a new body today or any time soon. And the odds are big it will be in Angeles National Forest again."

"I know. Hopefully Sara finds it, she knows how to save evidence for us."

"True. Although I don't want her involved in murder anymore." Her lover didn't say she was uncomfortable at the scene, never complained about it, but Sofia didn't want her around murder scenes. There was a reason why Sara decided to stop working as a CSI, didn't want to have anything to do with law enforcement. Somebody dropping body at her workplace, this person not only killed innocent people, he also messed with the wishes of Sofia's lover. Which made her hate and catch this person even more.

"She'll marry a CSI, she lives with a cop in a house, most of her life was dedicated to find killer and other bad people, it will always be a part of her life, no matter what you do. And she can handle it; better than she handled her first meeting with the captain."

"That's mean." Sofia had to grin. Sara's first meeting with Sofia's parents had been interesting for the blonde and a pure nightmare for the brunette. In a way Sara had been right, her mother was a nightmare until she realized Sara loved Sofia and Sofia told her not to mess her relationship with Sara up.

"And so true. How is she? Are there any fires?"

"She hasn't text me yet. As long as I don't hear from her I assume she's fine...although this is the same the mother of Charlene Flemming thought and today she'll see her daughter on the table of the medical examiner."

"Sara won't end up on Cherry's table any time soon. Not within the next forty years and by then Cherry isn't here anymore and the two of you had a lot of happy years together and a bunch of grandchildren."

"Yeah, give it another ten years and Steve might be a dad and Susan...has a lot of time before she becomes a mom. At least twenty-five years or so as she won't date before twenty-one."

"We'll make sure about this." He blinked at her before he turned serious again. "Her mother will ask if he did anything else to her daughter, more than kill her and cut off her finger, things she'll see when she looks at the body. Is it a good idea to tell her about the postmortem rape?"

"It could be part of his signature in case it is a serial and releasing it to the family and therefore to the public might not be the best idea. Of course they have a right to know what

happened to their family, but what good will it do? Her mother will only feel worse, I would if anybody told me this about Susan. A dead child is the worst thing that can happen to a parent, having your daughter raped makes it worse and a postmortem rape...I don't know, to me it feels worse because he not only humiliated her alive but also her corpse. Even in death she didn't find peace."

"So we won't tell her about it?"

"I'd rather not mention it at this time."

"Good, I think the same. Did you get anything from the bruises?"

"We're working on the type of rope, so far it doesn't look like it's a special kind, the usual rope you can buy in every Do-It-Yourself shop. When we have the name we can look for shops, that sell it and get names of people, who bought it with their credit card."

"End up with one hundred names."

"More or less, yes. Better one hundred suspects than over six million, that might be the number of men, who live around Los Angeles and fit the profile. Plus all the men, who don't live here, only were here the last days for business or on vacation."

"You have a way of brighten up my life."

"It's always my pleasure." Sofia got up. "When is Charlene's mother here?"

"Within the next ten minutes or so."

"All right, I see Greg for any news and tell Cherry to prepare Charlene so her mother can see her one more time. Or the first time since she's dead, she might see her again on her funeral, I don't know. Which room did you book?"

"Interview five. I get something to drink. Some water."

"Give me a call when she's here." Sofia took her folder and left the room. The chances Greg had anything, that might help them, weren't big but maybe he or Cherry had a comforting fact for Mrs. Flemming. If there was something that could comfort you when your child was murdered.

Mrs. Flemming was a petite woman in her late forties with short brown hair, mixed with some gray strains. Her gray eyes were red from tears and her face slightly swollen. She hadn't

touched her water, only looked at Sofia and Don with sad eyes, filled with tears and a lot of questions.

"Detective, what happened?"

"We hope you can help us with this question. The body of your daughter was found yesterday in Angeles National Forest. Did she have any connections with the forest? Did she spend her time there? Did she hike a lot? Knew somebody, who works there or lives in this area?"

"Not that I know of. My daughter likes the ocean, water, she needs to be around water. Mountains and forests weren't the places she spent her weekends. Always the beach. To swim in summer or sit there, have a coffee, in winter."

"We did find sand on her body, where were her favorite beach spots, do you know that?" Sofia asked. She got the news from the sand when she talked to Greg a few minutes ago and they also had a possible location, but for a huge area and it would help if Mrs. Flemming could give them information where her daughter liked to be most times.

"Marina del Rey. She liked it there, liked watching the planes coming in and take off and all the boats leave."

That helped to reduce the area of the assault. Los Angeles has seventy-five miles of coastline, they could narrow the area down to a few miles, still a few miles was a big area to look for evidence. Knowing in which the victim liked to be helped.

"She was on the beach? Or the marina itself?" The beach belonged to Venice, but this little detail wasn't important.

"She liked sitting at the marina, in the little park or at the beach of Playa del Rey. Do you believe somebody kidnapped her there?"

"We work on this angle. Now that we know where she liked to be most, we can go there and talk to people, show them her photo. Maybe somebody saw her talking to somebody or leave with somebody. We're also looking for her car, I'll inform my colleague to have a look around Marina del Rey, if she was taken from there, her car must be still there or, if it was tow away, and it's in impound. All information that will help us understand what your daughter did on the day she met her killer."

"Who killed her? Who did this to my baby?"

"We'll find out. Was Charlene alone on the beach or did she go there with friends?"

"It depends. Sometimes she goes there alone, sometimes with friends."

"Do you know her friends?"

"Some of them, her school friends."

"We need their names so we can talk to them, find out, if they were with her, maybe saw something. The more you can tell us about her, what she did, whom she met, the better our chances to find the man, who did this to her. When was the last time you talked to her?"

"Tuesday, when we made an appointment for breakfast today."

"Was she worried? Anything different than other days?"

"No, she was a happy person and she was happy on Tuesday, told me she was close to get a promotion and was excited about her holidays, she just came back from. Her cat behaved strange, she took it to the vet the night before but it was fine."

"You said the cat was out of food and almost dehydrated. Can you guess for how long she gave the cat food and water every day?"

"Enough food for the day and twice a day a fresh bowl of water. It's quite a big bowl, belonged to her last dog, I have no idea how much cats drink, but I'd guess it's enough water for two or three days if it's full."

Sofia wrote down to pay attention to the water bowl, it could give them a timeline.

"What about newspapers? Did your daughter get the daily news?"

"No, she read them online."

"Is her computer in the apartment?"

"I didn't look for it, why?"

"Nowadays we find a lot of information about people on their computer. We can also check their internet history. Your daughter could have been at an online chat room and met somebody from there. If so, we can find out who she met and when."

"You think she was killed by somebody from the internet?"

"It's a possibility we can check when we have the computer. Like we can have a look in the area of Marina del Rey and

Playa del Rey for video cameras, that record for a longer time or keep their recordings. We might find her on a video with her killer. Or we can see her walk to her car and drive away and know, nothing happened to her on the beach or in the park. Every little piece, no matter how tiny it is, helps us. It's like a giant puzzle, one or two pieces seem to make no difference but they add to a complete picture. That's why it's so important you tell us the tiniest details and why we ask so many questions. It's not because we assume something, it's to get a picture."

"Where did your daughter work?" Don asked.

"At Paul & Welch, a small shop for office supply. She worked as a secretary, mostly answered the phone for her bosses but she was supposed to get a new job as chief customer service manager. She was so good with people, everybody loved to talk to her and she could talk the clients into buying more than they wanted first. Her bosses were quite impressed when they listened how she made a man buy a trolley full of folders, pens and whatever else they have in the shop and all he wanted when he came into the shop was a hole puncher." Mrs. Flemming smiled a little bit. "When she was a child, she was the same. You told her she could choose one piece of candy and in the end you bought half a dozen."

"Was she a person, who had no problems talking to strangers?"

"Yes...maybe she was too open to strangers. Is it possible she talked to her killer first? Got his attention because she approached him?"

"A killer picks the person, nobody picks a killer. The lion chooses the zebra he wants and not the other way around. It's not your daughter's fault." Sofia knew what the mother really wanted to know. Did her own daughter got herself into trouble? Was it her fault she was dead because she was such a social person? The answer was no, it was never the fault of the victim. Nobody wants to be a victim.

"Can I see my daughter now?"

"Yes, of course. I take you to her." Sofia guided the woman to the morgue. Cherry had taken the body of the young woman into a separate room. The washed body was covered with white sheets so the scars and stitches weren't visible. The blonde

doubted any parents paid attention to the stitches the medical examiner left on the body of their daughter.

"Oh my god, oh my god, my poor baby." Mrs. Flemming took the cold hand of her dead daughter and cried.

Sofia stepped aside to Cherry, who was here to answer questions of the mother after she said goodbye. It was never an easy moment for none of them. For the parents to see their dead child, for the law enforcement team to find the right words to comfort them. It was impossible to take away their pain, hard to ease it but most times they could give answers and sooner or later answers helped the family members.

"What did he do to her?"

"He cut her throat." Cherry said with a gentle voice.

"Oh god. Was she in pain?"

"It was a deep cut, she died quickly."

"Was it painful?"

"Yes, there aren't painless ways of dying. Even when you fall asleep and don't wake up anymore, have a heart attack, it's painful. You just can't show or tell it to somebody because you're dead."

"What else did he do to her?" She looked at the bruises on Charlene's wrist.

"He tied her with a rope, she fought back, that's why there are the bruises."

"And...what happened to her finger?" The eyes of the elderly woman were fixed on the place, where once was the little finger of her daughter.

"The killer cut it off when she was dead. She didn't have any pain, didn't see what he did."

"Oh my god, he...he kept a piece of my daughter? Or threw it away like garbage? Why?"

"I'm sorry, I don't know. We will know when we have him in custody."

"How long did he have her? How long did she have to suffer?"

"We don't know yet. I can tell you she died two days ago."

"Two days ago? Where has she been all the time?"

"Her body was found yesterday morning in Angeles National Park. We needed this long to contact you because there was no

I.D. with her, her fingerprints aren't in the system and we had no idea who she was until you reported her missing."

"Was she...naked? Did people stare at her? Touched her?"

"No, she was found by a ranger, who used to work as a CSI in Las Vegas. She knows how to secure a crime scene and is very respectful, made sure your daughter's body was only touched and seen by the medical examiner, the detective and my colleague and me. Charlene was dressed, he redressed her, we assume because she wore bright red pants, two sizes too big for her."

"Why...did he..?"

"She never experienced any sexual assault with him." Cherry said, knowing it was a white lie. Charlene had been dead, did she not experience the assault? That was in the eye of the beholder, from a scientific point of view, the one she chose now, Charlene never did. Her body did after it was dead. But that was something her mother hopefully never had to learn.

"CSI Curtis, how are you?"

"Officer." Sofia smiled when Lynn came into the lab. "What can I do for you?"

"It's more like what I can do for you, or did for you. I was out at the beach of Marina del Rey with a photo of your victim. Nobody saw her there but I did find her car. It should be here any minute, Greg is informed."

"Did it look like she had been in there when she was abducted?"

"Not to me. It was locked, parked on the street. Tomorrow we had found it because it's road cleaning from ten to twelve."

"What about any video recordings?"

"Kyle works on that, when he finds something he gets it to you guys."

"Any news about a new DB?"

"No, so far there hasn't been a body in Los Angeles, which is good. I go and talk to her colleagues now, do you want to come with me?"

"She was off work, otherwise her boss had informed us or the mother. I'd rather talk to her friends, her mother gave me the

name and number of her best friends, I called one half an hour ago and meet her at the Santa Monica Pier in half an hour."

"Charlene disappeared from the beach, what if one of her friends isn't complete innocent? It would explain why nobody noticed her. When you're at the beach with a friend and he or she asks you to go somewhere for a snack, you don't call out for help. Then, when you're in the car, all it takes is a tissue with chloroform and Charlene is out."

"Does that mean I should take a cop with me?"

"Not just any, the best. Come on, we see her friend and afterwards we go and talk to her boss. You need a cop by your side."

"I was a cop once and still have a gun."

"You were a cop once, exactly, now you're a CSI and as a lab rat you need a cop by your side to protect you."

"Lab rat? You're in trouble, officer. Don't forget you talk to your lieutenant."

"Ex lieutenant."

Sofia's eyes became narrow. "You're not invited to my wedding anymore."

"Doesn't matter, Sara invited me already."

"You're uninvited. Get your guns, we have an appointment to keep. And I don't believe one of her friends has anything to do with this."

"You never know, it could have been the idea of a boyfriend. Not the first time a woman does what a man tells her to do and then we have a killer with a helper. A female helper, what will make it more difficult to warn women."

"Yeah, usually women are more careful when a man approaches them, when they also have to worry about another woman it makes it more difficult."

"Feels like serial."

"It does. We should stop him before he becomes one, officer."

"Then lets go, CSI Curtis."

"Did Sofia catch the killer of the poor woman?" Shane asked when he and Sara were alone in the car. He had been quiet the whole day, seemed to be lost in his thoughts. The discovery of the body yesterday weight heavy on him.

"Not that I know of."

"She was murdered, wasn't she?"

"Her throat was slashed, I didn't see a knife or any other sharp instrument so I guess she was killed." They had been through this yesterday, he knew she was killed. But knowing and accepting were two different pairs of shoes.

"By somebody, who killed before?"

"How am I supposed to know?" She couldn't tell him more, it was not easy to tell only by the crime scene if the killer was a professional. Not when you weren't involved in the case.

"You were a CSI, you saw this kind of scenes more often, aren't there any hints that tell you, if he killed for the first time or not?"

"Usually people who leave a lot of evidence behind get caught and have no chance to kill again, I didn't work the crime scene, I have no idea if he left evidence behind so I can't know if he killed before or not."

"What did Sofia say?"

"Nothing, we don't talk about murder when our kids are around and try also not to talk about work at all, it's called after work and weekend, you're supposed to think of other things."

"She doesn't tell you about cases? Doesn't ask you for your opinion?"

"Usually not, no. She's a great CSI, she doesn't need my advice."

"You were a great CSI too."

"Yes, I was. Past tense, it's over, I'm a ranger now and don't want to work crime scenes anymore. Working here, in Angeles National Forest, means I'll run into another body sooner or later because murder like to dump their victims here, hide it in the forest, but all I do is call the police and make sure nobody contaminates the crime scene. The same thing you'd do. The only difference between you and me is, I know better how to secure the scene."

"Yeah, much better. How did you deal with seeing dead bodies? How could you sleep in Vegas? Didn't you see them whenever you closed your eyes?"

"The first times yes, after a while you get used to it. It sounds cold, but it's important otherwise you can't do this kind of

work. When you go home every day and see the victims in your dreams, you get crazy." She had been there many times, way too often did she take cases home, couldn't get them out of her head. A reason why she had to stop being a CSI and leave Las Vegas. Her own ghosts of the past and the ghosts of too many victims were with her, didn't give her any space to breathe.

"I couldn't do it."

"You don't have to, you're a great ranger. We should all do what we can best and enjoy most. It's why we're all different."

"Do you want Stephen or Susan to become a cop or CSI?"

"They should become whatever they want to be. At the moment Steve wants to be a rich lawyer or a movie star. By the end of the year it might be something else, he doesn't have to decide yet. As long as he's happy I'm happy too."

"He's a lucky you're his mother."

"Hopefully he thinks the same."

"Oh, he does, no doubt about it. And he should thank me for giving him to you."

"He should thank you for doing what people did to him for years? For deporting him?"

"It was for his own best."

"It was because you didn't want to work with him, didn't want to put up with him."

"You're much better with teenagers than I am."

"I'm good with him."

"You're perfect with him and with Susan. The perfect mother."

Sara wasn't sure about this, she had no idea if she was perfect in being anything. A perfect mother? Her mother hasn't been perfect, if Sara was better than her own mother, she was satisfied. She never wanted to let her child down when one of them needed her, never wanted to hurt Steve or Susan the way Laura Sidle hurt her. And she hoped, no, she knew, Steve was a better brother to Susan than Sam was to her. Steve would never let anything happen to his little sister.

With the file of her case under her arms and Don by her side, because Lynn was needed at another case, Sofia entered the office supply shop, where Charlene Flemming used to work.

They wanted to talk to her former colleagues, needed their help to get more information about the time when the young woman disappeared. Right now it was at some point between Tuesday and Thursday.

"Good afternoon, how can I help you?" A man in his thirties approached both, a casual smile on his face until he saw Don's badge. His face dropped. Somehow people always lost their smile when they had a cop around. Unless they called for one.

"Good afternoon, I'm detective Flack this is CSI Curtis, we'd like to ask you a few questions about Charlene Flemming."

"Is she in trouble?" According to his name tag his name was Ashton.

"Why do you ask? Is she a trouble-maker?"

"No, I asked because she hadn't been here for a while and never called in sick. We tried to reach her but all we got was her answering machine and she never called back. Our boss isn't happy about this."

"When was the last time she came to work?"

"Tuesday. What did she do?"

"It's more what was done to her. Your colleague was killed."

"No." He looked honestly shocked and held on to a pile of copy paper packages for a second before he found his balance back.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, we are."

"Uhm, why don't you come with me?" Ashton looked around until he found another clerk. "Lawrence, can you take over, please? I've to bring these people to the boss." He turned back to Sofia and Don. "Please follow me, I'm sure my boss wants to talk to you too." They followed him through a door to a small hallway. Ashton knocked on a door and opened it before he got called in.

"Mister Welch, here are two people who wants to talk to us about Charlene."

"What did she do?" A man in his late fifties and barely any hair left on his head sat behind a desk, covered in papers and files. If this shop sold things to organize your desk, he should get himself a folder or two.

"Detective Flack, CSI Curtis, we're sorry to inform you your employee Charlene Flemming was killed." Sofia said.

"You're kidding."

"No, we're not, it's not funny."

"Who killed her?"

"We're working on that. Is it right the last time she was here was Tuesday?"

"Yes, Tuesday afternoon. She left around six. I can't believe it."

He shook his head. "Who kills a nice woman like Charlene?"

"Her mother told us she was due to a promotion?"

"Oh yes, she was very good with customers, started as a secretary but hell, could she sell. She made people buy ten times more than they planned and all of them left the shop happy and satisfied. What a shame."

"Did she tell anybody where she wanted to go on Tuesday?"

"No. I assume she went to the beach, it was a nice day and she liked being there. Ashton?"

"She didn't mention something special."

"When she didn't come in Wednesday you called her?"

"Yes, when she wasn't here at ten we called her but we only got her answering machine, no matter if we tried landline or cell phone."

"Was that unusual?"

"Absolutely, she was very reliable. First we believed she was sick and with the doctor but when we hadn't heard from her until lunch time, we wondered what happened."

They wondered but not enough to call the police or the mother to ask, what happened to Charlene. When the young woman was reliable, how could they not report her missing? Sofia didn't understand it.

"Why didn't you call the police?"

"We didn't want her in any trouble, it's not like Charlene to be in any trouble, but you have no idea if people, who are very reliable at work, are the same at home. She could have been in trouble we have no idea of and didn't want the police poke around her private life."

It could have saved her, helped her, Sofia thought.

"Did she ever get any visitors here? Boyfriend?"

"No. Her mother was here once or twice."

"Why didn't you call her?"

"I don't have her number and it's not like Charlene was a teenager. She is a grown-up woman, we can't call her mother and ask for her."

"When she didn't come to work on Friday, what did you do?"

"We tried her telephones again, Ashton drove over to her place..." Mister Welch looked at his employee.

"I knocked on her door, nobody answered. Her car wasn't parked on the street, I drove around the block, didn't see it and guessed, she might have taken off for a long weekend trip. She didn't have vacation days written down but...maybe she thought she had and didn't know she had to work."

"Unlikely for a reliable person."

"Was she killed at home?"

"No."

"So she was killed at the beach? Met her killer after work?"

"It's a possibility." Don answered.

For Sofia there were three possibilities. First one: Charlene met her killer after work at the beach and was abducted there. Number two: Charlene's killer got her at home, took her away in her own car. Number three: on her way to work Charlene was abducted and her car was left somewhere between her home and work. They knew where the young woman had been until six o'clock on Tuesday afternoon and that she didn't come to work at nine in the morning on Wednesday. Fifteen hours. In these fifteen hours she had been abducted by the man, who killed her on Friday evening. Where and when did he abduct her? They had to find out if Charlene made contact with anybody after work, had to check her computer, talk to friends. Then they needed to find out more about her car, was it parked at the beach, the marina, between her work place and home by herself or the killer? A lot of important question they needed answered to find out who killed the young woman.

The coffee and the muffins were supposed to make this all a friendly and casual meeting but Sara felt strange when she entered Jules's office and sat on the armchair. The same one she used to sit on when she came here for therapy, in the same room where she had a bout, where she had cried and fought with demons of her past.

"We can go anywhere else, Sara." Jules offered, seeing how Sara struggled with her thoughts and memories.

"No, it's fine, I only...remembered a couple of things and moments. After all, this is the place where I fought my demons and won. It's a good place, a place that helped me into a new life, a better life. You do have new plants and a new photo. Where are photos of the twins, Louise and Greg?"

"Not here, this place isn't about my private life. I have a photo of them as desktop background."

"Do you tell people about them?"

"I tell them I've got kids when they ask, although most of my clients know this as I left for a couple of weeks and that's it. My private life doesn't matter in this room, this room is all about the people, who come here. Their life, their problems, their story. I'm the listener and don't tell the story."

"I know all about your private life."

"You're not a patient, you're my friend and you're a good friend because you brought extra large coffee, exactly what I need now after a long day in the office and a long evening ahead."

"You're welcome. Is paperwork worse than patient work?"

"Patient work is fun, which sounds a little bit strange considering the fact, most of my patients have problems, but it's fun to see how they get better and recover. Paperwork is good when it's over, it doesn't make me happy. It doesn't make other people happy."

"Your children make me happy, especially your son. Can I see him later?"

"If you want to fight with my mother over him."

"Uhm, no." Sara laughed. Doctor Bendler wasn't a person you wanted to fight with. As much as she loved Eric, it was better to let him stay with his grandmother.

"In this case he stays with her until tomorrow. Dad bought some kind of slide and climb tower, they build it up today and want to attach a pool to the slide. Jorja will be on it the whole day, I hope it comes with a huge sunshade and Eric might lose his dislike to water. Something his godmother should hope for too. She wants him on a surfboard."

"I want him happy, if he's happy playing beach volleyball, I'm happy too."

"He shows an interest in video games."

"He'll love auntie Tanya then."

"Oh yes, I hope auntie Tanya knows a boy his age should spend his time outside and play instead of sitting in front of a TV."

"She's a doctor, she should be smart."

"You don't know her ex-husband, she can act pretty stupid outside work. How was your work today? Any more bodies?"

"No, only happy hikers, families on picnic dates and another fire, a small one thanks God."

"Good, the way Angeles National Park should be. Except for the fire."

"What about your week off for the wedding?"

"I'm afraid that won't happen, there are too many appointments, I can't reschedule. Sorry. We find you another priest or so and you can get married on the beach in Los Angeles. Makes it easier for your family and friends to join the party. Or maybe you can get married in your garden, makes the way to the cold buffet and barbecue shorter."

"I love that thinking! So will Sofia, she loves everything that includes getting fast to a barbecue and a cold beer."

"Do you also love the idea of getting married to Sofia?" Time to address the reason why they were here.

"More than anything else."

"Why do you fear you might blow it?"

"Because I tend to do stupid things I don't want nor mean. When it comes to social skills I'm less than the average."

"Says who?"

"Says history. The history of the private disaster of Sara Sidle." Gosh, this book had quite a few chapters. Most of them weren't short.

"Do you want to know what I believe?"

"Sure."

"I think you don't lack in social skills, you lack in self-esteem and the only one who thinks you're bad with people, is you. You came to Los Angeles, you met an old colleague, the two of you became friends, later lovers. You met her housemate, he's a good friend of yours now. Your best friend from Las Vegas moved to Los Angeles and you've got a huge part on this

decision, it's not only me, who forgot some rules to become your friend. You got two new housemates, they're your friends too, you get pretty good along with your new colleagues in the forest, last year you befriended a stranger by sharing pizza and beer, which most people hadn't done. You also got the trust of a foster boy, adopted him and he loves you a lot, like you're his real mother. I don't know, to me it sounds like you're not too bad with people. Like you're a social and loveable woman. Correct me where I was mistaken."

"And why are there no friends from before my Las Vegas time? None I stayed in touch with because he or she was this important to me or I was important enough to."

"Friendship is a two way street Sara. It requires two people to work on it and keep it alive. You left San Francisco and went to Vegas, it's a long distance and a lot of friendships don't survive long distance. Only the special ones do. Like yours and Greg's. You left the country, were out of his life and nevertheless your friendship stayed alive. It's because of what the two of you did."

"A friendship isn't a commitment, a marriage is."

"Really? You don't feel committed to Greg? Wouldn't do anything for him?"

"Of course I would..."

"So?"

"Okay, it's a commitment too. But you can have more than one friend, while you have only one spouse and you're supposed to keep this one for the rest of your life. What if my love doesn't last this long? My love for Sofia suddenly appeared, at least it felt like this, what if it leaves the same way? Out of the blue and I can't do anything to keep it alive."

"Do you want a kind of guarantee? Nobody knows if their wedding will be the last one, you can only decide by the feelings you have in this moment. There's no guarantee to endless love, nobody can promise to love somebody for the rest of their life. It's out of your hands, you have to have faith in yourself, in your love. You get a guarantee for TV or a car and these things break down all the time."

"What happens if Sofia and me break up?"

"What happens when Greg and me break up?"

"That will never happen!" They were perfect together, they loved each other, completed each other. Just like...she and Sofia did.

"Why?"

"Because I say so."

"And I say you and Sofia won't break up. Try to sue me on it in case I'm wrong."

"Do you think I'll make her happy?"

"You're making her happy already, Sara. You were the reason why she fought for her life after the explosion. Like she was your reason to fight against your demons."

"When we're on Hawaii and I...do the wrong things, we have Los Angeles to make it right. In case Sofia still wants me then."

"You really believe you'll say you don't love her?"

"No...but I might say I'm not sure about the wedding thing."

"Are you? Unsure?"

"No! I proposed to her. In the safety of our garden, knowing there was nobody around to make it formal."

"There were a bunch of people around, they all heard it, they all witnessed it. It was formal. Imagine, you stand on a beach, Sofia is right in front of you, dressed in a stunning white wedding gown, you get asked if you want to love this woman until the end of your life, be with her forever, she looks at you, her blue eyes full of love, what will you say?"

"I do!" Sara sighed. She could Sofia in front of her, could almost feel her. It was such a nice picture, it filled her with joy and made her life perfect.

"There you go, that sounded pretty good and you didn't hesitate for a second. She's the one for you Sara, you know it and these fears are no real fears. It's what you expect from the old Sara, the one, who didn't love Sofia, didn't have a family. People change, you're not this person anymore. You're the happy and soon-to-be-married Sara. And if you ruin your own wedding and come back as a single, I make you marry me. Now, that's a threat that should make you marry Sofia ASAP."

"You make me marry you? How do you plan to do this?"

"I'm a psychologist, I can manipulate you. Don't put yourself in danger, marry the sexy blonde, the mother of your beautiful daughter, who looks every day more like you."

"Why are you flirting with me? This should be a flirt-free room, doctor Weinberg."

"Like it should be coffee and muffins free and costs a lot of money to talk here with me."

"How much do you charge nowadays?"

"Depends, the last client I accepted pays two hundred dollars for one session."

"Two hundred dollar? Wow." Sara was sure it had been less when she was a patient. The price went up fast and high.

"He can afford it and I doubt he will work with me on his problems. He doesn't see them as problems, what he sees as problems is behavior of other people and you can't change that."

"Why did you accept him?"

"Two hundred dollar per session is a good reason for me to work with him. I told him what I think, he doesn't believe me, it's only a question of time until he leaves. Until he does, he pays good money and I use it to buy nice things and pay the debts on the house. Which brings me to the question, what do you and Sofia want for your wedding? Any special wishes?"

"More time with you, Greg and the kids. And a pool, as we found out last night, we could use one."

"When you have a pool in the garden there's hardly any garden left."

"Yeah and it's too dangerous for Susan. Take the first option, more time your family. We want a vacation with you. And be invited to your wedding."

"I'm sure you'll be at the wedding. As a married woman."

"Yeah. What are your plans for tonight?"

"Dinner with my fiancé. What about yours?"

"Dinner with the in-laws. Want to join?"

"No, we have a children free house, these are rare times and we'll savor these hours for ourselves. No phone, no computer, only Greg and me."

"A long and hot sex night, I understand."

"Just what you have when your kids are out and you're alone with Sofia."

"Maybe." Sara grinned. "She hasn't closed her case yet but she'll be home on time."

"I'm sure she'll close the case. With her talent and her talented colleagues it's only a question of time."

"Yes. What do you think of going home?"

"I think it's a good idea. When will we meet again?"

"I've got Monday off and could bring lunch."

"Sara, I love you."

"Wow, doctor Weinberg, I love you too. Come on let leave before you violate another rule, hugging in the office or so."

"I think this rule got broken a long time ago." Jules blinked at the other woman. She hugged Sara a couple of times here and there was no reason not to do it again.

Pleased to be home on time and not disappointing her parents Sofia checked on her children first. Stephen sat next to Susan on a blanket in the garden, watched her while he read out a story for her. The blonde was sure this was one of the cutest things she had ever seen. Her teenage boy reading a story to his baby daughter. How often did you see a picture like this?

"Look who's home, baby sis, our mother. How was work?"

"Not as satisfying as it could have been. You made up for that by sitting there with your sister and reading a story for her. Where's your other mother?"

"Not here yet."

"She told me she finished at four and now it's six. The traffic can't be this bad."

"Maybe she's shopping, some wedding stuff, surprises for her bride and some stuff we need for the trip." He picked up his sister and lifted her over his head. "Looks who's flying. All the way to Hawaii and back. It's Susan Airline, have a pleasant flight, first class seats for everybody. You get all the newest movies and the cocktails for free." Susan laughed while she was flying over her brother, to the left, to the right and back.

"Are you excited about the flight?" Sofia sat next to her children.

"No, going to Hawaii is the most boring thing I ever did. Who'd be excited about this? Don't you do this every day? I flew so many time to Waikiki, one time more doesn't make a difference."

"You fly to Honolulu and not to Waikiki, dear son."

"All the same, it's on the beach. Mom, I never flew anywhere of course I'm excited. And Hawaii. Hello? It's so cool. Everybody wants to go to Hawaii, it's an A-one destination. Sara promised to rent a surfboard and teach me some surfing. How cool will that be? I come home with a photo of me surfing on Waikiki beach. Do you think mom will enjoy teaching me surfing?"

"Oh, she'll love that; wherever she is."

"Nervous? Does she have a curfew?"

"We all have a curfew in this home. Especially when we're having dinner with the captain. She hates it when people are late for dinner."

"It's delivered food and she has another two minutes and forty seconds. The captain isn't here neither."

"She'll be any second...no your mother is here first." Sofia smiled when she saw Sara coming into the garden. "Hey Honey, where have you been?"

"I had a date."

"Really? Did I miss something? I had no idea we were having a date."

"We weren't, I had a date with something else. Hey Steve, how are you?"

"I'm fine while you might be in trouble, mom. Mom doesn't look happy about your date. With somebody else."

"Oh she'll be fine and has no time to worry about it, her parents are here and as a good daughter, she should open them the door."

"They've got a key. With whom did you have a date?"

"Somebody really sexy."

"Who?" Sofia grumbled.

"Somebody who won't be with us at Hawaii."

"Steve, open the door for your grandparents, I need to talk to your mother."

"Oh dear, I told you, you're in trouble." Steve handed Susan over to Sara. "Here, she might not attack you when you have little Sue in your arms. Otherwise, good luck."

"Thanks." The brunette laughed.

"So?" The blonde put her hands on her hips, waiting for an explanation.

"Honey, you're so cute when you try to look angry." Sara kept Susan in her left arm and pulled Sofia in with her right. "I love that evil look on you. Your blue eyes are sparkling then, really sexy."

"Who. Was. Your. Date?"

"Don't you trust me?"

"Do you have secrets?"

"Of course I do, you knew that all the time. But before you go crazy because you don't trust me at all, I had coffee and muffins with Jules, left one for you on the kitchen table. Double chocolate. Satisfied?"

"I trust you."

"Why do you need to know where I've been?"

"I love you, I worry when you're not home. It doesn't take two hours to go from the National Forest back here, you told me you finish on time, which was four o'clock."

"I did. Coffee and muffins with Jules and the news, she can't come with us to Hawaii, her schedule is too full. We have to get married without our best man. Looks like we need another wedding in our garden."

"Oh bugger, I looked forward to have them around." Sofia kissed her lover. "I do trust you." She repeated only to make it clear, she didn't ask because of mistrust.

"Good, I'd be really disappointed if you don't. Come on, lets say hello to your parents."

"I'm sorry for being...strange."

"You worried, I could have told I meet Jules for a coffee."

"Yeah...you just met her yesterday. Why do you have to meet her every day?"

"You see Greg almost every day, let me have my fun with Jules. She's good for me and she looks after me, means you never have to worry when I'm with her."

"She's a sexy brunette."

"And I'm head over heels for a sexy blonde, the only woman who ever interested me in my life."

"The only person you want to marry?"

"The only person I want to marry and the only person I want to be with, in any kind of way. The only person I ever asked to marry me. The only person, who's allowed to see me naked."

"You know what I want to hear."

"Of course I do, I love you and I'm going to marry you. If I didn't know you, who else would?"

"They." Sofia pointed to her parents. "Hey daddy, hey mom."

"Good evening daughter, I'm pleased you made it home on time." Maria hugged her daughter and kissed Sara on the cheek. "How are you, Sara?"

"I'm fine. Look who is here Susan, your grandparents. You haven't seen them in a while."

"Twenty-four hours."

"It's a while for her. So many things happen in twenty-four hours when you're her age. How was yoga?"

"The exercise is good, the talk of the instructor is bullshit. I wish she'd just show us what to do and not try to sell us life advice. Find your inner zen or whatever. There is no inner zen, it's called a gut feeling and as a good cop you have it. What it is in her case I've no idea. Might tape her mouth the next time."

"You're such a sunshine." Sara grinned.

"Reminds you of somebody you know?" Sofia chuckled. Her own mother sounded a lot like Sara back in the days.

"As a matter of fact yes."

"There's a reason why I love Sara so much, you're such a wonderful woman." Marie pulled Sara in her arms. "I can't wish for a better daughter-in-law than you. Do me a favor and make sure my daughter doesn't do anything stupid when you're on Hawaii. Don't let her blow off the wedding. If she gives you any problems or trouble, call me and I come over and kick her ass."

"Okay." Sara was amused. Sofia blew off the wedding?

"Mom, you're not..."

"What? What am I not, daughter?"

"I've got no reason not to marry Sara."

"Not if you want to be alive in September, Honey."

"Your grandchild hears you."

"So? She can know that if her mother isn't marrying her other mother, she'll have only one mom and a dad, like most other children. Look, there is her handsome dad. Come here son, give your mommy a kiss."

"Hey Captain Mom." Don grinned and kissed Marie. "Nice to see you. You look gorgeous."

"Thanks, you're such a charm."

"Slimy as a snail is the correct term." Sofia mumbled.

"Oh, you look gorgeous too, little sis. So does your fiancé."

"What do you want? When you're this nice you want something. Spill it out."

"Nothing, I'm just...honest."

"Hah! Sara, what does the CSI inside you tells you about this suspect? Has he anything to hide?"

"Absolutely. Spill it, Donald."

"My boss granted me a week off in ten days and I was wondering...don't you need some time to organize your trip to Hawaii?"

"Why? Do you want to go to work for us?"

"No, I'd like take Susan with me to New York, to meet my parents again."

"Our baby? Away from us? For a whole week?" Sara pulled Susan closer in her arms. "No, she can't be without her mothers!"

"Sara, he's her father." Marie said.

"A father without any rights, when they say Susan can't come with me, she stays here."

"What is she supposed to do without us?" Sara whined.

"Spend time with her father and her other grandparents, who know how to look after a baby. Look at the son they raised, he's a wonderful man."

"A whole week?" Sara looked at Sofia.

"Don't look at me like this, I miss her too but we should let her go with Don. Susan will be fine and have a lot of fun in New York with her grandparents. Plus it gives us more time to plan our wedding, he's right on that. You better make sure our baby is fine and happy all the time. Her first week without breastfeeding. If she reacts good to it I might stop at all. Although they say it's good for the mother-daughter-relationship. Mom?"

"Honey, if your relationship to Susan is only through breastfeeding you did something wrong. There's more to be a good mother than feed your baby with breast milk."

"Susan seems to like what I do, she laughs when she sees me. Will you be fine a week without your mommies? Alone with daddy in the Big Apple?"

"Yes, she'll be fine, do you really believe I let anything to happen to our daughter?"

"No..."

"Okay, take her...but we want to see her every day via webcam!" Sara sighed. "My poor baby, away from her mommies. Will you miss us?"

"Of course she will."

"We'll miss you too...isn't it bad enough she'll go away when she's a teenager? This horrible trips with her friends to wherever. Without us."

"Sara, you're not yourself, get a grip." Marie rolled her eyes.

"I'm...already missing her." Sara gave Susan to Don. "My poor baby."

"Your poor baby looks pretty happy in the arms of her daddy."

"Yes."

"We'll have fun in New York and write a postcard to your mommies." Don cuddled Susan and kissed her. "Your grandparents will be over the moon to have you around, they'll spoil you and give you thousands of presents."

"She looks so happy in her daddy's arms." Sara pulled Sofia into her arms.

"I always thought I'd be the one who cries more when she's away for the first time. Looks like you beat the pants off me."

"Call me a wimp but I love our Susan and can't imagine to be without her. When she's in New York I've to hug and hold Steve all the time."

"I think I'll stay with Lea that week." Steve said fast.

"None of my children love me."

"They both love you but you have to let go of the people you love. They'll come back, believe me."

"Gosh, I'm afraid mom needs to see Jules every day when Susan is gone otherwise she ends up in a loony bin. Mom, get real, it's one week and the stink bomb will come back. It's not like Don will kidnap her and take her to another country. He wouldn't dare, grandma would track him down and punch the crap out of him."

"Beside the fact your choice in words is poor you're right, grandson." Marc agreed. "Your grandmother would find him, no matter what. But as he will take her for one week to New York and come back to Los Angeles afterwards there is no reason to do so."

"And if Steve denies your wish for love and cuddles, I give you all the love and cuddles you need and want."

"Yuck, I will so stay with Lea."

"You just have to love this boy, he's such a delight." Sofia laughed.

"If the two of you get all sexed up I'd rather stay somewhere else and don't have to walk around with earplugs all the time. Or a headset on."

"You can also stay with your grandparents, we're happy to have you over and I cook your favorite meals every day."

"Deal, you got me." Steve cheered.

"And you can bring Lea too."

"You're just the best."

"Tell me something I don't know." Marc blinked at Steve. Now he had a grandson to take care of, cook for and his daughter had the house childfree. A win-win situation.

"I don't like the idea of Susan being on the other side of the country, away from her mothers. She belongs with us." Sara started whining again when she had Sofia in her arms later in bed. Their daughter was far away when she was in another room, there was no reason to increase this distance. Especially not when it was supposed to be increased by two thousand five hundred miles. For a whole week!

"We agreed Don is her father and can take her to his family too. They're her grandparents and should see her."

"I know but why can't that wait until we have the time to fly with them?"

"Because we don't have any time for New York the next months. Unless you want to fly over for two or three days and that's more stressful for our baby than being away from us. I hope it's not too much stress at all."

"She'll miss her mommies."

"Of course she will but she won't be alone, her daddy is with her and she loves him. We don't send Susan away with a stranger, we let her go on vacation with her father." Sofia kissed her lover. It was so cute how Sara struggled with the idea of letting Susan go with Don.

"Do you think she'll be fine without breastfeeding?"

"Yes, other babies never get breastfed and develop good. Let her take the next step, explore New York with her proud daddy."

"Tanya comes with him."

"Another familiar face for our daughter, she'll be fine, don't worry."

"You try to assure me so you don't worry too much yourself."

"Guilty as charged." The blonde confessed and laughed. "It drives me crazy when I think of our baby away, but my parents are right, Susan will be fine, she's with her father and will be looked after perfectly. Don's parents are crazy for her too, they'll spoil her and do whatever our little princess wants."

"She wants her mommies."

"Her mommies will see her every day on the computer, talk to her. And then they'll go to bed and comfort each other because they miss their baby girl so much."

"Yes, very much. And then we check if everything for our wedding is planned and start packing our suitcase. We can't take much, all the things we need for Susan will take a lot of space in our suitcases. Luckily we go to Hawaii, all we need is summer clothes and the less you wear the more I smile." Sara kissed the throat of her fiancé softly. Her wonderful girlfriend, she was so good in comforting her, making sure she was fine.

"I will wear a wedding gown, so will you. One suitcase is gone for them."

"One big one. Another big one for Susan; at least. We need additional suitcases, that's why your smart girlfriend booked already two extra suitcases and I'm sure we'll feel like this isn't enough."

"Probably." Sofia laughed softly. "I like when you think ahead, we let Steve carry the suitcases. He's cheeky and needs to be punished."

"With heavy suitcases? I'm sure he'll be fine with this punishment. I wonder if he writes a postcard to Lea or if we have to tell him to write one."

"She'll tell him if she wants one. If I were in her shoes I wanted one each day, he's her best friend and has to write daily. Or an email every day and a postcard or two. An email is nothing compared to a colorful postcard with pictures of beaches, nice buildings and green mountains. Can we write a postcard to ourselves?"

"Of course." Sara laughed. A postcard to themselves? Wasn't that a little bit strange? Then again, being strange was something they were pretty good at.

"Does it feel real to you? That we'll be married soon? In less than a month you're my wife."

"I am already your wife, Sofia. The only difference is, in four weeks there was somebody, who told us we're wife and wife.."

"You make it sound like a wedding isn't important."

"Oh, it's very important because I want the ceremony, I want to see you in your white wedding gown and want to take it off you later in our suite. Poor Steve, he has to live with the knowledge his mothers have sex in the other room. Lucky for him I booked a single room for him."

"He'll be thankful for it. I like the fact we have a bedroom and a cot for Susan in the living room. Maybe her brother takes her into his room for our wedding night, gives us more privacy and time to celebrate."

"I'm sure he does, he loves his little sister, even when he pretends he doesn't care she goes to New York for a week."

"Do you think he's sad Don doesn't take him with him?"

"No, Steve has to work and you heard your dad, Steve can stay with them and that's like vacation for him. Your parents will spoil him and he loves them. Your mom will buy coke in cans and they'll have fun about it without mention the incident in the forest."

"I'd give a lot of things if I could have watched that. He knocks her out with a can of coke, I never laughed more. Captain Curtis was knocked out by a boy and a coke can. So hilarious. You're so lucky you could see that."

"I didn't feel that lucky when it happened. It was quite a shock but she reacted not the way I suspected."

"He impressed her, to him it looked like she threatened you and he protected her. She loves you and likes people, who protect you. And he wasn't scared of her. At least not enough to risk any danger for you."

"Our hero. We've got the best kids in the world."

"Absolutely. Like we found the best wife for ourselves."

"You're right." Sara smiled and kissed Sofia. Their life was, when she focused on her little family, perfect. There was nobody better than Sofia and no better kids than Steve and Susan.

Sunday, August 4th

"You'll look stunning in your dress." Steve said after he watched Sofia looking at her wedding gown for a few minutes, like the blonde was walking through her wedding in her head.

"Why are you awake?" She turned surprised. It was almost seven, Sara left over an hour ago and Sofia was about to go to work too. All she wanted was a minute or so with her wedding gown, have a look at it, think about her wedding and how wonderful the day would be.

"Because Lou sent me a text yesterday we can come over for breakfast. More hours in luxury and when the stink bomb is awake I need to dress her up for the day, pack her things and call the driver to pick us up. Lea will be here around eight, Tanya and Jules will be there around half past eight with the three other kids. Lou mentioned a few surprises for all of us."

"Does that mean when I come home neither you nor Susan will be here?"

"Yes, we'll be with Lou, you can come over to his place."

"I might do that, he had wonderful food the last time. If Sara agrees."

"She shouldn't be jealous anymore."

"You know her."

"I do, my mom loves you and when Lou hits on you, she'll hit him - in the face."

"Exactly. No, she should be fine with an evening at his place, his pool is nice and the garden is amazing."

"He's nice, he invites us. Some guys in school are pretty friendly since they saw the video message on youtube, Lou sent me. The weird kid knows a cool action movie star. Makes me cool and interesting."

"Their problem is you're not interested in them, they treated you unkind before or didn't pay attention to you, now you don't want their attention. My son way too smart to fall for this ass kissing bullshit."

"No, I don't share my movie star with them and I don't invite them over when he's here."

Susan started crying from her room.

"Sounds like my baby sis is awake and demands attention, I wonder why she can't stay in bed quietly and look at her mobile?"

"She's hungry, needs a fresh diaper and love. I can give her a good morning kiss, for rest she has to charm her brother, my lab is calling."

"Always the same, the mothers are gone and the big brother has to take care of the stinky. You're lucky I like her."

"You love her and we're the happiest parents that we have you. One year and it feels like you have been with us all the time. Promise you'll never leave us alone."

"Only when I go to college, university, or on vacation. But I come back every time."

"Such a good boy." Sofia pulled Stephen in her arms and kissed his hair. "Thanks for taking care of Susan."

"She's my sister."

"She gets a trip to New York, is it okay you stay here?"

"Mom, I've to work, Mel pays good money and Don't parents aren't my grandparents. You heard your dad, I can stay with them, my own grandparents vacation and he cooks for me. That's better than New York."

"Especially when he makes his mouse au chocolate. To die for."

"I think I survive it and come with you to Hawaii."

"You better." Sofia picked up Susan, who stopped crying as soon as she was in the arms of her mother. "Hey baby girl, how are you? Did you sleep well? Oh, you look a little bit sleepy, why didn't you sleep longer? You have no reason to wake up this early, enjoy the time you can stay in bed as long as you want. There'll be many years when you have to get up early in the morning and can only dream of sleeping in. Like your mother. I've to go to work now, your brother will look after you and later you spend the day in a villa and when I recall correctly, Lou has a nice housekeeper, who was really nice to you the last time."

"She was, she likes babies and asks Lou all the time when he settles down."

"Good luck with that."

"How can he settle down when his dream woman marries my mom by the end of the month? He has to stay solo for the rest of his life."

"According to the tabloid press he's everything but lonely. Okay, I really have to go. Take care of the two of you." Sofia kissed Steve and Susan, handed her daughter over to her son and threw one last look at them. There they were, her kids, together and happy.

Summer time could be such a great time of the year if the fires weren't there. There wasn't a day without a new fire, most times small ones, they could douse within a few hours.

"I'd rather spend my day with the kids, who arrived this morning, tell them about the forest instead of driving around and look for fires." Shane sighed.

"Kids are more fun."

"They are. How are your kids?"

"Fine and both cute. My little boy takes care of his baby sister today, takes her to a huge villa with pool and housekeeper, expensive exclusive food and other things, we can only dream of because we can never afford them."

"Wow...where is he?"

"Got invited by Lou Lee to a nice day in his villa, together with his sister, the twins, Louise, Lea and as far as I know Jules and Tanya will be there too."

"Lou Lee? The movie star? Right, you know him, how could I forget you know important and famous people. Where is my autograph?"

"There should be a new movie out in a month or so and the premier is in Hollywood, he'll be there and you can get your autograph there."

"Why don't you get one for me? Plus a meeting and an invitation in his villa."

"Dream on." Sara laughed.

"You could be nicer to your favorite colleague, thanks to me you've got a son."

"It was a favor I did you because you didn't want to work with him. You didn't see the wonderful boy in him."

"He was pretty good in hiding this part."

"No, it was always there...while that wasn't there yesterday!" She pointed to a thin cloud of smoke south of them.

"Fuck, not another fire." He took the radio. "Shawn? Here's Shane, we're north of the Bouquet Reservoir and there's smoke south of us. Must be close to the reservoir. Send the firefighters, we have a closer look."

"One day, one damn day without fire, is it too much to ask for? One fucking day!"

"Mother Sara, language please."

"Screw that, we had so many fires this year, I'm sick and tired of them." Sara drove faster.

"The wind comes from the south, it will blow the fire towards us. We need to get the visitors out of this area."

"Tell me about it. Use the microphone."

Shane took the microphone, that was connected to the speaker on the roof. "May I have your attention please. Here's the Angeles National Forest ranger service, we have a fire in this area, please leave the area around the Bouquet Reservoir. Please go back to your car and keep away from the reservoir and the north side of it. If you're on the north shore, please make sure you get back to your car as fast as possible. We will be around soon, the firefighters are informed too. Please leave, it's for your own safety...why do you stop?" Irritated Shane looked at Sara, who stopped the car. "We need to get to the fire."

"There's something in the bush." Sara pointed to something red, that was under a bush.

"So what? We have a..."

"Shane, it's the same red we saw two days ago, it looks like red pants." Sara got out of the car and walked to the bush.

"Are you saying..."

"I'm saying you take the car to the fire, work on that and I..."

Sara checked her cell phone. She had a signal. "...call Don. We have got a dead body." She didn't have to get closer, she saw it was a human being, that was under the bush. A dead one.

"Shit...are you sure..."

"Yes, I know what to do and you have to make sure the people get away. Go, we need the firefighter, the wind gets stronger and will push the fire to here." The brunette had her cell phone

in the hand and dialed Don's number, while she waved Shane away. They had to split up otherwise it was impossible to handle both places and both, fire and dead body, were important.

"Hey Sara, how are you? Did you want to call Sofia...?"

"Don, we have a new DB, north of the Bouquet Reservoir. A female DB, red pants. The problem is, we have a fire and the wind blows it to the scene. Get here, call Sofia and Greg, they have to hurry. I'll secure the area as good as I can until they're here, but, depending on how close the fire is, it might be too late. We couldn't locate it yet, found the DB on our way to it, it might get here soon."

"Okay, I call CSI and you...you know what the right thing is to do. See you soon." He ended the call, knowing they had no time to lose.

Sara sighed and took a look around. Yes, she knew what to do, the problem was, she also knew time was working against them. And without a kit, without evidence bags, without gloves, she couldn't do a lot.

"Hey." Sofia coughed when she got out of the car. Smoke was in the air and seemed to get thicker and thicker the closer she came to her crime scene.

"Hi." Sara looked worried. Not only because her lover coughed and had problems with the air, the fire came closer and she knew, there wasn't much time left. Firefighters were around and it was only a question of time before they ordered them to back up and leave the area. "How close is the fire?"

"I saw flames down the road, we have to hurry." Don stepped out of his car.

"Cherry has a flat tire." Greg got off the phone. "She needs longer."

"We don't have much time, definitely not enough to change a tire. By then the firefighter might not let her through."

"I took photos of the scene." Sara handed her lover her cell phone. "As many as I could and as close as possible. There are some boot prints now, I give you the boots later. Take some more photos so you have official photos nobody can argue about."

"Thanks."

"We might have to get the DB out here, Sara, can you find out how much time we have left?"

"I can try."

"Thanks." Greg kneeled next to the dead body. "Female, early twenties, these are again not her own pants, it's way too big. Her left ring finger is missing."

"Same M.O. like Charlene Flemming. Number two, one more and we have a serial."

"No wallet." He checked her pockets, took a photo of the face of the dead woman. "I send it over to missing persons."

"There are some bugs." Sofia collected bugs and put them in a glass.

"I have a look around, see if there's some evidence in the bushes, get the ranks and the soil here before we have to leave."

"Not more than half an hour, probably less. The fire comes closer too fast." Sara came back. "The firefighters can't stop it, they want us out ASAP. Don, it might be better if you leave now, Shane has the license plates of the people, who were around, they got sent away by the firefighters, there's nobody to talk to."

"Yeah, you make sure you guys get out here soon too."

"We will."

"Fuck, we need more time."

"Do you have the body bags in your car?" Sara asked her lover.

"Yes."

"Continue with the body, I get your car ready to transport her body, turn the backseat and prepare whatever I can do without putting the case at risk." They had to work fast otherwise the evidence was gone. If the ME was late, it was impossible to wait for her.

"All right." Sofia took photos of the body, the surrounding and collected some more possible evidence from around the body.

"Car is prepared."

"Greg, can you help me to get her into the car?"

"Yes." He coughed. "Damn it, the air is getting warmer and the smoke thicker."

"Another reason why we have to get her out of here, we get ashes on her, the air contaminates her body, the evidence, she's safer in the car."

"Ten minutes." Sara said after she listened to her radio. "I can already see them."

"What happened to half an hour?"

"Stronger wind, fast flames." The brunette opened the trunk so Greg and Sofia could carry the body into the car. It was in a body bag, safe now. "Go back to work, I keep you posted."

"We need more than ten minutes."

"You won't get them."

"Damn it." Greg took more evidence bags. When they were in a hurry, it was better to grab what they could and choose later if it was important or not.

"We need more time."

"Collect, I get the bags in the car." Sara carried the bags back into the car, making sure she didn't step on evidence. As fast as possible Greg and Sofia collected whatever looked important to them, took photos and tried to ignore the smoke.

"Out!" Sara called.

"One more minute."

"One more minute and our kids are half-orphans. The road is blocked, trees fell on it, we have to get out another way. Get into the car. Now!" She opened the door for Sofia. "Passenger seat, I drive. No arguing about it, I know the area better."

"But..."

"Sofia, get into the car or I punch you into it."

"She's right, we can't stay longer, I see flames." Greg pushed the blonde to the car and got on the backseat, squeezed between evidence and the body bag.

"We get through the bushes, there's a fire road not too far away and from there we can go up north a little bit more and then take another fire road to the next real road. Hold on, we can't waste any more time." Fire could be faster than their car in the forest, Sara saw flames in the rearview mirror and started the car. Ignoring scratching benches and smaller bushes she forced the Denali through the forest, saying a silent prayer they didn't get stuck somewhere.

"Sara, where are you?" A firefighter's voice came out of the radio.

Sofia took the radio so her lover could concentrate on driving.

"Here's CSI Curtis, we're on our way north, around one hundred yards away from the crime scene."

"Get away there, the fire is fast and we can't stop it at the moment. There's a fire road..."

"We're on our way to it, it's north. Where are you guys?"

"We're on the east and west side, try to get it this way. It's too dangerous to get it from the front. If you guys get stuck, you have to run on foot, we do have a helicopter, but it can't land in the forest, needs to be on the fire road."

"Don't worry, Sara knows what she's doing." The blonde swallowed hard when she heard a loud noise from under the car. Something was broken or ripped off. Hopefully nothing that could make them stop any time soon.

"Shit!"

"What was it?"

"I don't know, hopefully nothing we need."

"Uhm...here's CSI Curtis again. In case our car breaks down, how fast can the helicopter be at the road?"

"It's over your head, if you can't continue get out and run to the road, it will be there to pick you up."

"Thanks." If they had to run they couldn't take the evidence with them; or the body.

"We get through, I don't get stuck in here." Sara accelerated more to get up a little slope and they were on the road. Around them was thick smoke and when Sofia looked out of the window and up, she didn't see a helicopter.

"We're losing something, oil or petrol, I can see it." Greg had turned and looked out of the rear window.

"Whatever it is, lets cross our fingers we have enough of it to keep going for five more minutes. Sofia, tell them to send a car in our direction in case we can't continue. If we're far enough away, they can tow this car out of the danger zone and you can keep the evidence and the DB."

"Evidence and DB are important, our lives are more important."

"I'm glad you think so."

"Always." She only forgot it sometimes. "CSI Curtis again. We're losing oil or petrol, can you send a car to meet us, tow this car away in case we can't continue?"

"Copy that, I send a truck. Try to get further away, the helicopter can see you."

"I'd wave but..." She stopped, another bump and the blonde jumped up on her seat. "We have other things to worry about."

"You're having half a mile between you and the flames, keep going."

"We have nothing else on our mind...shit, what's that?"

"That's what happens when we don't get money to look after our fire roads, you might want to fasten your seatbelt, Honey. Same for you, Greg." Sara grabbed the steering wheel harder. In front of them were deep holes in the road. They could risk driving through them and ruin the lower side of the car completely or get off the road again, down the slope and drive for a short distant through the bushes, which was the better solution. Hopefully.

"This is worse than a boat trip in a hurricane."

"It's the same, only we don't drown, we burn. Hold on." Sara pulled the car to the left and for a second it felt like they might end up on the left side of the car, wheels in the air, then the car got his balance back and they drove over a bush, that appeared in front of them out of the blue.

"Look out there's a..." The right side mirror was gone and the car jumped up a little bit. Two trees, a big one ripped off the mirror, the smaller one died under their car and destroyed more of it probably.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" Sara pulled the car back on the road. "The axle is as good as broken, we won't get far anymore."

"I think we have a flat tire too."

"And lose more and more...I think it's oil and petrol."

"According to the refueling indicator we're almost out of petrol."

"I don't want to sound too positive, it was half full when we came to the forest."

"Now it's not that full anymore. Under red."

"We're less than a mile away from the fire I bet."

"Unfortunately we're not on our way down a hill, we can't roll."

"There's the truck!" Sofia took a deep breath.

"Good, we can really need some help...a lot of help." The car coughed and didn't react on Sara pushing the pedal down.

"We're out of petrol."

"Where's the tow rope?" Sofia asked.

"Somewhere...under the evidence and the body. Get the one out of the truck." Greg answered.

"All right." The blonde got out of the car.

"You need some help?" The man in the truck asked.

"Definitely. We're out of petrol, our car must look like a Swiss cheese underneath. We need you to tow us away, where's the rope?"

"In the trunk, let me turn first." He turned the car and Sofia opened the trunk.

"How far away from the fire are we?" Sara asked after she left the car to take a look back.

"Less than a mile. It's good you sent me here. Otherwise the helicopter had to get you."

"We have evidence of a crime scene in the car, we need the car."

"In this case lets get you out of here." He helped Sofia with the rope. "All right, get back in the car, I get you out of the forest."

"Thanks." They climbed back into the car.

"I called the lab, Brandon is on his way to the forest to meet us there, Cherry is also waiting in the safe area for the body." Greg informed them.

"Lets hope we saved some evidence."

"Let us hope we get out of here first and then we can worry about evidence." Sara didn't want to sound negative but until they were safe, their safety was her biggest worry.

After a short check-up by an emergency doctor they were cleared to continue with their work, which meant for Sofia and Greg, they could go to the lab and work on the evidence. Cherry had taken the body with her and Brandon loaded the evidence into his car and was ready to leave the forest with his colleagues.

"Will you stay here?" Sofia asked her lover.

"Shane will be here any second and take me to the station. We can't do anything, it's the area of the firefighter. Our job is to make sure no more people come close to the fire. The roads have to be closed and hikers, who are out in this area, warned."

"Or stupid CSI, who doesn't want to leave a crime scene." The blonde knew it had been stupid to make her fiancé and her friend push her to the car, she should have listened to Sara and leave without hesitation or second guessing.

"We talk about this later, at the moment we both have other things to take care of."

"Are you very mad?"

"Right now I'm exhausted and relieved we made it out there."

"Okay. I let you know when I come home as soon as I know more."

"Ditto. Will we go straight to Lou?"

"Our kids are there, at one point we should go there, but if we can leave work around the same time, maybe we can talk first."

"We stay in contact. Make sure my CSI is safe."

"I will. I promise. Can you make sure my ranger stays away from the fire?"

"She will."

"Good. I love you."

"Love you too." Sara stroke softly over Sofia's arm. "Go and catch a killer, maybe he set the fire. This time it had worked in his favor if we hadn't found her body this fast. Half an hour later and nobody had checked the area, everybody would have been busy with saving hikers."

"If you hadn't helped us our evidence bags were quite empty."

"Whatever it takes to support the Los Angeles law enforcement team."

"We need you. I need you."

"I'm all yours, your boss and the LA CSI unit have to live without me." Sara saw Shane stopping a few yards away. "My driver is here. See you later."

"Bye." The blonde stepped forward and hugged her lover, kissed her cheek and whispered in her ear: "I'm really sorry for being stupid and promise it won't happen again."

"I'm sure you're smart enough to learn from your mistakes. See you later." Sara smiled and turned. "See you tonight, Greggo. Good luck with the evidence."

"Thanks and thanks for the help. See you tonight."

Slowly she walked to Shane. "Are the hikers out of the area?"

"Hopefully, there are two more cars in the car park, I hope they saw the fire was between them and the car and took off in the other direction. We have some rangers on horses coming in, they help us with the search."

"We'll be busy."

"Yes. Sara, what the hell was going on? Why did you stay this long?"

"We were saving evidence."

"How about saving your life?"

"We did that too."

"It was about time to leave when you finally did. The wind is strong, the flames are fast and there was no road."

"Luckily the CSI team has an off road car."

"And a ranger, who drives like the devil. What did you do to the car?"

"Slopes, bushes, trees, I had no time to worry about the car, I worried about what was in the car; or who."

"William will tell you a word or two about risking your life, you know that?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"Means, you can stop reprinting me and take me back to work. I'm checked by a medic and he said I can continue with my work. Lets find the hiker, hope they're save."

He nodded slowly. "We will do that. And hope the firefighters can get the fire under control. Otherwise we have a big problem. Everybody in a radius of five miles is asked to leave, we can't predict if the wind doesn't change directions and sends the flames somewhere else."

"If we had north wind and the flames get send back to the reservoir it would be best. They can't continue once they're at the water and the firefighters can douse them better."

"Cross your fingers the wind helps us, at the moment it works against us."

Sofia went straight into the morgue after they had all the evidence in the lab. She wanted to know if they destroyed evidence or if Cherry could work with what they did.

"Hey, how are you?"

"Annoyed and sorry I couldn't be at the crime scene." Cherry looked up, starred for a second at Sofia and pointed to her left cheek. "You wear a unique way of black make-up or you have ash on your left cheek."

"Ash, we came close to the flames."

"So I was told, a little bit too close. The road back was closed."

"Yeah, we had to drive through the forest, our car is a little bit broken."

"A little bit? You came back in a second car, but you did a good job with the body."

"Thanks. We had no other choice."

"Not the way I prefer to have my patients, usually I take care of them myself, take them to my morgue."

"Do you know who she is?"

"No, she had no wallet in her pockets, I sent her fingerprints to our colleagues and before you ask, I haven't finished the examination. Ten minutes aren't enough, the only thing I finished was collecting evidence from her clothes."

"Okay. Give me a call when you know more and I hope we didn't destroy all the evidence."

"No. How did you manage to get all the evidence?"

"We had some help."

"Sara?"

"Yes. She helped us as far as she could without getting us into trouble when we get into court."

"Your fiancé knows what she's doing."

"She's a little bit...mad with me." For a good reason.

"What did you do?"

"She told me it's time to leave, the flames were very close and I, being more committed to my work than my health, wanted to stay. She had to push me away, tell me our kids might become half-orphans if we stay longer."

"Ouch. Sounds like you will have a conversation tonight"

"We will. After we come home from Lou Lee's place."

"Oooh, star time, you're fancy, I had no idea you have Hollywood friends."

"We have the same godchild and it won't help me with Sara. Who is the only one who matters to me."

"The only thing that will help you with Sara is honesty and make her believe, you won't do something stupid like this again."

"Harden than a day in court."

"Good luck, Sofia."

"Thanks doc..." The blonde sighed. Time to get her mind away from Sara, no, Sara was always on her mind, it was time to get the evidence into her mind too. Next to Sara. Maybe with Sara on her mind she could use the brilliant brain of the brunette too.

"Four people are still missing." William greeted them when Sara and Shane arrived at the ranger station.

"Damn it. They all were around the reservoir?"

"That's what their cars tell us. A family of three and a man in his late forties. Search parties are around, so are two helicopters."

"What do you want us to do?"

"Tell me about the dead body."

"What?"

"You heard me. It's the second time we have a dead body in our forest, both times around the Bouquet reservoir and within two days. You were a CSI, you know more than we about those things. It can't be a coincidence, it's the same guy, right?"

"William..."

"Don't start like this, Sara, don't give me bullshit and don't tell me you have no evidence so you can't tell me anything. You were there, you helped LAPD, that is enough for you to know a lot about the case, probably more than anybody else except LAPD. I want you to think like a CSI, that's an order. It's our forest, I want to know what is going in here."

The brunette sighed. "Both victims are female, in their twenties, both had a finger cut off, wore red pants too big for them. It looks like it's the same killer and from what we saw, he won't stop after the second killing unless he gets caught. The fingers might be a souvenir. A detail the police doesn't release

to the public so no copy cat killers show up. We're also supposed to be quiet about it, otherwise we endanger the investigation."

"Can we do something to catch this man?"

"The forest is over six hundred fifty thousand acres big, we can't control every yard of it. The closer area around the reservoir is fifteen square miles, we can't control this area neither unless we get way more people and patrol the area day and night and I'm sure our killer will choose another place then. He doesn't stick exactly to the same point, the first body south of the reservoir, the one today north."

"Are you telling me we can't do anything?"

"Yes."

"What had you done when you had a case like this in Las Vegas?"

"I don't know, depends on what I knew about the case. They won't tell us everything about the case, William. Sometimes it's important to keep information to yourself, otherwise you help the killer. And no, Sofia didn't tell me anything about the case. We have kids in the house and try not to talk about cases anymore. And when we do, she can only tell me what she tells the reporters otherwise she gets into trouble. I'm a civilian like anybody else."

"You're her fiancé."

"When it comes to law enforcement this doesn't count."

"I don't want our forest as a place to dump bodies for serial killer."

"Nobody wants that."

"Good. You and Shane go and get the quads, I want you out, we have to find the family and the man - alive!"

"Okay." Sara took a deep breath. She could understand William, it was frustrating to see how somebody walked around your area and left bodies behind. Sooner or later people would stop coming here and they needed guests. Without guests the government stopped the money and no money meant no work and no job for Sara and the rest of the team.

"Her name is Angela Thornes, she is from East L.A., age twenty-two." Don hat a copy of a driver's license in his hands

and a thin folder. "Her boyfriend reported her missing last Wednesday."

"Last Wednesday?" If she had been abducted on Wednesday, she was likely the first victim. At least she was longer with the killer than Charlene Flemming.

"Yes, she didn't come home from work. She worked in Downtown L.A. as a facility manager."

"A secretary from Inglewood, probably abducted in Marina del Rey and a facility manager from East L.A., probably abducted in Downtown L.A., what can they have in common. There are over twenty miles between these two women and a couple of million other women. What made him choose them?" Sofia wondered.

"And what did he do with them? Charlene went missing on Tuesday, it was her last day at work, Angela Wednesday. He had both for two days."

"He might have more than just these two. I checked with missing persons, there are two dozen women between eighteen and thirty-five missing, ten of them went missing within the last seven days. Charlene Tuesday, Angela Wednesday, there could be a Thursday, Friday, Saturday and a new one today. He must have a place where he can keep them for a few days, an isolated place or a soundproofed apartment."

"A separate entry or a garage attached to the apartment, which sounds more like a house. He can't carry a woman over his shoulder into the apartment and nobody sees it."

"He can force them to come with him, a gun at their back."

"What does your evidence say, CSI Curtis?"

"I didn't get a lot of evidence that wasn't contaminated by the fire. We're working on the clothes, Cherry sent them up a few minutes ago. She collected some evidence, sent it to trace. Now that we have a name and address I'd like to go to her apartment, talk to the boyfriend. Did they live together?"

"No, she had her own place, but they met every day after work."

"He has a key?"

"Yes, that's how he found out she wasn't home."

"Okay, lets talk to him, get the key and have a look at her apartment. Maybe we find something, we also found at

Charlene's apartment. A point, where both women had been. A club, a shopping center, anything that connects them. Geographically they aren't connected at the moment."

"The age gap isn't that big, maybe it's a common friend."

"The boyfriend? We need information about him, detective."

"Lyn is working on that, don't worry, I do know how to work a case, Lieutenant." He blinked at her. Every now and then Sofia seemed to forget she was a CSI and not a lieutenant anymore. Her head switched back to cop and the main attention was on police work. Old habits die hard and Don appreciated a second opinion, knowing his friend and former lieutenant was a good cop.

"Sorry, I'm still doing it."

"A cop by heart, the Captain would be proud of you. Lets go and see the boyfriend."

"Yes." She took her cell phone and dialed Greg's number.

"Anything new?"

"Don has the name and the address of the boyfriend, who reported her missing. We go and talk to him and after that we have a look at the apartment."

"Okay. Cherry found something under the fingernails of the DB, I run it through DNA, but it can be anything else. The photos suggest he dumped her under the bush and left her without any bigger attempts to hide her."

"He didn't try to hide the other body, he wants us to find them."

"He wants the ranger to find her. Or hikers. The Angeles National Forest might be a part of this, might be important to him. I will contact Sara's boss and talk to him about any strange messages or something else, that could help us with this."

"You think he dumps the bodies to damage the National Forest?" Or person working there? Was it not about the women, was it about the forest? About a ranger? Was Sara at risk? Who said he didn't choose a woman, who worked in the forest after he dumped two bodies there? Sara didn't fit exactly the profile, but what if she came in handy for the killer? Alone in her car, she wouldn't see her fiancé as an easy target but...it made her nervous, scared her.

"As a side effect, maybe. I don't believe the forest is his main target, the missing fingers don't fit in this picture. He tries to tell us something with the fingers."

"Hello, I'm a serial killer, the human body has ten fingers so I will kill at least ten women before I stop and if you don't stop me, I might continue with the toes."

"Let's catch him before he gets to the middle finger."

"If he sends the middle finger to us I do understand his message."

"He shows us the finger, we show him a cell in prison."

"Hopefully. I talk to you later." She ended the call. Time to talk to the boyfriend and see the apartment of their latest victim.

Tony Chan met them in his lunch break in Downtown L.A., not too far away from the Walt Disney Hall, where he worked. His skin tone told Sofia one parent was Asian while the other was Caucasian. He was around her height, not tall for a man but still tall enough to be the killer of Charlene Flemming.

"Are you sure it's Angela?" He asked, not willing to accept what he learnt two hours before.

"The fingerprints are a match and she looks like your girlfriend, yes. I'm sorry for your loss." Sofia had no idea how often she had said these words and had also no idea why it never got easier to tell somebody their loved one died. There nothing like a routine in bringing the message of death to people.

"Why? Why did somebody do this to her?"

"We don't know. When was the last time you saw her?"

"Wednesday morning, we had breakfast together before we took off to work."

"You don't share an apartment?"

"No, we were together since four months, it was too early to move in together. We did spend our time together, either at her place or mine, but we kept our own places. Everybody needs a place to be alone sometimes and she loved going out on the weekends while I'm more a couch potato. So when she hit the clubs with her friends until the early morning, I was at my place and we met the next day for lunch. It worked out

perfectly this way, she called me once or twice at night, knowing I was awake too, playing online computer games."

"What made you believe something happened to her? You called the police Wednesday evening, she could have been out with a friend and forgotten her cell phone."

"No, Wednesday is our sushi night, we're both crazy for sushi and make it every Wednesday, it's like a little celebration. She'd have never forgotten about it and when something came up, she had called. I knew when she was over half an hour late something happened to her. She hated being late and when she was close to be less than five minutes too late to an appointment she called and told the other person she was late. She didn't call, didn't answer her cell phone, I knew something was wrong."

"Did you call her workplace?"

"Yes, I reached a colleague, who told me she left work at five, should have been home for an hour or so. Angela didn't mention any other plans, didn't mention she wanted to go shopping, only that we had our sushi night and she was very hungry and couldn't wait to start. After I heard that I knew something happened, but the police told me I can't report her missing after one hour, I have to wait twenty-four hours. Why? Maybe she could be alive if somebody had looked for her immediately?"

Yes, maybe they could have done something. With every hour they waited the chance for Angela Thornes to survive dropped and in the end she was dead. Sofia knew about the problem of waiting but there was nothing the police could have done. The twenty-four hours were a rule. "Did you? Look for her?"

"Yes, I went to her workplace, drove back home, took another route and another one. Asked people on the street, the people in the café around the corner, other colleagues of hers, who came out of the building. Nobody had seen her. Then I called hospitals in the area, all around Los Angeles, in case she had an accident. Why did the police not look for her? You guys can check cameras and all these things."

"Because we can't put an adult on the list of missing persons unless he or she is twenty-four hours missing. Some people vanish and don't want to be found. Most times it's a crime, but

sometimes they run away from an abusive spouse or other problems and if it's their free will, we can't do anything. Like we can't make them go back when we find them."

"She didn't run."

"No, she didn't and I'm sorry we didn't find her alive." Don said.

"I read in the newspaper you found another dead woman in Angeles National Forest. Was Angela killed by the same man?"

"We're still working on the evidence." They hadn't mentioned the finger and so far there was no hard evidence, that told them, Angela Thorns was killed by the same man who killed Charlene Flemming.

"Can I see her?"

"She was your girlfriend, you're not family in the eyes of the law. Are you in contact with her parents?"

"Yes, I have to tell her parents what happened."

"We can do that, it's our job. What you can do is ask them to go to see Angela with you. When her parents say it's okay you can see her and say goodbye."

"I don't want to say goodbye, I want her with me. We wanted to spend our lives together and not...this isn't right."

It was never right, it was always painful to lose the one you love and there were no words that could help.

"I'm so sorry."

"Do you know how it is to find the right one and lose her?"

"I do." Don said. "The woman I loved, I wanted to marry was a cop too. We had secret plans to get married, she was the only one for me, the perfect match, before we could tell anybody about our wedding plans she got shot. I held her in my arms, she died in my arms and I couldn't do anything to help her, make her stay with me. No matter how much I cried, prayed and no matter what I promised, she left me and took a part of me with her. A big part that I'll never get back. It belonged to her, it's with her and she'll always be in my heart."

Sofia had no idea Don and Jessica planned to get married, he never told her about it. She knew it was serious and he loved her a lot, probably more than any other woman before, but a wedding? That was new to her.

"After you lost her, did you ever love another woman?"

"It took me a couple of years and a lot of therapy. I love another woman now, but Jess will always be in my heart. You never forget the ones you really love. Like you never forget your family. Love is stronger than death. Death can tear you apart but it can't take your love away, can't take the special thing you two had away."

Tony Chan thought about what Don said before he nodded. "She was the one for me, even when we weren't together that long, I knew it and I had plans to pop the question on Christmas Day. A special day for a special occasion. Now I wonder if I told her often enough how much I loved her. Why do we have to lose people before we realize how important they are to us?"

"That's one of life's mysteries." Sofia wondered the same. Why did she never tell Sara what she felt for her when they were in Las Vegas? Even when she wasn't in love with the brunette, she knew Sara was special and she wanted to spend time with her. Why did she never tell her? Why did she never ask her out for dinner or some hikes in the desert? The answer was as easy as it was stupid: because she thought it wasn't the right time, it was the wrong thing to do and there would be a better moment to ask and say all those things. She was lucky, she got her second change, but most times there wasn't a second chance. Life gave you one chance, you took it or it was gone forever.

Steve felt how heavy weight on his shoulders pushed him down and in less than a second his face vanished under water and he couldn't breath without swallowing a lot of water. He tried to get his arms up, push the weight aside but all he grabbed was water and he waved more helplessly under the surface than he fought. Just as sudden as the weight had pushed him down it was gone and he could get up, could breathe again. Coughing he rubbed his eyes and looked around.

"What the fuck?"

"You are so not ready for a surf trip on Hawaii, you drown in the pool." Lea laughed. She had pushed him under water.

"I don't drown in the pool unless some bitch pushes me under water."

"Would you two mind using another language? There are toddlers around and they will pick up these words and use them in kindergarten. Unless you want to spend your days looking after the twins and not in school, you talk the way you were taught as children." Jules said.

"Actually this is the way I was taught, those are the words the other kids used in the foster homes and children homes."

"You know better, Stephen."

"Sorry. The twins are asleep and so is Louise."

"Yes, at the moment, they can wake up any second. Like your baby sister."

"Susan does what most women want: she sits on Lou's lap and lets him feed her. He is not too bad for a movie star."

"He's pretty good, I think he took lessons."

"Obviously he enjoys the babies around." Steve grabbed Lea and stared tickling her. Screaming the blonde girl escaped, followed by her friend.

"Kids."

"Oh come on, we were the same." Tanya got next to Jules into the pool. With only one baby awake she had the chance to join her cousin in the cold water.

"I can't remember, you must be talking about yourself."

"No, I'm talking about us. There was a time when you weren't boring and up to a lot of fun. Do you remember how we poured honey in the shoes of my awful neighbor?"

"No, I never did something like that." Jules grinned. And if she did, it was such a long time ago, it wasn't real anymore and when something wasn't real, it never happened.

"Liar, liar pants on fire."

"Don't mention fire, my fiancé was in Angeles National Forest, there was another body and he almost burnt in the flames because they spent too much time at the crime scene. Sometimes I wonder how old he is. There are three children waiting for him at home - and his fiancé - how can he risk his life?"

"He's trained to save evidence."

"Well, it's time somebody trains him new, family first."

"Was he there alone?"

"No, they were all three there and they're fine."

"Good. Another body means overtime. Was it the same killer?"
"I have no idea, he didn't give me any details on the body, only on his nearly death."
"I wonder if Don was around too. If he was he didn't mention it."
"Aren't they always in cahoots with each other?"
"Very likely. We need to wash their heads. You do that with words, I let them suffer on my chair the next time."
"Sometimes I wonder if they're kids in adult bodies."
"Who?" Steve asked when he gasped for air.
"Your mothers, my fiancé and Tanya's boyfriend."
"What did they do?"
"Forgot their safety over work. Instead of leaving the crime scene when the flames came closer and the firefighters told them to leave, they stayed a little bit longer."
"Great, I get told off for walking around in darkness and they risk their lives. Okay, it's part of Don's job but not of Greg's and my moms' jobs."
"I'd rather have my boyfriend leave the hero part to Lou in his movies...although he is a pretty good nanny too." Tanya grinned. "Hey Mrs. Doubtfire, are you all right?"
"Sure, the lady is more than happy with me; as usual. I know what women want: me. Are you full now, little Susan? Okay, then it's time for your burp. Now is the only time of your life when somebody wants you to burp. Well, depends on with whom you spend your childhood and teenager years but I assume it will be the twins and Louise, so chances are high, you're not supposed to burp after dinner when you're twelve. Enjoy your first year, Susan. It's a great time." He walked around in his big garden, softly patting Susan's back. On a table in the shade was a tray with fresh fruits, some cold snacks and drinks, music played quietly from a hidden stereo system and the twins and Louise slept on thick blankets under a cherry tree, watched more or less by Rantanplan and Scooby, who were busy chasing Lou's cats until they left the garden to have their peace, and the dogs could play guardian dogs again.
"And I always thought movie stars have nannies, who do these things, that children are only cute accessories for them."

"Tanya, you should know me better. You know parts of me nobody else in this house knows."

"This sounds so...it could be so exciting and hot." The Latina sighed happily.

"If you weren't his dentist and knew his teeth better than anybody else here." Jules completed the sentence dryly. "Don't you might not like your dirty dreams."

"He's not here, he doesn't know and I'm a woman, there's a hot movie star, if I wouldn't drool all over him something is wrong with me. Don't tell me you don't have secret crushes on a movie star or singer. Somebody Greg doesn't know about."

"No."

"Oh Jules come on, don't be this holy and boring, everybody does."

"She flirts with my mom." Steve grinned. "My other mom told me last night."

"With Sara? See, there is your secret crush. Now I can put my mind at rest, you are a normal person and not saint."

"I don't flirt with Sara and I don't have a secret crush, I love my fiancé and he's the only one. It might scare you, Tanya, some people can be happy with one person."

"Of course cousin, of course. As a therapist you know you're lying, I'm sure you even have a fancy name for whatever you're doing. It doesn't matter. One day we might be here when there's a movie star party going on and you tell me which one is your favorite and absolute sexy."

"Jared Hamilton is sexy." Lea said.

"Good choice." Tanya agreed.

"Who is Jared Hamilton?"

"A half talented and mostly almost naked monkey, who plays a vampire in "Bloody love" part one and two. I've no idea what is special about him." Steve rolled with his eyes.

"His body is like a gift of God, his eyes are more blue than the ocean in the Caribbean and when he smiles it like the sun rises after a long dark night."

"Lea, you have a very good taste in men, you described Jared Hamilton perfectly. And you, Jules, we will watch his movies, I've got the feeling you're lacking in general knowledge since you're an engaged mother."

"Maybe because I've got other things to do. Like looking after three kids and spend time with my fiancé."

"Not to mention good Jared is about to become the new Don Juan de Marco." Lou said. "He does have another woman every night, sometimes more than one. As a single man I have to admire that, as a man who knows women a little bit, I know women don't like it when their man is sleeping around and I'm sure he caused a few tears."

"Nobody is perfect." Tanya smiled.

"I am, right little lady?" He kissed Susan. "What do you think about a little nap? Your eyes are so small, you must be tired. Do you want to fall asleep in my arms and I put you on the blanket when you're in your dreamland? Maybe lay next to you and watch you sleep?"

"Sofia would be impressed how dedicated you're with her daughter." Jules chuckled.

"Make sure you tell her later. I like impressing sexy blondes."

"What is it with men and blondes?" Tanya grumbled.

"I could give you a psychological explanation you don't want to hear."

"And I could tell you they're very sexy and just have something most men want."

"The next time you're at our office I make sure there's no blonde nurse around."

"What a shame." Lou smiled when he saw Susan was asleep. A few more minutes and he could put her on the blanket next to the twins and Louise. Four happy sleeping children in his garden, finally his villa felt like a home. Maybe it was about time to settle down for him.

"Hey, how far are you?" Sofia came into the morgue after she returned from Angela Thorne's apartment. Before she concentrated on the new evidence she wanted to know if the medical examiner found anything she could use.

"The examination is over, I sent all results to the lab. What did you find out about her?"

"She lived alone, her apartment was small but cozy. We talked to her boyfriend, I don't think he has anything to do with this."

"My guess is a man has something to do with her death, she was raped post-mortem."

"Sounds like it was a man, why only your guess?"

"Because I remembered something I didn't think of when I looked at the last victim. I didn't find any semen which is most likely because he used a condom, but what if when she wasn't raped with a real penis? It could be a dildo too. They look more and more like the real deal, when we're dealing with a woman, who wants to throw us off her tracks, it could be something she does."

"I don't like your ideas." Sofia furrowed her brows. A woman, who uses a dildo to rape dead women? That was more than sick, that was worse than a man raping the women. She had no idea why she felt this way, but she did.

"Me neither and it's not likely to be this way. I only want to keep an open mind. Women do rape other women."

"I'm aware of that. But it was the same MO? Likely the same killer?"

"The MO was the same, the throat was slashed with the same kind of knife like the first victim, the left ring finger was cut off, the rape and again, the killer was taller than his or her, victim. Angela Thorne was five foot seven."

"Right-handed?"

"Yes."

"The same red pants, again too big, the body was found in the same area. Everything points towards the same killer. When was she killed?"

"Last night, with her body being close to the fire and not knowing where she had been before, the best guess I can make is around eight to ten last night. Her stomach was empty, you said she went missing Wednesday?"

"Yes."

"He definitely gave her something to drink, she wasn't dehydrated and she also had food, but not yesterday."

"He must have a place where he keeps them. Angela and Charlene were in his hands from Wednesday to Thursday night together. Somehow I'm afraid he already has another victim, maybe two, so he has a place where he leaves them."

"A woman doesn't need a lot of space if you don't care how comfortable she is. Tie her up to something and you can have a few in your living room without having a big house or apartment. Or two chairs are enough, tie them to the chairs, secure the chairs to the floor and ready is your small prison. Very handy." Cherry printed her report out for Sofia. She sent it to the blonde when she typed it, not knowing Sofia would come here after she returned.

"Very sick."

"Could you find anything that connects the victims? One is white, one is Latino, one lived in East L.A, one in Inglewood. They worked in different jobs, in different companies. We have to check their belongings, but I don't think they had any contact after work. Any doctor work done?"

"No, sorry."

"How does he pick them? Random? Does he walk around the city and when he sees a woman he likes, he takes her? It can't be this random, he's too good, makes no mistakes, he must plan the abduction. Otherwise people had seen something. Who do you talk to when you're out? With whom would you go to a car or a van?"

"Nobody, I know better."

"We all know better, the problem is, serial killers blend in perfectly, they're not creepy, most times they're like the neighbor you know for years and talk to every time you meet. A man with a crutch, who needs a hand with something heavy. We all help disabled people."

"You lift whatever in the trunk and suddenly the man gets out of his wheelchair, pushes you into the trunk and off he goes? That will work." Cherry agreed.

"Ted Bundy did the same."

"We don't need another Ted Bundy."

"Just saying, the method isn't new and it works, people don't remember anymore how Bundy got his victims and even when they do, they don't think it will be them. Things like this only happen to other people. I thought the same before my accident. In my world I was invincible, other cops got shot, hurt or in accidents, to me nothing could happen. It's hard to learn you're

wrong but at least I had the chance to learn. Most times it's too late when you realize you're not Wonderwoman."

"You leant your lesson and for me you're Womderwoman. Go and catch the new Bundy before the press makes the new Bundy out of him. These guys have a lot of fantasy and a damn good memory when it comes to killer and selling them as a serial. Sells more copies and they all want their fifteen minutes of fame."

"Yeah, who cares that women have to die for these fifteen minutes? The mother and the boyfriend of Angela Thorne will be here later in the afternoon."

"She's prepared, they can say goodbye. I'll be here too."

"Good. I go and see Greg, maybe he found something more helpful."

"Tell me you found the address of the killer and Don is on his way to arrest him." Sofia placed a banana in front of Greg, who worked on his report.

"A banana?"

"It's healthy and sweet. Our last victim had two banana trees in her apartment, small ones. They looked nice."

"Do they help us with the case?"

"No. Did you find anything?"

"Due to the fire a lot of traces are contaminated. I found a lot of ashes on everything. Being a genius and the best lab rat of the CSI Las Vegas team I also found something new. Have a look." He slipped aside and let Sofia see what he printed out.

"These two results look alike, where are they from?"

"Traces from the wounds, Angela Thorne was tied with the same rope like Charlene Flemming. There weren't many traces on their skin, but from what Cherry found I could get enough to know, he used the same ropes on both women."

"Did you also find out where he got it from?"

"No, but I know which rope he used." Greg opened a task on the computer and showed Sofia a rope. "This is the rope, I checked with the stores in the city, there are a few dozen, that sell them. You can also order them online."

"A lot of possibilities, many names."

"Yes. Brandon is checking with the shops and online shops, collects name from credit card orders."

"He will come up with a lot of names and we don't know for sure if he bought the rope here or somewhere else. If he's in town for business he might have bought the rope anywhere else."

"What about the women, he needs a place for them?"

"A hotel room is enough, it's not like he wants them comfortable. I talked about this with Cherry; like she said we could also be dealing with a woman."

"A woman?"

"Yes, rape with an object."

"Seriously?"

"She can't exclude this possibility."

"Great, yesterday we searched for a man, today we're looking for a man or a woman, almost everybody in Los Angeles over five foot four and the strength to carry a body."

"Sorry, that's what Cherry said."

"Did she find anything helpful?"

"Nothing that helps except it's the same person and must be taller than five foot seven."

"Great. How comes we always get the cases without evidence? The ones, that are almost impossible to solve?"

"Because we can solve almost impossible cases."

"Can we?"

"Of course. Lets get back to work. There's more evidence for all of us in the bags."

"And I bet it won't help us catch the killer. Write on our list: our killers knows how to leave no evidence behind. He, I stick to the male version, knows what he's doing it's likely he has already another woman in his hands...and will kill her tonight or tomorrow. You should tell Sara to be alert, that it's likely she'll find a new body tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

"Why don't you tell her?"

"She's your girlfriend, I give you the opportunity to talk to her."

"I think I better call her boss."

"Thunder in paradise?"

"More like...never mind, I call William."

Greg raised his brows. Definitely, this sounded like a huge thunderstorm in paradise. One, that requested a quiet eye to eye conversation and not a phone call.

Sara rang the bell at the huge gate of Lou's villa around five in the late afternoon. A mechanical voice asked for her name and with a quiet beep she could open the door after she told whoever was at the other end of the intercom (and camera) who she was. Before she could reach the front door it was opened by Lou's housekeeper, a woman in her forties, who greeted Sara the last time, she had been here. Maybe this was the only woman Lou kept for a while in his life.

"Good afternoon Miss Sidle, how are you."

"Hello...Marian." Thank god she remembered the name. "I'm fine, a little bit...maybe I should have driven home first and change." She was dirty, dusty. Not the way you showed up in a villa.

"Don't worry, it's not a formal meeting, but you can take a shower if you want. We do have clothes here. Or a bikini. Get into the pool and I take care of your clothes."

"It's easier when I just..." Why didn't she think of changing before? Her thoughts had been somewhere else. With Sofia. At the incident this afternoon. Maybe it had been better if she had driven home first, changed, talked to Sofia and then come here.

"Miss Sidle, it's not a problem. Come on, I show you where you can take a shower, get you a bikini, a big towel and a bath robe. In one hour you can have your clothes back, clean and with a hint of roses."

"Okay. Thanks." Take offers, don't refuse them all the time. Sara followed Marian to a big bathroom.

"Towels and bath robes are in the wardrobe, I get you a bikini. Any color you prefer?"

"No."

"Okay, I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Thanks." Sara closed the door, took off her clothes and stepped into the shower. Seeing how her skin was cleaned from the ashes, how tensions loosened and the smell of ashes left her made her relax a little bit more. It felt good to be clean again.

Dressed in the bath robe, that felt like silk and was cozy like wool she took her wet towel and clothes. Marian was waiting for her outside, took her clothes and gave her a brown bikini so Sara could change in the bathroom. Wasn't it a little bit strange that Lou Lee had a collection of bikinis in his villa and his housekeeper knew her size? Did he have women without bikini over frequently? Did he bring women here all the time? And if so, why didn't he invite them to use the pool naked? Wasn't that what men usually did when they took women home? Make them lose all clothes and see them naked?

"Nice bikini." Lou grinned when he saw Sara.

"Thanks, your housekeeper gave it to me. For a moment I wondered why you have bikinis here, then I decided it must be a secret fetish."

"Guilty as charged."

"Hey mom." Steve threw the basketball to Tanya and hugged his mother. "Why did you have a shower before you join us? There's a pool."

"I know, but I was slightly dirty, covered in ashes. How are you? Did you enjoy your day in luxury?"

"Still do. Just like Sue, she loves it here."

"I can see she was taken care of." To entertain the baby a toy was placed over her so she could touch various things, that made sounds. Louise, who lay next to her, did the same and both seemed to be very fascinated by the toy and happy with it.

"Hey, how are you baby girl?" She picked her daughter up who started smiling when she saw her mother. "Did you miss me? I missed you."

"She did miss you, she always does." Jules said.

"Sasa! Sasa!" Eric discovered his godmother, left the pool and ran to Sara.

"Hey Darling, how are you?" The brunette got down on her knees and pulled the little boy in her left arm while she held Susan with the right one.

"Pool."

"Yes, you were in the pool. Does that mean you like water now?"

"Love Sasa."

"I love you too."

"He enjoyed the slide into the little pool at my parents' place, maybe you can excite him for the ocean the next time we're at the beach. The pool seemed to be fine as long as the water wasn't higher than his knees. And one of us had to be around."

"You're a very smart boy. As long as you can't swim it's safer to stay in shallow water with an adult around. I'm very proud of you, Eric."

"When you were covered in ashes, you were pretty close to the fire, weren't you?" Steve asked his mother, sounding a little bit like a worried parent.

"Yes, it was close but we had a car."

"By we you mean Greg, mom and you."

"Yes."

"And why are three usually smart adults so stupid to get close to the fire?"

"We collected evidence, it looks like the same killer stroke again and the flames were about to destroy the crime scene, or the dump side."

"Mom, it's important to catch a killer but I'd rather have mom lose a body than lose my moms. Can you promise me you won't do such stupid things again?"

"Yes Steve, I'm sorry, I know it was stupid." Somehow she managed to pull Steve in her arms too. He pretended to be cool but she could see he was afraid and worried about his mothers. Of course, he loved them and didn't want to lose his mothers in less than a year.

"Just make sure Sue and me won't be orphans. Or, Susan would be a half orphan and I could get my bed in the children home back...hello Mister Sunday, Sir."

"If ever anything happen to Sofia and me, which won't, you don't have to go back to the children home. Your grandmother will take you and your sister in."

"Or Greg and me." Jules offered.

"I'm sure you want to stay with your sister, so you stay with Don and me."

"I thought you don't want kids." Steve wondered.

"No, I don't want to be pregnant, you're fifteen, I don't have to carry you around for nine months, you're more than welcome."

"Thanks but to be honest, I want to be with my moms. It's where Sue and me belong."

"And it's where you'll stay." Sara kissed the cheek of her son.

"You belong to us."

"Will we get a cool pool too?"

"We'd love to have one, the problem is we don't have the space for it. Our garden is slightly smaller than Lou's."

"Slightly? Like forty times?"

"Perhaps."

"We didn't have time to play tennis yet, what do I have to do that you play with me?"

"How about you ask me?"

"Mom, would you play tennis with me? Please."

"Sure. Susan can go to her godmother." Sara got up and gave Susan to Jules. "Take care of my baby, doctor."

"I will. It's not like I don't have three other kids here."

"You can handle them all."

"My cute godchild is quite busy with her toy." Lou sat next to Louise. "We don't need your mother, we're fine. Today is godfather Lou day, mom Jules can have you back tomorrow when I've to work."

"Be careful Lou, you might want your own family and end your bachelor life." Tanya warned.

"When I can have such a cute girl like Louise I'm up for it. My home can use a sunshine like her. A daughter, yes a nice idea. Then I don't have to be so alone on the red carpet."

"What about the mother of your daughter?" Tanya asked.

"She won't be in my life, I take a surrogate mother, less stress."

"If you want company for your next movie premiere, I am available." Lea joked.

"Lea, if we appear together on the red carpet everybody will believe we're having an affair and you're way too young to be my affair."

"We tell them you're my dad and I'm your long lost daughter."

"Your parents will be delighted."

"What a pity, no red carpet experience."

"You can join me as a friend and take your boyfriend with you."

"Great, now I have to find a boyfriend to join you..."

"What about the good looking guy, who is up for a tennis match?"

"I'm way too blonde for him."

"Too blonde? That would never happen to me. I can remember how I saw his sexy blonde mother at the bar...so sexy...I love blondes."

"You get your fingers on my blonde and you're the next body in the forest." Sara warned.

"See, she loves blondes too. Don't worry, Sofia is all yours."

"Your luck you think the same." Sara called over her shoulder. She knew she didn't have to worry, but that wasn't a reason not to make it clear, her fiancé was all hers.

It was almost seven when Sofia joined the others in the garden of the villa. Unlike Sara she had a shower at the lab and changed into clean clothes. The smell of meat on the barbecue made her realize how hungry she was. Somehow she skipped lunch, if she didn't count the banana she ate.

"Good evening."

"There's mommy, Susan." Steve handed Susan over to Sofia.

"Oh my baby, did you miss me? Are you hungry?"

"She had a lot of food."

"But no milk. Or was the other food good too?"

"Yes, it was good, she is quite a good eater. Maybe she wants a steak too."

"Next year, today is too soon." The blonde searched for the eyes of her lover, who sat with Jules at a table, Eric on her lap.

"Can you hold her for a moment? I've to talk to your mother."

"Sure."

"Thanks." Sofia walked slowly towards her fiancé. "Hey."

"Hello sexy blonde, how are you?" Jules took Eric in her arms.

"You should talk to your wonderful fiancé, I can sense a big urge of a private conversation."

"You're a great shrink." Sara kissed Jules's cheek.

"Then show me how much you learnt."

"Did you catch the killer?" Sara asked while she and Sofia walked away from their friends, deeper into the big garden.

"No, he is good, he left no evidence behind we could use so far. All we have is the brand of the rope he uses to tie the women up."

"That's not much. He'll strike again and it's likely he'll dump his next victim in Angeles National Forest."

"I called William about this today...he's your boss, so I had to call him and not you..."

"Sofia, I'm aware of the fact you, as the LA law enforcement, has to call him, as the boss. It's the way you're supposed to work. You contact the one in charge and not one of the employees or helper."

"I...Sara, I'm sorry."

"You know what Steve did when I came here? He made me promise we'll never risk our life for evidence. It was visible in his eyes, he was scared to lose us, he loves us, we're his mothers and, besides the fact he doesn't want to go back to the children home, he doesn't want to be without us. When he loses us, he loses his family, his sister and the life he has now."

"My parents would never let him go back to the children home."

"I know that, he knows that too, somewhere deep down, but I wonder what it says about us that we risk our life, risk that our children will be orphans, only to save some evidence. It is your job, it was mine for many years, but Susan and Steve should be more important than trace evidence. To both of us. Or are we not capable of putting the life and well-being of our children over our work? Over the life we used to live?"

Sofia stopped, took Sara's hand. "We love our children more than our job."

"Then tell me why we didn't leave earlier? Why did we let the flames come this close? Shouldn't the mother instinct tell us to leave sooner?"

"You wanted to leave, I was the one, who held us back. If one of us is a bad mother, it's me. You told me to think of our children."

"No, I won't blame you, it's as much my fault as it is yours."

"How mad are you?"

"Not at all, I'm not mad. Really. I'm...sad, and not sure if we're good mothers..."

"Our children smile when we're home, you saw how happy Susan was when you took her in your arms, it took you only a few days to steal the heart of Steve, said yourself he loves us, we must do something right."

"Can one right overrule all the wrongs?"

"Honey." The blonde the hands of the brunette. "Your shrink would say: can one wrong overrule all the rights we did?"

"Hopefully not." Sara placed her head on Sofia's shoulder. Nobody told her there were so many possibilities to make mistakes as a mother.

"Can I promise you something?" Sofia asked quietly, her lips on the neck of her lover.

"Sure."

"I promise to be less a law enforcement person and more a mother. The next time I'm too much a CSI and not enough a mother let me know. Maybe you can slap me."

"Never. Your wedding ring might help you remembering there's a family waiting for you."

"My heart should tell me."

"Oh it does, I'm sure about that, the problem is, the head is too much focused on work and catching killer. No time for the heart when the head is taking over. The same happens to me all the time."

"We do have to work on ourselves a lot, don't we?"

"Law enforcement members for over twenty years, mothers for less than a year. I'm sure we get better with every day. At least that's what my therapist would say."

"She's a smart woman."

"Absolutely. So are we. Usually."

"As smart women we should go back and spend some time with our children."

"And our friends. Greg just arrived." Sara smiled. "Did you order overtime for him?"

"Yeah, we're doing teamwork, I'm the team and he's the work."

"Just as lazy as in Vegas." The brunette bopped the blonde.

"How is my favorite son?" Sofia pulled Steve in her arms.

"Your favorite son? You've got only one."

"Don't be a nitpicker. Tell me about your day while you lose against your own mother." She threw the basketball to him.

"Oh, a modern day duel. Sorry mom, you'll lose, I practiced a lot with Don."

"He's not a real opponent, only a lousy detective."

"No, he's great." Steve took the ball and threw it into the basket. "See."

"Not bad, only luck." The blonde took the ball, got on the other side so Steve was between her and the basket. "Show me what you can."

"Make sure you're tissue isn't too far away, you'll need it to dry your tears."

"Big mouth, no muscles, no eagle eye." Sofia shielded the ball with her body and tried to get closer to the basket.

"You're so wrong." He got the ball out of her hands and threw it into the basket. "Steve the Giant two, mom the loser nothing."

"You're way too arrogant!"

"No, I'm way too good for you." He started to run towards the basket, but Sofia slapped the ball out of his hands and threw it into the basket.

"Big mouth son two, talented mother two and soon four."

"In your dreams."

"Not a dream, reality." Pushing and pulling on each others shirts, they fought for the ball, missed the basket a few times, both made some points until Sofia formed a T with her hands. She needed a break, her left leg reminded her she wasn't twenty anymore and not a well trained athletics.

"You're all right?" Steve asked worried.

"Yes, your old mother only needs a little break, her leg told her, she's not twenty anymore, even if I still look like it. Or twenty-five." But after her accident she never dared to dream of playing basketball again, leave alone playing basketball with her own son. How could she have thought her life was over? How could she not believe there were better times? Times when she even forgot she missed half of her left leg?

"Not a day older." Both sat on the meadow to catch their breathes.

"You got really pretty good."

" It helps a lot I continue to grow. I'm already taller than mom. And I practice every day. "

"Seriously? When?"

"Most times before I go to work, after you left. The next time you have one of your tournaments, Lea and me will join, we will kick your asses."

"If she's as good as you are, the two of you have good chances to do so."

"She's better than I am but don't tell her I said so."

"Never." The blonde laughed. "Did you enjoy your time today? The villa and all the nice toys Lou has here."

"The pool is great and I love the tennis court and the basketball field. He has everything and space for even more. A pool in our garden would be cool but we don't have the space. All we can do is play basketball in front of the garages and have barbecue parties - which are cool too."

"They are."

"Did you and mom talk about the fire today?"

"Yes, she also told me you about your fear of losing us. I'm sorry about the fear we caused, mainly it was my fault, she wanted to leave sooner, I was the one, who wanted to collect more evidence. I didn't think right. Nothing is more important than you and Susan and we've got a responsibility for you. No matter what we do, we have to think of you two, make sure, you're fine and we don't do anything, that may harm you. I'm sorry Stephen."

"It's okay, we all forget important things sometimes."

"A good mother does never forget her children."

"Hey, you're a new mom, you can't be perfect. Nobody is perfect. Not even the captain."

"We won't tell her otherwise we're in trouble."

"Trouble is an understatement, she'll punish us in a way only she can." He leant back and closed his eyes. "Can I ask you something personal?"

"Sure."

"You said you came to Los Angeles and decided you want to date women and not men anymore. How could you decide that? You can't decide for whom your heart beats. You dated for all

those years men, how is it possible you could just change your mind? We can't choose who we love."

"No, we can't. And when I say I came here and decided to date women, it sounds easier than it was. Fact is, I did think about dating women before but I was a cop and Las Vegas might be a crazy city but it's not always very open-minded. Especially in law enforcement you're likely to end up being the victim of your colleagues. Cops are not always open for changes."

"You knew Sara in Vegas, were you in love with her?"

"No. I liked her, which was a lot, especially the first weeks, she was everything but easy going, thought I was after her boyfriend. It got better after a while, I liked her, had liked to spend more time with her but I was sure, she wasn't interested in meeting me outside work. We weren't...on the same wavelength. The time wasn't right."

"So there were other women you wanted to date?"

"There were women I'd have loved to know better, maybe even date, but it wasn't the right time. When I decided to leave, this might have been a reason why I chose Los Angeles. And I promised myself I wouldn't do the same mistakes again. I promised myself when I felt like dating a woman, I'd do it, no matter what my colleagues say. After a few weeks I found out I had a few lesbian and gay colleagues and nobody seemed to bother a lot about it. Of course there were some stupid comments sometimes, but nothing I was sure I couldn't handle. One Friday night I went into a gay club and when a woman asked me to dance, I accepted. First it was weird, then, when I managed to push away my own prejudice, it felt just as right as dancing with a man. I danced with a few women that night, nothing else and was back the next time I had a day off. With every time I went out I became more confident it didn't take long until I kissed a woman and it felt as good as I always hoped it would.

That didn't mean I wasn't interested in men anymore. A good looking man was and is always something I enjoy, but with a woman...it felt more...like home. I can't explain it, it was a feeling I didn't have before but enjoyed a lot."

"And then mom appeared."

"And then Sara appeared in my life, stubborn and awful like in the first weeks in Vegas. And at the same time very vulnerable and I wanted to know what was going with her, what demons chased her. Somehow I made her let down her guard a little bit and with a lot of help of Jules's therapy, we became friends and I fell in love with her. She knew it, told me she didn't feel the same and we were friends until her feelings changed. We both were lucky enough to experience the wonder of falling in love with somebody we knew for a while. I don't say it doesn't matter if your partner is a man or a woman, but I'm sure a lot of people concentrate too much on the gender of the other one and not on the character. Sara had everything I was looking for in my partner, yes, she isn't a man, but that is one point. Is it more important than all the other points, all the other things I wanted? Not to me. Some people might look for an opposite sex partner and the rest isn't that important, I found out, I care most about the character and the rest is additional bonus."

"So you say anybody can turn homosexual?"

"No, I'm saying some people are capable of loving both genders, others love just one. Others are born in the wrong body and need an operation to get into the right body. All is absolutely right. Why do you ask?"

"Just out of curiosity. I'm not gay, if you wonder."

"I don't wonder, it's none of my business who you love. Your love and sex life is private, if you want me to know, you tell me. No matter what you tell me, if you're hetero-, homo- or bisexual or transgender, I love you no matter what."

"The way I know myself you will have a daughter-in-law one day."

"What about grandchildren?"

"Hopefully. Can they be adopted too?"

"Your children, no matter if they're adopted or have your DNA, are my grandchildren. Like the captain, there's no difference for me."

"Good to know."

"Did you expect anything else?"

"No." He smiled.

"Good."

Steve pulled Sofia in his arms and kissed her cheek. "Are you and mom...was your talk successful?"

"We're not quite sure if we're as good as we should be as mothers, but we promised each other to try harder."

"I'm only your son but I can tell you, you're doing a great job."

"Not today."

"Hey, we all screw up a little bit sometimes."

"Yeah, we do." The blonde smiled. They all made mistakes, no matter if as a mother or a law enforcement worker.

"Got a second?" Jules asked after the big barbecue dinner.

"Sure, for my favorite doctor I have got more than one second, you can have a whole minute." Sofia smiled. "Or do you want to tell me off?" The blonde picked up Susan and waited for Jules to do the same with Louise before they started walking slowly away from the group.

"For what?"

"Being not the smartest today?"

"That's Sara's job. Beside I'm sure you know what you did wasn't the best idea and won't do it again. You're a smart woman, you don't make the same mistake twice."

"I try not to, it doesn't work all the time. Are you sure you and Greg can't come with us to Hawaii? Our wedding would be much better with you around."

"Sorry, I can't reschedule some appointments I have in that week. When you are back in Los Angeles and get married here, we'll be right by your side. My fiancé is your best man."

"I wonder when we get the marriage license."

"If you get it before Hawaii, would you get married before your trip?"

"Sure, when you get us somebody, who weds us. There are thousands of same-sex couples, who applied for a marriage license and they all want to get married as soon as possible. Which is no wonder because we have all waited for years to do something, other people can do as often as they like."

"Your son works for a lawyer..."

"No! Mel is not invited to our wedding and I don't want her involved in any way! She hit on my girlfriend."

"Something you can't understand?"

"Of course I can understand it...stop teasing me! Mel is a lawyer, she can't wed us."

"She might know people who can."

"No. And I'm sure Sara doesn't want her involved neither. We wait."

"Okay."

"Your children...can we borrow them? As flower boys and girls."

"Sure. What will be Susan's part?"

"Looking adorable and laugh because her mothers get married while she is in her daddy's arms next to us. Don is my best man."

"What am I?"

"One of the reasons why we get married. Without you Sara might have never given me a chance."

"Sofia, she loved you, she would have done the same she did without me. Maybe needed a few days longer but there is no way something could have gone between you and her. It was her love, that scared her. Sara might avoid her fears for a while, but at one point she faces them and that would have been the time when had kissed you."

"Maybe. The good thing is we don't have to think about it, she loves me, she wants to marry me. She asked me. And she the one who filled out the form for the marriage license."

"I don't question her love to you and know she wants nothing more than be your wife. You don't have to convince me but you can continue to use me to convince yourself." The brunette smiled.

"Sorry. I'm only....sometimes I get nervous, realizing my dream comes true and I'm a little bit afraid something might come up in the last second and destroys this dream."

"I guess that's normal." And sounded a lot like Sara. Wasn't it interesting that both women had the same fears? Somebody might suggest them to talk to each other.

"Is anything normal when it comes to Sara and me?"

"Everything is normal."

"There are a lot of people, who would disagree."

"We don't give a damn about them."

"No, we don't. We only care about love." And what she felt for Sara was love, endless love and she knew Sara felt the same for her. This was the only thing that counted.

"Oh, look at them." Sara waved Sofia to her. She stood in the doorway to Steve's room, saw their son and their daughter, arm in arm on Steve's bed sound asleep.

"Oh, so cute." Sofia whispered. Half an hour ago their son had taken Susan in his arms and took her with him to make her fall asleep. Looked like it worked out for both on them.

"They are. Come on, we get her out of his arms." Carefully Sara took Susan in her arms without waking Steve up while Sofia tucked Steve in and kissed his hair.

"Sleep tight, little son. Dream of your huge villa and exciting garden."

Quietly they left the room, closed the door behind them, brought Susan into her bed, kissed her goodnight and left her alone too. Now it was time for them to go to bed.

"You know, we had some really nice evenings the last days. A lot of time with our friends. Or people we know." Sara offered her arm to her fiancé.

"Honey, Lou is a friend."

"He's a rich guy from Hollywood, who makes millions by pretending being somebody he'll never be."

"It's what acting is about. For a rich guy he is nice, you have to admit it." The blonde snuggled into the brunette's arm and kissed her cheek. She was such a lucky woman, every night she could get into the arms of the most wonderful woman.

"Yeah, yeah, he's quite...okay. Good with kids too. No matter if they're teenagers or babies."

"See." The blonde chuckled. "Don't forget to mention he also has a good taste in bikinis, you looked gorgeous in the bikini."

"Thanks, his housekeeper chose it, she also seemed to know my size, which is impressive. And she was really fast with getting me my cloths back - clean and with a hint of roses, just like she promised."

"I invited him to the barbecue wedding party...Honey, are we having a hen's night?"

"Do you want one? It's up to you, you will have it without me anyway."

"What?"

"That's what a hen's night is about, celebrate without your future spouse. The last night in freedom, the last time you can really have fun."

"A celebration without you is no celebration and no fun."

"You're cute." Sara kissed Sofia. "We should have a hen's night. Both of us a separate one. It's what people do when they get married. We want the real deal, don't we? So, who do you want in your celebration team?"

"You."

"You can't have me. Lynn, Tanya, Jules, Sally."

"Yeah...a whole night without you? Can we settle for an evening? Like dinner at six and we can be back at seven, or even half past six when we eat at Triple Burgers."

"At least until midnight. You can be back in my arms at one."

"From six to one, seven hours...almost like a work day."

"Don't forget you have to get this twice, one night for you and one for me."

"Do you have any ideas for your hen's night?"

"In fact I do."

"What is your plan?"

"A nice dinner at the beach, afterwards a cocktail or two and then back home."

"Sounds nice. Can I come too?"

"No, you can wait right here in bed and kiss me when I'm back before we have wonderful sex. One of the last times we have sex as an unmarried couple."

"Sex as an unmarried couple? We won't have this too often anymore."

"Right, the wedding is this month, we have to use every chance we have." Sara slipped on Sofia and kissed the throat of the blonde. "Before we can't have it anymore."

"You're so right." Sofia took off Sara's shirt. Lets push aside the idea of a hen's night without her lover and have a hot night with her lover.

Monday, August 5th

The first thing Sara did when she got up was checking her cell phone. No call from William, it looked like she had a day off today and didn't have to come in. Nevertheless she got up to have breakfast with Sofia, who was already downstairs in the kitchen. Why they ate most times downstairs and not in their own kitchen was something, she didn't understand herself.

"Half past five on a Monday morning, we're awake, the whole week lays in front of us and a lot of work is waiting for us. I feel a little bit like being back in high school, having a week coming up with a lot of tests." Sofia poured some coffee for Sara.

"Like in high school we don't get some real coffee."

"No, only decaf because somebody wanted some real milk today, the best milk a baby can get." The blonde kissed the forehead of her daughter, who lay in her buggy and played with her little mobile. Susan didn't care which day it was or what time of the day.

"A good source of omega three fatty acid, very important for babies and mothers. Can prevent a depression."

"Geek."

"Worried and caring partner."

"Did you take them yourself?"

"Of course, they're healthy and when it helps to keep my body and spirit in a good shape, I take them. It's not like they taste bad."

"Jules and her hocus-pocus. I wonder what she did to you, the Las Vegas Sara had laughed about those things."

"The Las Vegas Sara would have never become your girlfriend, leave alone asked you to marry her."

"Praise the shrink and her hocus-pocus." Sofia raised her arms.

"You're nuts." Sara pulled her lover into her arms and kissed her. "Anything I should take care of today? Anything we have to do? Organize for our wedding?"

"Flights and accommodation are booked, it's too early to pack our suitcases, passports are valid, we have sun lotion...if you want you can make our wedding invitations for Los Angeles, leave out the date, we fill it in when we know when it is and

otherwise...oh, you can go shopping, buy all the things we need for our after Hawaiian wedding in September. We come back on August thirty-first, celebrate a day later, I doubt we'll have the time for shopping and preparing a lot."

"I can buy the drinks, snacks. Salad, meat and bread have to wait until we're back."

"It's a start."

"A shopping tour, my favorite hobby."

"Take Susan with you, she'll get your attention away from the other people in the shop and makes you smile. Otherwise you can also take the dogs out for a walk, or to the beach, relax in the garden and send me messages every time you miss me."

"I miss you all the time and you need your attention on your job. I go shopping with Susan, take the dogs and our daughter for a walk and go out for lunch."

"Late lunch at the lab?"

"Do you want us there?"

"No, no lunch date for you and Susan at the lab, you're involved in this too much anyway."

"I'm much more into you."

"You can have me for dinner - in any way you like."

"Yuck, please, you had enough time for that in your bedroom." Stephen said after he heard the last words.

"We had wonderful sex last night, thanks for your concern, son." Sara grinned.

"Now I feel sick...you don't want to talk about cases, don't want to hear swear words around the stinker but you talk about sex?"

"Yes, it's how we all were made."

"Susan didn't come to life because you had sex. In fact, you weren't allowed to have sex after the IV date. The Captain told me about it. Don had sex with himself and you...well mom, you were made pregnant by another woman."

"No, Sara did put the egg into me. The doctor did the first part, she finished it."

"Whatever. Be normal parents for the time your children are around, keep your clothes on and talk about...the weather, politics or gossip." He poured some orange juice and grabbed a bagel.

"You could have slept longer."

"No, Mel needs me early, we're going to Santa Barbara for a case."

"Santa Barbara?"

"Yeah, she has a client there, who wants to talk to her. Don't worry, I'll be back for dinner."

"Have fun and be careful, you know, her clients aren't always on the right side of the law." Sofia said.

"No, they aren't but they do pay a nice amount of money for this trip. We'll have lunch at a four star restaurant too."

"Luxury boy. Yesterday a villa, today an expensive restaurant. Are you sure you're happy with your poor parents?"

"They're the best - when they're dressed and don't talk about sex."

"Our son has an issue with sex, Honey." Sara kissed Sofia's hair.

"It's the lack of sex. I'm not sure if I'm glad about it or not."

"Change topics, please. Talk about the case or anything else. The wedding, you get married soon, talk about it."

"We want you to have Susan in your room in the wedding night because..."

"No explanation needed. I take an apple and go. You're too annoying in the morning and in this mood. Bye moms."

"Hey, what about a kiss for your mothers?" Sofia complained.

"I'm sure you kissed each other enough, no need for my kisses. Besides, I'm a teenager, to kiss your mother goodbye isn't cool. See you later."

"Unbelievable." The blonde shook her head. "It's not cool to kiss your mother goodbye. Why does he care about what's cool?"

"Because he's fifteen and you did the same when you were fifteen."

"We are cool." She was a cool mother, how could her son refuses to kiss her goodbye? He needed an appointment with a therapist. Something had to be wrong with him.

Two hours later Sofia was busy watching videos from the area around the first crime scene. The park at Marina del Rey, there were a few video cameras, she hoped, she could get something

helpful of them. So far they didn't find Charlene on the tapes they had from the beach, this was their last chance.

"Hey, I got a call from a traffic cop, Charlene's car was seen on Hollywood Boulevard."

"It's parked there?"

"No, it was moving. Somebody drives it, they're chasing the car."

"Who is in the driver?" Were they chasing the killer? Did he keep the car? Maybe they were about to close the case.

"A man, he was caught by various traffic cameras. We have his picture and it can't take too long until the cops have him too."

"Is Don out there?"

"No, only traffic cops, he'll be here when they take him in. We should get the evidence ready and prepare the garage for the car. If we're lucky we find evidence in there too."

"No serial killer, no more dead women in Angeles National Forest. Sounds way too good to be true." No more danger for women, at least not from this men, no more dead woman Sara had to find within the last days. Hopefully. After all, she worked in the one of the biggest body dump places around Los Angeles.

With Susan in the buggy, the dogs on their leashes and their lunch in her backpack Sara arrived at Jules's office. The door was closed so she waited outside until the last patient before the lunch break left the room. For a moment she felt like she was a patient again. Waiting for her therapist to have time for her, get some advice and help with her problems. It felt like it was an eternity and yet, she remembered every detail like it was yesterday.

"I see you next week, have a good time."

"Thanks doctor and thanks for your help."

"You're welcome."

"Looks like your office will be very full now." The man said when he saw Sara.

"Don't worry, I can handle them. Hey Rantanplan, Scooby, how are you?" The dogs greeted Jules happily and sat down to offer her their paws. "So well behaved, very good. You're good boys."

"They only greet you this way."

"It's called training."

"Hocus-pocus. You don't even stop on pets."

"No, I use hocus-pocus only on you. Everybody knows there is not such a thing like hocus-pocus." The therapist hugged Sara and kissed her cheek. "How are you? Do you enjoy your day off?"

"Susan and me went shopping for the wedding party, that wasn't much fun, the way to your office was nicer, I remembered the time I went here once a week, with each time I meet you here, another part of my therapy comes back and I'm sure, it was the best thing I ever did. Well, after kissing Sofia and tell her I love her."

"Nobody and nothing can compete with your wife or family. I see your daughter is asleep."

"Yes, the buggy is the best way to make her fall asleep. Give her ten minutes and she'll be awake, hungry and looking for attention. She got that from her blonde mother."

"The woman, you love every part of." Jules opened the little fridge to get some water out. "Did she and my fiancé catch the killer?"

"I've no idea, she doesn't update me all the time. She wants to keep me out of murder. Didn't Greg send you a message?"

"No, he never updates me on cases unless I ask for details. I hoped you could tell me if your workplace is safe again."

"When he's gone a new one will come, it's too easy for a killer to leave a body behind. I knew that before, do you worry I might get a flashback?"

"No, you're strong enough to deal with a little bit of your past. Scooby, if you consider jumping on the couch I will lock you into the bathroom. You sit down on the carpet and be a good boy otherwise there won't be a treat for you." When the dogs heard the word 'treat' both sat down and looked awaiting at Jules.

"Ha, you said the magical word."

"Works all the time, it's the same with children, say sweets and they do whatever you want. Sometimes you have to do things even when you don't feel like doing them, there won't be a treat for every favor you do."

"No, life doesn't work this way." Sara put the two bowls with salad on the table and sat down.

"So you did the first wedding shopping." Jules joined her. "How did it feel?"

"I didn't make me change my mind. I still wonder how I'm so sure Sofia is the one and then there are no doubts because she is the one...oh Jules, will these roller coaster thoughts stay with me for the rest of my life?"

"Does Marie worry all the time if she feels the same for Marc in two years? Or does he worry about his feelings for her?"

"I don't think so. Do you parents?"

"No, they're enjoying every minute of their life together. Sara, it's impossible to say how long your feelings last for somebody, the only chance you have is to enjoy your life, your love, the feelings for your lover. When Sofia had her accident your live together could have been over, you know there are some things in life you can't control. The two of you got a second chance, now it's up to you to make the best out of it."

"Yeah...the best...am I the best for Sofia?"

"Let me think about it...she fell in love with you, you were the reason why she came out of the coma, you were the reason why she wanted to have a child, she wanted your child, when you asked her to marry her, she looked like the happiest woman on this planet...Sara, you are the best for Sofia and you're the only one she wants." Jules poured them some water.

"I love her more than my life...last night I dreamed of our wedding, I saw her in her wedding dress and she looked...wow! I couldn't take my eyes of her and when I woke up I saw this picture in front of my eyes for another five minutes although my eyes were open. Do you think it's possible to see a beating heart through the shirt? Like in a cartoon? It's how I feel when I see Sofia."

Jules shook her head. "Honey, you're so in love, I really don't think you can ruin your wedding. The way I see it, you'll say: I do! before it's your turn."

"You think?"

"Absolutely. The same for Sofia, the two of you will be faster than the priest, or whoever weds you on Hawaii. Make sure the

video camera is running, I want to see it on the after wedding party. You can be my inspiration."

"You'll be my sister-in-law when you marry my brother. We'll be family."

"We are already family. According to your son we're having an affair."

"Right, you told me yourself I'm the only woman you'd fall for. So, doctor Weinberg, what does that say about you? Fantasying about a woman while you're engaged to a man?"

"My fiancé knows how it is to be in love with you, I'm continuing what he started. We might make you our personal sex affair slave."

"To me it sounds weird. You know, since our little talk on Saturday I feel much better, am less afraid of ruining the wedding. How are you doing it? Give me all the self-confidence I don't have in one hour."

"My magical hocus-pocus. Sara, you have all the self-confidence you need when you open your eyes for it. Like you're a wonderful woman and know it deep inside."

"My fiancé believes it and that's what's important."

"Your family and friends know it too and one day, after a lot of lunches and dinners with me, you will believe it too." Jules blinked at her friend. In her opinion Sara didn't need any therapy to say: I do, but if her friend wanted her around twice a week before the wedding, Jules was happy to meet her. That's what friends are for. And she would like to continue these meetings after the wedding.

"He escaped." Greg threw the folder on the table. "This bloody bastard escaped."

"Who? The suspect? How?"

"A truck came out of a side road, he rushed threw the narrow spot between the truck and the wall of a storage building. This bloody bastard was so lucky. By the time the cops made the truck driver get out of their way the car was gone. They found it ten minutes later, empty. It's on the way to us, maybe we can find out where he kept the car the last days, find out where he hides."

"If he is smart he won't be there anymore."

"No, but his other victims might - if he has some. I'd rather save a few women's life and catch him tomorrow than have him today and let them die."

"Me too...but...oh, it's so annoying they lost him."

"Yes, but we have his photo, we'll get him." Greg pulled a photo out of the folder and pushed it over the table over to Sofia, who picked the photo up.

"That's our killer? It's a child!"

"He is young, guess in his early twenties. Serial killer don't have to be old."

"No. A boyish appearance helps them, makes them look innocent and not dangerous. The cruelest murderers have the sweetest faces. Is his photo out?"

"All cops in town have it, they sent it to bus and train stations and also to taxi driver, who joined our information MMS system." Since the police sent photos of criminals to taxi driver, they had a lot of more information and success when it came to catching killer.

"She has an old car." Sofia studied the photo. "I doubt there's a GPS inside, that will tell us where he took the car after he abducted her. Hopefully we can find some trace on the tires, something you only find in certain areas of Los Angeles, preferably one small area."

"We won't be this lucky. We get this guy by hard work and not luck. Otherwise we had him already. I can't believe they let him escape."

"I'm sure they're just as mad as you are. Sometimes things don't work out in your favor." Sofia could remember a few times as a cop when a suspect escaped literally the last second and she had no other choice than look after him or her, seeing her suspect disappear and wonder, when and if she could ever get this close again.

"You heard it already." Don came into the room, anger written all over his face.

"Yeah, he told me about it. How could that happen?"

"This guy was lucky. I bet he wins a million in case he plays lotto tonight."

"Is that supposed to brighten up my life?"

"No, it's..." Don's cell phone rang. "Flack." His face wrinkled. "Boston?"

Boston? Sofia's attention was on her friend. Somebody from Boston called him? On his work cell phone? Boston Police Department? Why did they call Don? Did he have a case with them? He didn't tell her, usually they talked about his cases, Don liked to hear Sofia's opinion and she loved the cop conversation, it reminded her of the good old times.

"Okay, thanks."

"You have a case with Boston PD?"

"We have a case with them."

"We? Which one?"

"Our dead women in Angeles National Forest."

"They have or had cases with the same MO?"

"They had five dead woman in Wompatuck State Park. All with a slashed throat, fingers cut off and when they were close to get the guy, he vanished. Detective Ricardo heard about our cases and called me."

"Do they have any information?"

"Not much, not even a photo. She is about to send me her case files, how about you and me have a look over them? Your eyes are still cop eyes, maybe we can find something helpful."

"Sure. How did they get close to him?"

"They found the car of the first victim, a Mercedes, he kept it, parked it not too far away from his hideout."

"The cars seem to be his Achilles heel."

"If so we'll get him with the cars."

"I go to the garage, start with the car so you can work with Don on the case files. Lets get the bastard by sunset."

"Please tell me you're not doing paperwork on your day off." Tony came into the garden, where Sara sat with her laptop in the shade. Susan was on thick blanket under a tree, next to her Scooby and Rantanplan, each dog on one side of the baby, like the personal royal guards. First Sara and Sofia worried the dogs might become jealous and not like the baby, but this fear was gone fast. Both dogs saw a kind of puppy in Susan and as the smallest and most vulnerable member of their pack, she needed protection.

"No, I'm working on invitations for our wedding party."

"Oh, you got the license?"

"No, the party after we return from Hawaii. We want to celebrate on September the first, I bought the snacks and beverages already, don't be surprise when you look into the garage, it's kind of packed. We won't have the time to buy everything when we're back home and I don't know if I can take the next planned days off."

"What else do you need for the party?"

"Meat, salad and bread."

"Write a list, I get you what you need. The first week of September is not much to do for me, my character won't get a lot of attention until the middle of the month, I might have some computer work, but a shopping trip on the second is no problem." Since half a year Tony played in a soap opera and most times he had very busy weeks, with a lot of time in front of the camera or low weeks, with no or only a few shoots a day.

"Thanks, that helps a lot."

"I'm also quite sure your father-in-law will cook a few things."

"He's busy with some university stuff at this time."

"Oh Sara, cooking is his hobby, the best way for him to relax, when he's busy he'll need the time with food even more. I'm sure he prepares a salad buffet better than in any restaurant. Do you need somebody for the dessert?"

"Are you offering yourself?" She laughed.

"Yes."

"As a tester or the one, who prepares the dessert?"

"Well, if you prepare dessert, you also have to test it, like with any other food, you can't risk to give bad quality to your guests and friends. I'd prepare and test it. Pudding, ice cream, for the healthy people fruits, a lot of whipped cream, vanilla and chocolate sauce, chocolate sprinkles, fruit sauces."

"You've got the job."

"Thanks, I'll look what I want to prepare most. Any wishes?"

"No, the only thing we definitely need is a white chocolate wedding cake for Sofia."

"White chocolate wedding cake? They make such things?"

"Hopefully, if not, we have to come up with one. My beautiful fiancé worried about losing a few pounds for the wedding, to look stunning on the photos, in her dress. She looks stunning anyway, sometimes she doesn't believe me so I asked her, if she wants to watch us eating the white chocolate wedding cake."

"Hah, I know the answer." Tony chuckled. "She doesn't, she wants her share. But you should ask Jules to have a look after her."

"Why?"

"Losing a couple of pounds? There's either something wrong with her head and she needs a shrink or she has problems with her eyesight. Sofia looks amazing, she doesn't need to lose a couple of pounds."

"Thanks, I think the same. She remembers the Sofia before the accident, she had a few pounds less that time, but she is older - don't tell her I said that - and after the accident she had to slow down a little bit. Nevertheless, to me she's the most beautiful woman in the world."

"In my poor unimportant opinion she looks better with a few pounds more than so skinny. I remember, I worried sometimes if she ate at all."

"She loves her barbecues."

"Yeah and when a person loves barbecues and chocolate and is very slim, there are some not so nice ideas how that can be."

"Anorexia? No, she has good genes and likes sport."

"Don't tell her about my anorexia fear, I only worried."

"Now we both have two secrets to share about Sofia." Sara blinked at her friend.

"Yeah...good genes...so not fair. Why do I have bad genes?"

"You don't have bad genes."

"When it comes to losing weight I'm very bad but pretty good in putting on weight. I only have to look at the lovely cakes in the supermarket and put on weight."

"It's because after you looked with your eyes, you look with your mouth." The brunette chuckled.

"Maybe...you think looking with my mouth is wrong? It tastes pretty good and makes a lot of fun. You are supposed to use all your senses."

"It's absolutely fine, it makes you happy, but it kills your supermodel body."

"It's the Danny DeVitto model type." Tony patted on his belly. Yes, maybe he was almost as wide as he was tall, especially when you count his front and back side together, but he enjoyed food too much. Why abstain from something when it makes you happy?

"Can I ask you something totally out of context?" Sara asked.

"Sure, what is it?"

"Does it make you happy to live here? I mean, in one room with en-suite, no own living room and not your own kitchen. You can never have the place for yourself, can never be alone, except in your room."

"Why did you come here? It was the same for you."

"When I agreed to live here I thought it's for a few weeks, until I had my own place. It wasn't supposed to be permanently."

"Oh." He laughed. "I never thought you could be this wrong. Leave after a few weeks. Sofia is here."

"There was a time when I wasn't in love with her. Unbelievable but true."

"Yeah, absolutely unbelievable. To get back to your question: I can't imagine a better place to live the next months or even years. You guys are great, I have a wonderful garden and why live alone in an apartment when I can have my second family around? One day, when I find my Mrs. Right, I might move, until then I stay as long as you and Sofia let me stay."

"Sofia will let you stay, she loves having you around. So do I but my opinion doesn't count, it's not my house."

"When you're married it will be all yours too."

"No, it's her house, there's a reason why I'm still paying rent."

"If you guys ever break up - which more than unlikely - you don't have to fight over the house. Only over custody of Steve and Susan, which will be more than enough. Luckily you won't break up in this century."

"In this century? We won't be alive in the next."

"How wonderful, you'll be together for your entire lives." He grinned. One day he'd find his perfect match too. Until then he had his lovely second family, who made him happy every day.

Who wouldn't want to live here? There couldn't be a better place on earth.

Sofia's attention was focused on the reports Don handed her over from Boston. Two years ago five women were abducted, killed and found in Wompatuck State Park. All of them died after the killer slashed their throats, all were raped postmortem and all had one finger cut off. The killer started with the same finger like in Los Angeles, just on the other hand. Was he here to finish what he started in Boston? If so, was he done after five women or had he other plans? What did he do the last two years? How did he come here, why did he choose the city of angels and - most important - how could they stop him? Two years ago Boston police found every second day a new victim, would they find a new one tomorrow?

"I invited detective Ricardo over to join us." Don said after he came back into the room. "She worked the case, maybe she can help us with information."

"Her team was close to catch him two years ago, with her help we might stop her before he kills more women."

"It's three in the afternoon, if he sticks to his time schedule he kills another women soon and will dump her body this night in Angeles National Park, likely around the Bouquet Reservoir. I talked to my captain, we will send cops to the forest, have them patrol the area. The park is informed, they will have more people around the reservoir than usual."

"When the killer realizes police is all around he dumps the body at another place. From what I read in the Boston files, he stuck to the park but not to the same area after Boston PD started patrol the area more often."

"Since today he knows we're after him."

"Where did they spot the car first?"

"Universal City. We were checking traffic cameras to find out from where he came, maybe it helps to narrow down the area, where he lives, keeps his victims."

"Hopefully he doesn't leave the city again. When he hides out for a while again, we lose him and I'm sure he has at least two more victims with him, he won't let them survive."

"Unlikely. We have a list of missing persons, the most likely victims of our killer are marked. I have Kyle checking on them."

"How many names?"

"Ten. We considered only women between eighteen and thirty, who are missing for five days or less."

"He can manage with this short list." Oh, that reminded her of a day in Vegas, when she had list of over thirty-six possible suspects to track down and when she slightly complained about it, Sara said: You're the detective, go detect! This smile, the twinkle on her eyes, when the blonde thought about it, she could consider it as flirting. Sara Sidle flirted with her in Las Vegas! Hah, she had to confront her fiancé with this tonight. Again. They talked about this scene a couple of time, it came back to Sofia's mind often. She was sure back then, in that moment, there was something between her Sara. No matter if the brunette was with Grissom, this moment...it was their own little magic.

"With that smirk you think of Sara." Don read her mind.

"Yes, guilty as charged."

"What did you think of?"

"I just realized she flirted with me back in Las Vegas. It was well hidden, but I finally understood it now. Sara Sidle was hitting on me!"

"Okay." He wasn't sure, so far it sounded all the time different.

"She was and now I concentrate on the case again." The blonde smiled. The thought of her lover made her happy whenever she thought of her.

"Oh, there's my blonde daughter, how are you?" Sara greeted Lea with a soft smile when the girl came into the garden; without Steve by her side. Which wasn't unusual anymore, as this was Lea's second home and she came here sometimes when her parents annoyed her. When you're fifteen your parents annoy you all the time they're around.

"Hey, are you having a day off or did you come home early" Lea sat down in the grass and petted the dogs, who were all over her to say hello.

"A day off. What about you?"

Lea worked in the small shop she had her school project in since the summer holidays started.

"A short day today. Most people go to the beach with this weather. Is Steve still away?"

"Yeah, he sent me a text an hour ago, he comes home later, this client took them on a boat trip to San Diego; on his private yacht. The impressive life of the rich and famous."

"He lived for fourteen years a poor life, let him enjoy some luxury. A yacht. And they call it work."

"Probably when he's back he tells us it was a hard day." Sara laughed.

"Could be. It's nice of Mel to take him with her to this important people. He is no lawyer, only a helping hand, she could take somebody else with her, somebody, who knows about law and the business."

"She will have her reasons and Sofia and I have an eye on them."

"Do you think she uses Steve?"

"I can't imagine what for. It's not like he can give her information she needs for her cases nor is he surrounded by rich people, who are always looking for new lawyers. The way I know Mel she has her reasons, we might not see them, but she has them and as long as Steve is happy with his job, he can work there."

"Save money for his car."

"The dream of freedom. Will you get a car too?"

"Not my own, I can have my parents' car sometimes. Otherwise I've got Steve to drive me around, my own chauffeur. Real stars don't drive themselves, they have their drivers."

"Right. Taxi company parents."

"Exactly." Lea got up and picked up Susan, who was stretching. "Hi little girl, how are you? Did you take another nap? Oh, such a big mouth you have, one day a big mouth might get you in trouble." Refreshed after her nap Susan smiled at Lea and made a happy sound.

"Do you want to give her her bottle? "

"Sure, I get it. Go to your mom for a minute, Honey-Pie." Lea vanished in the kitchen after she left Susan in Sara's arms.

"See, you have a babysitter all the time. No matter where you are, somebody comes around and takes care of you. I thought today I'm the only one, who looks after you, but I was wrong. Jules, Tony and now Lea look after you too and when your mommy comes home, she will have you in her arms too. You're the most wanted girl in town and I haven't even mentioned your grandparents and your daddy." Susan laughed again and tried to touch Sara's face. "Do you plan to steal my nose? Or my mouth?" She lowed her head and kissed the belly of her daughter, who grabbed her hair and squeezed happily. "Ouch, let go, you're mean, ouch. Damn, you're strong." "You're swearing when your daughter is around? Bad mother." Lea laughed.

"Don't tell her grandparents, they care about the correct language." Sara gave Lea Susan back and watched how the fifteen year old girl gave her daughter the bottle with milk. It wasn't the first time Lea did this and Sara had to say, the blonde girl looked every time more comfortable.

"She has one of your hairs in her hand."

"Yeah, she grabbed it when I kissed her belly. The next time I eat her alive."

"No, you won't. Your daughter looks like you, all she needs is your hair, hers is too short. Nice dark brown, yes, but not long enough."

"It grows every day like the rest of her, no need to steal my hair."

"This way she keeps a part of you with her, smart girl. Mommy is gone too often, isn't she? You miss your mommies when they're at work, the problem is, they have to work, otherwise there's no food and no house and it's not like your grandparents don't love you, they adore you."

"We all do and so does her brother. I was worried first Steve might get jealous when Susan is born."

"Steve jealous? He loves his little sister and he knows, she needs more attention because she's a baby. It's not like you ignore him, a teenager likes it when he or she has more freedom and the attention of the parents is on a sibling. Very handy."

"Is it? We always know what Steve is doing and we always have one eye on him. If the two of you plan something, we will find out, believe me."

"We? We don't plan anything, we're good kids."

"You better are."

"Always. We work every day in our school holiday, we don't go to parties, don't borrow the car for a joyride, don't steal alcohol for an illegal party and don't do drugs. Everything parents can ask for."

"Yes, you're even not dating."

"No, we're not."

"Not yourselves and not anybody else. Which reminds me, what happened to this idiot, who bet with Steve, who gets you into bed first?"

"He lost to Steve. I slept a couple of times in Steve's bed."

"I'm sure sleep wasn't what he had in mind."

"Steve and me are not responsible for his mind. It's not a big one anyway, you would get bored quite soon if you were responsible for it."

"Is my son a cool kid at school now?"

"No, still the weirdo, sorry. With two women as parents he will never be a cool kid, there are too many idiots around, bashing people gets you attention and recognition. At least in one certain group. The cool sport guys don't like gays, they're not good at sports. Within the group the whites don't think highly of the blacks and Mexicans, who do the same with the others. Why can't people just concentrate on the only thing that matters: personality? Why is it important in which skin color my body is wrapped? With whom I go to bed? In which God I believe or at none at all?"

"Because people always need to form a group and fight other groups. We're doing this for thousands of years."

"Not very smart."

"I never said human behavior is smart."

"You sound like a misanthrope now."

Sara looked irritated at the blonde girl. Misanthrope? Wasn't that exactly what she called Grissom once to tease him?

"Thanks."

"You're welcome."

"You spend too much time with Steve."

"No, I don't. He is on a yacht, I'm in your garden. He works with rich people, I sell stuff to ordinary people."

"You both enjoy luxury. Don't tell me you didn't enjoy your day at Lou's villa yesterday. The big pool and all the toys he owns."

"I love the pool, want one for our garden too. When I suggested this to my parents last night, they weren't too happy about it. We're ordinary people and ordinary people don't have a pool in their garden. If I want one, I have to buy one."

"The hard school of life. The ocean is free."

"And next weekend I will go to the ocean for a few hours. With this job I've got less time to hang out with friends than with school."

"Another example of the hard school of life." Sara chuckled.

"School is the best time in your life. Unfortunately until we realize this we're in the middle of our job and far away from these wonderful years."

"Wonderful is not the right word, wonderful is...not school. An evening with friends, a sunset or a painting can be wonderful, school can't."

"One day you might think different about it." Sara leant back and thought about her own school time. To her, it was a wonderful time, it gave her the chance to get out of the foster family, start her own life and become an independent person.

"Cute." Sofia pointed with her index finger to her left cheek, indicating Greg he was dirty at this spot, when he came out from under the car. A 2002 Ford, gray, in good condition from how it looked, not a car people paid attention to, when it drove past them. Charlene Flemming's old car.

"Thanks, I know I'm good. There's even more to me than my pretty face."

"The oil stain?"

"It's good for your skin, you should try it yourself for your wedding. No, I'm talking about my smart brain and my special skills with cars."

"You mean special obsession, whereupon this car shouldn't be a part of your boy's dream. It's nothing special."

"Not on the outside, in the inside I found so many fingerprints, most of them belonged to Charlene Flemming, some didn't. I assume we will find prints of friends and family members around the passenger seat, like in any other car. The ones more interesting for us are the two I found on the steering wheel, they didn't belong to Charlene. From various traffic cameras I know the killer didn't wear gloves when he drove the car yesterday, we do have his fingerprints and I tend to be certain, I know which one of the two different are his."

"The ones, that overlaid all the others." You didn't have to be a genius to know this. "You can impress kids with this, not a CSI."

"Smart ass. They're all running through AVIS and Co. if we're lucky, we know by the end of the day who our killer is. The only problem is, as your trained eyes have noticed when you looked into the car, the radio is missing. Our killer left the car unlocked and somebody helped themselves to a new radio."

"Then we were already lucky they took nothing else and we have the car to work with. What else did you find?"

"Various traces in the tires, I sent them all to trace, the guys there will be busy for a while and in the end they hopefully tell us, where the car was the last days. I vacuumed the interior, sent it to trace too. Candy wrappers, two empty water bottles, an empty fast food bag with a half filled coke container, running shoes, a towel, a hat, a road map, four CDs and nail polisher under the seat."

"Sounds like an ordinary woman car, a little bit messy, crammed with all the things you might or might not need during the day."

"The fast food bag didn't fit in with the rest, why would she left half of her coke behind? Unless she bought it the day she was abducted and her killer took her from the fast food car park or after she left there."

"I check on that, see which restaurants are between her and her work place, around the Marina del Rey and beach area. Maybe she met her killer there."

"They all have video surveillance, we should get her on tape."

"Hopefully. Although I'm afraid it's too late for victim number three." Sofia checked her watch. "She's likely already dead or

close to be killed. I wonder where he kills her. At the place, where he keeps them?" The blonde opened the trunk of the car. "No blood. He doesn't kill them in there, not at the place, where we found the bodies. They must be wrapped in something or he took another car to dump the body."

"Neither Cherry nor you found evidence of a blanket, there would be trace if he wrapped them in one."

"Plastic foil? Like a body bag, they leave no evidence behind."

"Possible. Sofia, he looked young, can a young guy like him know so much about crime and evidence?"

"Greg, you were what when you started in the lab? In your early twenties, let him be somebody, who has always been interested in chemicals, police work, with a high IQ, maybe he worked as a lab tech or a CSI somewhere, a smart brain doesn't prevent you from doing illegal things. Sometimes being smart is your reason for doing whatever you do. You're smart, nobody gets you because they're not as smart as you are. I think a killer, who doesn't get caught fast, is not only smart, he or she is also arrogant. You need some arrogance to take a life and be sure, you get away with it."

"He is cool, I watched the video of his chase yesterday, he drove coldly, knew his way around and when the truck pulled out, he never hesitated for a second, only speeded up more."

"It was his only chance. Stop and let the cops get you, end up in jail, get the needle, or accelerate, get smashed by the truck, which is the same like the needle, only faster, or get away and stay free. He had one chance, he took it."

"Yeah, unfortunately he was lucky. Did Don get any more information from this Boston detective?"

"The files were interesting, from what I read and saw I'm sure it's the same killer. No photo, no description. How tall was the driver yesterday?"

"According to the videos and photos he must be around six foot two."

"Taller than all our victims."

"He looked slender, must have strong arms to carry them. Dead weight is heavier."

"You can be skinny and strong." Sofia knelt next to the tire.

"Is that a fingerprint?"

"Why don't you find out or aren't you here to help me?"

"I am." A fingerprint over the tire? If she was right, it was an unusual place. A palm print was normal, you change a tire and push yourself up by leaning on the car. But this tire wasn't changed and it wasn't a palm print.

"I'm sorry I'm late." Sofia hugged Sara and kissed her. It was almost eight in the evening.

"I didn't complain."

"No, but I was gone for the whole day. It was your day off, we could have dinner together, spent some time together, instead I was in the lab and worked. Overtime. But I did take a few breaks."

"Did you close the case?"

"No. We almost caught him, but he was lucky and escaped. We do have his picture now." The blonde stroke softly with her finger over Susan's cheek. Her daughter was asleep, of course, her mother came home late. A bad mother.

"Then you catch him tomorrow."

"Tomorrow might be too late. There'll be additional people in Angeles National Forest tonight and tomorrow morning."

"I thought so."

"Let's talk about something nice. How was your day? Did you and Susan have fun?"

"We did. We went shopping, Tony will buy the rest for the party, all we have to do is leave him a list of what we need. Our lunch was with a beautiful woman in her cozy office, then we walked back home, Susan and the dogs slept in the garden, Lea came along to visit us and left when it was time for dinner and our son wasn't back. He should be back any second, their trip was a little bit longer than planned, they took a yacht from Santa Barbara to San Diego. Your mother called, she insists on having her granddaughter back tomorrow or else. Did I forget something?" Sara paused to think about the day. "Oh, your fiancé thought about you a couple of times and missed you the whole time."

"You thought about me a couple of times? What a nice coincidence, I thought of you too. And I realized you flirted with me back in Vegas."

"I did what?"

"Don't play innocent Sara, you flirted with me. The smile you gave me when you told me I'm a detective and should detect was a flirt. It was a dirty smirk, you hit on me."

"I do recall the moment, but I didn't flirt."

"You can't deny it, it's obvious."

"Honey, it's only obvious in your mind, which doesn't make it true."

"Are you telling I don't know how you look when you're flirting?"

"I'm saying you interpret an action the way you want it, not the way it was."

"Not true!"

"Does one of you need a lawyer? I'm available for a low charge."

Both turned. Next to Steve stood Mel in the kitchen, both watching the word battle of the two women.

"We've got guns, we don't need a lawyer." Sofia answered coldly.

"No guns around the kids, please. Talking about kids, here's your son, healthy, clean and happy after an interesting day by and on the ocean. I made sure nothing happened to him. Not that he can't do that himself."

"You take him to mobster, killers and god knows who else, you're not exactly the best acquaintance."

"Oh Sara, come on, you know I take care of Steve."

"You better do or you're in trouble."

"Moms, be nice, Mel is nice too. How is my baby sis?"

"Asleep after a nice day with her mother. Are you hungry?"

"No, we stopped at In & Out on our way here. Business dinner."

"Business dinner? Interesting. Since when do you have business dinner in a fast food restaurant, Mel?"

"Since the young gentleman requested a burger."

"Ocean air makes me hungry. I tell you, the yacht was wow! Huge. Like a house. It must have cost a fortune. A real bugger it belongs to an asshole."

Sara raised a brow. "You call a client an asshole?"

"Not when he's around, but it's the truth. He is slimy and thought I'm stupid." Steve handed Mel a glass with water after his mothers didn't seem to welcome the guest.

"One of the reasons why I took Steve with me is, some clients don't take him seriously, they see a stupid kid in him, the boy, who carries my bag and does, that I tell him. Means, when I leave the group to go to the ladies, Steve stays, apparently listen to his mp3 player while the men talk behind my back. My good employee listens to them, tells me everything and we know more than they think we know. And he is right, the client is an asshole, a slimy one."

"Like most of your clients. You attract them, don't you wonder why?"

"They want the best for themselves, I'm the best, Sofia. You know what the other reason is why I like to take Steve with me?"

"You want to annoy us?"

"Oh please, that's cheap and you know way better than that. You agreed on him working for me, it might not be what you wished for him, but you know he enjoys it and that's why you're fine with it. Steve is a pretty good judge of character, he knows an asshole when he sees one, he knows when people lie. I can't stand it when clients lie to me, it makes the defense more difficult and too often I end up with surprises I don't like. With your son's helps it's easier to figure out who lies and who tells the truth."

"Maybe I become a private investigator one day." Steve said happily.

"Better than a lawyer." Sofia mumbled.

"I can go to Police Academy first, makes the Captain happy."

"Why don't you finish high school and college first?"

"Yes moms. Don't be spoilsports."

"It's the role of a mother. Like it is our role to tell your boss we're happy when you work too much. It's illegal to work over twelve hours, especially at your age."

"It wasn't planned and he does have tomorrow off."

"Can't I work tomorrow and have Friday off? A long weekend."

"If that suits you better, you have Friday off."

"Cool. Thanks. All right, boss and moms, I'm tired, I go to bed. See you all tomorrow." He kissed Sara's and Sofia's cheek and vanished in his room.

"He is a very good kid." Mel said.

"We know that."

"He told me you get married in three weeks."

"Yes, it's all arranged."

"Good. Do you need a lawyer?"

"For the paper work or to change my mind?" Sara asked sweetly.

"Honey, if you want I could do both, but no, I don't hit on married or almost married women."

"Good to know."

"Do you have your license already?"

"No, still waiting. Should come any day, we hope. They are very busy."

"It was about time to allow everybody to get married."

"When will you get married?"

"Me? Oh dear, that will take some time. There are so many wonderful women around, how can I pick only one?"

"The best one is taken, you have to take the second best one."

Sofia got her arm around Sara's waist and kissed her. She had the best girlfriend in the world and she'd never give her away.

"Only a fool would let her go and you're not a fool, Sofia."

"I beat you in court."

"You did and only smart people do so. By the way, Steve has the last two weeks of the holidays off, he can help you with preparations for your trip and have a look into his books again. He was and is a great help, but I want him rested and prepared for the new year in school."

"Thanks, we appreciate that. He might not because he loses money..."

"No, he won't, Sara. He worked enough overtime to get money for one week extra. At his age there should be more in life than work. I know he saves for a car and a few other things, but he should also spend money on a movie night with a girl. I understood the nice blonde girl, Lea, is only a friend, but he's a good looking guy, there should be a real girlfriend."

"Burrito girl." Sara smiled.

"What? He is into a girl, who sells burritos?"

"No, this girl is a singer and her name sounded like a burrito...what was it? Selena Gomez? Does this name ring a bell?"

"It does. You don't know her?"

"We searched the internet for her, before that, we had no idea who she was."

"Selena Gomez? Interesting. He deserves better. What does he want with a girl, who is away all the time? Well, time will bring him somebody nice, who lives in the area. All right ladies, it's time for me to go to bed, I do have a case in court tomorrow. You won't be there, will you Sofia?"

"No, no court appointments for me. Your guilty bastard has chances to come free."

"I'm glad to hear that. Have a nice evening and if we don't see each other before the wedding, enjoy your wedding and all the best."

"Thanks. See you around." Sofia said.

"See you when you're back in the forest."

"I might come along soon, it's a nice place in summer. Bye."

Mel smiled and went down the stairs. Sofia and Sara listened to her steps until she closed the front door downstairs.

"Maybe she isn't that bad." The brunette said carefully.

"She's pretty smart, she has a good taste in women and does respect the fact you love me. Plus she is a good boss to our son, so yes, maybe she isn't that bad. But that's as far as I go!" The blonde grumbled.

"It's far enough." Sara kissed her lover. "Shall we put Susan in her bed and go into our bed? I feel like being in your arms, snuggling up and listen to your heartbeat."

"Sounds like a solid plan, I'm in." Sofia kissed her fiancé back. It was early, but they had been up early and tomorrow had to get up early too. There was no reason not to go to bed early in the evening.

Tuesday, August 6th

"Good morning, love of my life." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms when the alarm clock woke both up. "How did you sleep?"

"Perfect, like every night since you sleep in my arms and we're together. You make every night to a wonderful dream, my lovely fiancé." The blonde kissed her lover back. Could a day start better than in the arms of the woman she loved?

"Same here, my heroine, who chased all my demons and nightmares away. Do you want to marry me?"

"I do. And I love this question, no matter how often you ask it. In fact, it sounds better with every time. Soon, very soon, somebody asks you if you want to marry me, you will say: I do and we'll be married. It sounds like a fairytale."

"It does." Sara smiled and kissed the neck of the blonde. Five more minutes in bed, she set the alarm to have these five minutes, to wake up slowly and start the day in the best possible way. With Sofia in her arms. "You know I went to Jules on Saturday to talk with her about the wedding."

"Give her a list with all the presents we want?"

"More ask her how I can make sure I don't ruin our wedding." It was time to tell her fiancé about her fear, about her meetings with Jules. Maybe it sounded ridiculous to some people it wouldn't sound ridiculous to her lover.

"Why would you ruin our wedding?"

"I might get scared when we both stand in front of the priest, or whoever weds us, say the wrong words, run away, I don't know, it's not like I'm somebody, who never acted stupid in personal things. My social skills aren't top of the list and more likely to ruin or crash a wedding than be a successful part of it."

"Bullshit." Sofia shook her head. "You are perfect for our wedding, the only one I want and I'm sure you won't run away, won't say the wrong words and won't do anything else, that might be wrong or inappropriate. Get it into your head, you're fucking perfect, Sara Sidle."

"I'm far away from being perfect."

Sofia narrowed her eyes. "Do you want to fight with me? At half past four in the morning? In the month we get married? With our kids a few yards away?"

"No."

"Good, then you never ever say you're not fucking perfect coz you are. No doubt about it and no arguing about it. It's fact like two and two is four. And now move your sexy ass out of the bed, we take a shower together. You have to wash my back for being this stupid. Ruin our wedding, do or say something wrong. What a stupid idea. My perfect fiancé doesn't do anything wrong."

"Jules says the same."

"Other women might get cranky when their fiancé needs a shrink to tell her she's perfect, I know Jules, I know your relationship, I let you get away with it. The next time, Mrs. Sidle-Curtis, you talk to me, do you understand?"

"Yes, Mrs. Sidle-Curtis, I understand. And it turns me sooo on when you give me orders, tell me what to do. There's the old lieutenant Curtis, the one, who cuffed me and interrogated me the whole night until she was satisfied with me..."

"I just changed my mind, you won't wash my back, you will do something different and I don't accept any denials or complaints. Get into the bathroom, lose your clothes and then we get back to the night when you were cuffed and I interrogated you until we were both satisfied with the night. I want this again, not cuffed and in showering time. Move your sexy ass, before I take a bite out of it." Sofia grabbed Sara's ass and squeezed it. Now she was more than awake and wanted to get out of bed ASAP!

Quietly whistling Sara opened the car door of their off road truck in Angeles National Forest. The sky was blue, seventy-five degrees, zero chance of rain, the sun shone, the perfect summer holiday morning. So far.

"Your good mood makes me sick." Shane complained. "All because you had early morning sex. Does it make you forget we had two dead women in our forest? And when the cops are right and the killer sticks to his timeline we find another one today."

"I am aware of that." Sara shot him a smile. "It's sad, but I promised myself today I try to see the good things in life. Nothing can adumbrate Sofia's and my wedding. I get married this month, to the most beautiful woman in the world, who loves me. Our kids are adorable, healthy and happy, I have no reason to complain. Yes, I know we are likely to find another body and I hope the police catches the killer soon, but I can't change it and it doesn't help anybody, when I let it pull me down. If life gives you lemon, ask for tequila and salt."

"How profound."

"Oh come, you're only grumpy because you didn't get laid in ages."

"No, I'm upset because of what's going on in our forest and I don't want to find another body every second day."

"And the lack of sex, which is your own fault. Stop kicking your girlfriends out of your life when they want a serious relationship."

Shane rolled his eyes. Not again. People, who were about to get married, could be very annoying. "We go back to Bouquet Reservoir?"

"It's the place where the killer left two bodies, if he killed a third woman, she might be there."

"The police didn't see somebody, they were around the whole night."

"He killed two women, he left barely any evidence, otherwise the police had arrested him, when they drive around the Reservoir, he saw them. He isn't stupid, a stupid killer gets caught very fast. He's smart and it's difficult to catch a smart killer because he knows what he's doing and, more important, he knows what the police is doing."

"Sofia has no idea who he is? Where to look?"

"If she does, she didn't tell me, which are the rules."

"Or you tell me she didn't tell you. Anyway, I hope they close the case soon and we can go back to our area of the forest. I like it better there, the way to work isn't this far and...we never had two dead bodies within four days."

"Can happen any time."

"What happened to always look on the bright side of life?"

Sara whistled the tune of the song with a smile. Yeah, look on the bright side of life, they didn't hang on a cross...

The call came before nine o'clock in the morning. Right in the moment when her cell phone rang and she saw Don's number, Sofia knew he didn't call because he wanted an update, he called because there was a new dead body. Taking a deep breath, she answered the phone.

"Hi Don, where are you? We're ready."

"I'm at the PD, on my way to our new crime scene. He stuck to his schedule."

"No surprise. Where?" Where did he manage to dump a body without being seen by all the police, who were around last night. Did he widened his comfort zone about a mile?

"San Gabriel Reservoir."

"I beg your pardon?"

"San Gabriel Reservoir."

"Where is that?"

"At the north end of the 605."

"605? He chose a complete different area."

"He did, we must have scared him away. We meet at Upper Monroe Road."

"Okay, the GPS will know the way...see you there." She ended the call. San Gabriel Reservoir. She heard of it, had been there once or twice, for a walk, but Upper Monroe Road didn't ring a bell.

"We have a new crime scene." She called Greg.

"North or south side?"

"North. North of San Gabriel Reservoir."

"Where the hell is that?"

"In a complete different area of the forest. North end of the 605."

"No Sara?"

"No, her boss send her back to Bouquet Reservoir, believing the killer dumps the next body there. We won't find a perfectly organized and secured crime scene this time."

"Great. I'm with you in a minute." He ended the call. A new area, probably a not good secured crime scene and a killer, who

knew the police was after him. Not the best conditions for a successful hunt.

"The future rich and famous lawyer. Or was it movie star?" Tanya grinned when she saw Steve in her dental surgery.

"Astronaut."

"Oh, a new choice, interesting. What can I do for you? Aren't you supposed to be at work?"

"My boss sent me home because of my tooth ache."

"Tooth ache?"

"Yeah, I tried to ignore it, took pain killers and isolated the tooth more or less with chewing gum. Nothing helped and she doesn't want me to sit around and hold my cheek."

"Smart woman. Okay, have a seat, you need to wait a little bit but I'm with you soon. About the chewing gum thing we talk another day. What a stupid idea." Tanya shook her head.

"Marlene, can you get the folder of Steve, please? He's an emergency patient. Mister Blackwood, please come with me."

"Sure." The young woman behind the reception looked at Steve. "What's the full name, please?"

"Stephen Sidle." To him it still sounded new and great, his new surname. He had the same name like his mother. One of his mothers. And when they were married and Sofia could legally adopt him, his would change again: Stephen Sidle - Curtis.

"Are you new?" He hadn't seen her here. She didn't look much older than himself. Did she work here during the holidays?

"Yes, I started in June, I'm here to help out during the holiday time. Here's your folder. Have a seat, Tanya will call you. Where did you get the idea with the chewing gum from?"

"The internet."

"They really have crazy ideas there."

"Yeah, in pain you try them, you have nothing to lose."

"Isn't it easier to come here?"

"It is, especially because I see Tanya every day, she practically lives in the same house, and yet, the dentist isn't my favorite place." Not anymore. A few months ago he had gone to the dentist as soon as there was any kind of pain, only to be around Tanya. Those days were over, he didn't have any reasons to come here without having an emergency.

"You came today, soon your pain will be gone. How do you handle the bills? The name of your mother or father is?"

"Sara. The last time mom came along and paid the bill after work. It's not like we vanish, I'm quite sure we see Tanya tonight in the garden."

"Okay, I let Tanya do the bill, there might be a discount she gives you, she has to tell me or do it herself."

"That's the easiest way."

"Then, astronaut, you have a seat and come back to earth later."

"I might become something else, don't want end up calling: Houston, we've got a problem!" He grinned, held his cheek and sat down. When Tanya freed him of the pain, he'd go and see Sofia, tell her about the unplanned dental appointment. His mom would understand him, she didn't go to see Tanya herself until she was forced to see her on a Saturday morning. Like mother like son.

When Sofia arrived at the crime scene she found half a dozen cops, two rangers and some onlookers around.

"Great, I bet half of them tromped over our crime scene."

"If they're not still on it. God knows how big the real crime scene is." Greg agreed. "Why can't Sara be around?"

"Because her boss sent her to the more likely crime scene."

"Good for her, bad for us. I can see the red pants."

"I can see a not happy face on Cherry's face. Body or premises?"

"You had the other two bodies, keep them. I go and see what the killer left - or what the onlookers left for us."

"Good luck."

"Ditto." They separated and Sofia went to the medical examiner, who knelt next to the body and was busy writing something.

"Hey, red pants, a missing middle finger, the chance of a copy cat is...like the chance of rain?"

"More like the chance if snow." Cherry shot back dryly. So far everything looks like the two cases before. Why did they let him escape yesterday?"

"Sometimes fate isn't working for you. I've been there a few times when I was a cop. Still am as a CSI. She looks taller than the rest. Five nine?"

"Five ten. Our killer chooses taller women every time he kills. No wallet, no ID, I sent her finger prints to missing people, also her photo. How did he know there was police around the Bouquet Reservoir?"

"He is a pro, he spotted them and changed his mind. The question is why this one? I checked, there are a few reservoirs and lakes between these two. What is his connection with the Bouquet and San Gabriel Reservoir? Does something connect these two reservoirs?"

"Your job to find it out."

"I know. TOD?"

"At this moment between five in the afternoon and ten at night. Her throat was slashed, I'm afraid she was raped too, redressed in this ugly pants...did you find out where they're from?"

"Cheap clothes discounter, there are around fifty of them in Los Angeles, they sell these pants since four months, sold over ten thousand of them." The only useful thing Sofia found out yesterday. Or partly useful as it was impossible to get the contact details of all buyer. She requested the shops to send her credit and debit card information about customers, who bought more than one pair, but she doubted it got her somewhere.

"Great, will Don all track them down?"

"He's the detective, he can go and detect." Oh, it was fun to say this sentence. And it made her smile. A tiny piece of Sara and her mood was better.

"Poor man. Take your photos, I want to bring her to the morgue. There were some fibers on her, I bagged them, they looked like they fell from the trees on her. But maybe he left also a tiny bit of himself behind. See me in the afternoon, not before lunch."

"I got you. Any words about fires?" After the last case she was careful about the fire situation in Angeles National Forest.

"Not that I know of."

"What is that? The smear on her throat?"

"Smart man who found her checked her pulse."

"Seriously?" A woman with a slashed throat? All right, there was a tiny, very tiny possibility she could have survived a cut, a shallow one, but this one was deep, impossible to survive.'

"Yes, his hands were dirty. He also left a souvenir behind the bush."

"Great." She knew she had no reason to be annoyed, probably this was the first time the man saw a dead body with a slashed throat, it was a shock, but...she caught herself wishing her lover had found the body. Two perfect secured crime scene, this one was contaminated, even the body wasn't left the way it was found. It was like when she came to a scene and emergency doctors tried to save the life but didn't succeed.

Sara knew about the dead body at San Gabriel Reservoir before her lover called her. News traveled fast in Angeles National Forest, despite the size of it.

"Hi, how are you?" The brunette asked when she answered the phone.

"Annoyed, a little bit angry and a bad fiancé."

"Why?"

"Because I caught myself wishing you found the DB. Your crime scenes were perfect, this one is a nightmare."

"Contaminated?"

"Body and scene, yes. An El Dorado for every defense lawyer. How was your day so far?"

"Quiet. The firefighters are still here, the fire north of Bouquet Reservoir isn't extinguished completely, it keeps them busy. Luckily we don't have any other fires so far and people can enjoy their time here."

"Do you enjoy your day too?"

"It's better than the last time we had a DB in our forest, which is only two days ago. At least today I don't have to flee flames; so far."

"Can you come home on time?"

"Around four, yes. Your return will take some time, I assume?"

"I try to be back at six, latest."

"Sofia, you started at seven, try five. Yes, I know it's a hot case and you're all under pressure to find the killer, I want him caught too, but I also want my fiancé healthy. Make sure you

have enough breaks, drink and eat enough. Otherwise I've to invite the grandmother of my cute godchild to dinner, tell her how you treat your body and let her take care of you."

"Doctor Bendler is a nice woman, but she isn't my physician anymore."

"You're her special patient, she'll always be responsible for you." The brunette smiled. It wasn't fair to threaten her lover with the energetic doctor, especially when the Captain was around too, who would support the doctor this time and both elder women make Sofia promise a lot of things, she didn't want to do. It was much easier for the blonde to promise her lover to come home earlier and look after herself.

"I take Greg out for lunch, he needs his breaks too. How is that?"

"A pretty good idea. It is lunch time."

"Not for us, we're about to pack everything up here and head back to the lab. Then it's lunch time. Do you relax in your lunch break?"

"Yes, Shane brought some ice cream and we're having a huge sundae with cookies, cream, fruits. Food for the heart."

"Isn't your lunch place on our way back?" The blonde asked, salivating when she thought about the huge sundae. This was exactly the kind of lunch she loved. Add some vanilla sauce and chocolate sprinkles and it was perfect.

"Depends on how you drive back."

"Tempting. Maybe we can have one ourselves the next time we have a day off together. At the beach?"

"Honey, if you want a date with me just say so, I agree anyway."

"I want a date with you on the beach!"

"I'm all yours."

Sofia felt how the well known heat rose slowly in her, made her feel happy. Sara could make her happy without being there, only with words. Gosh, she was so in love with this woman, it was...wonderful.

"Are you still there?" Sara asked.

"Yeah, sorry, I was lost in my love to you."

"Don't get lost, I need you more than anything or anybody else. You're my lieutenant, you have to protect me and our family."

"I'm the CSI."

"Deep in your heart you're a cop and for me you'll always be a cop, no matter how good you're as a CSI, for me you're my cop. Maybe the wedding makes you my captain; Captain Cute, Captain Cuddle, Captain Crush."

"Ranger Romance, you get my thoughts back to this morning. Shall I get us some dinner tonight?"

"No, your father sent me a text message half an hour ago, he prepares something for us and takes it over when we get our daughter back. Indian curry."

"Okay, I try to be back by six so we can all have dinner together, like an ordinary family. We have kids, we have to show them, dinner is a meal, you have with your family."

"Our son will like a big family dinner, our daughter likes everything we do with her. A few more months and we can take her out for a picnic."

"Beach picnic, we take the dogs, the twins and my godchild with us. Our family is bigger than others."

"Our family is perfect."

"They got him! Sofia, they caught him!" Sara heard Greg's excited voice in the background and her heart jumped. They caught him? He had to talk about the killer. The nightmare was over, Angeles National Forest could go back to normal. Hopefully.

"Did you hear that?" Sofia asked.

"I did, does it mean...?"

"I hope it does. Sorry, I have to talk to him and see what we do next. Can I give you a call back?"

"Send me a text, if they have him, you'll be busy. Take care of my CSI, I love her to the moon and back."

"Take care of my ranger, I love her to Pluto and back; and I don't give a fuck that Pluto isn't a planet anymore."

Sara laughed. "Neither is the moon. See you tonight, look forward to it and can't wait to have you in my arms again, kiss you."

"Ditto, Mrs. Sidle-Curtis." The blonde sent a kiss through the phone and smiled before she put her cell phone away. It was an understatement to say, she loved Sara to Pluto and back, she

loved her even more. Until the end of the farthest galaxy, another step over this line and back.

Sofia met Don in the hallway of the police department, where he waited for her. Together they wanted to talk to the suspect, the young man, who drove Charlene Flemming's car and was most likely her killer and the killer of eight other women.

"Where did you catch him?"

"A taxi driver called us, he saw him walking along Hollywood Boulevard. Two officers picked him up there, surprisingly it wasn't difficult, he was didn't put up a fight. When back-up arrived at the corner of Hollywood and Fuller, he was already cuffed and in the car."

"Okay. Maybe he didn't expect us to get him this fast. Did he confess?"

"He confessed to steal a bread. Whole-grain."

"I beg your pardon?" Their killer confessed to what? Stealing bread? Was he kidding them?

"Yeah, nice try. Maybe he stole a bread too, but we don't care about the bread, we care about the killings."

"Did he explain the officers why he drove the car?"

"Apparently he didn't."

"Is he the guy on the photos we have?"

"Yes."

"Lets show him the photos and hear what he has to say about them. Maybe he has a kind of word disorder and thinks car means bread."

"No passport, no accent."

"Okay."

"Detective Ricardo is on her way, but until she's here we can talk to the suspect. Are you ready?"

"Ready to lock him up."

"Me too."

"Did he say something about the other women?"

"No, says he has no idea what we're talking about."

"Like he never stole anything else than a bread." Sofia said sarcastically. It was interesting to notice, almost everybody who got arrested told the police, he or she was innocent and did never do something illegal and if they did, it was something

small and a long, long time ago. Why couldn't people come up with new stories?

"Where is he?"

"Interrogation two. Did you get DNA?"

"It's too early to say if the lab was able to get DNA from the fingerprints, I took from the steering wheel. Do we have his DNA?"

"Not yet." Don lifted a can of coke. "It's warm outside, they didn't turn on the aircon, he should be thirsty. Gives us his DNA without a warrant."

"Handsome and intelligent, what a combination. Shall we talk to him?"

"Ladies first."

"Thanks." Sofia opened the door and stepped into the room. At the table, opposite to the door, sat a young man, she guessed him in his twenties, short reddish hair, tall, slender, dirty white t-shirt, cuffed with his hands behind his back. When she stepped in, he raised his head and smiled.

"Wow, I had no idea cops are so sexy. Why didn't you arrest me sooner? It would have been my pleasure to come with you, no matter where you want me to take. In fact, you can take me everywhere."

She turned and looked at Don. This kid was their killer? This bad acting Casanova?

"I'd have loved to arrest you sooner, unfortunately you hid and when we were after you yesterday, you escaped." She sat down, gave the young man a cool look over.

"This is the first time I see you, which is really a shame."

"You know flirting doesn't help you, do you?"

"We can do other things, when you send the Calvin Klein cop out. We don't need him."

"Detective Flack will stay, he is here to charge you with stealing a car and another minor thing."

"What car? I don't have a car."

"No, it's here, you drove it yesterday."

"Can't be, I arrived today. From Denver."

"Where is your flight ticket?"

"I hitchhiked."

"Do you have the name or license plate of anybody, who took you here?"

"No, sorry. They weren't as sexy as you are, I didn't ask. What's your name?"

"CSI Curtis."

"Got a first name, CSI Curtis?"

"Everybody has a first name. What's your name?"

"You can call me what you want."

"A criminal."

"That's harsh."

"Listen." Don said, ending the game of the young man. "You are here on criminal charges. Your story about arriving in L.A. today is a lie, you flee yesterday, there were a few cops, who saw you."

"They're mistaken, can happen to the best."

"Like it happened to you." Sofia pulled three photos out of her folder. All of them showed the young man in Charlene Flemming's car in Los Angeles. "This is you, isn't it?"

"He looks a bit like me."

"He is you, unless you have a twin. Then we need his name and address. Your fingerprints were in the car, in a few minutes somebody will confirm you drove the car. But if you are as innocent, as you say you are, why don't you give us your DNA?"

"If you want my DNA you can have it, but not with a cotton bud. There are much nicer ways to get DNA of somebody."

"We add sexual harassment of a law enforcement member to our list." Don said.

"You can add to your list whatever you want. All I stole was a bread. Oh and you can take your coke away, it's a cheap trip to get my DNA, I'm not stupid."

"We never said you're stupid. You got away for a long time with what you did, you escaped the cops in Boston, you're smart."

"Which cops in Boston?"

"Don't try to play us, we know about Boston, detective Ricardo is on her way. She investigated your cases there."

"I've never been to Boston, way too cold."

"Like you never stole a car. The car you drove yesterday, you escaped with thanks to the truck, was the car of your first L.A. victim."

"My first L.A. victim?"

"We have her body, we know you continued what you started in Boston. Why did you cut off the finger of the women?"

"I did what? Cut off fingers?"

Sofia had to admit, he was a good actor. The smile was gone, he didn't seem to think this was a game. Sincere replaced the smug smile. She could almost fall for his act. Almost.

"Where are the other two women? Did you already abduct them?"

"I never abducted anybody, that's bullshit. And I never cut off fingers of anybody, that's sick. Okay, I admit, I might have taken a car, that didn't belong to me, but nothing else."

"You admit you stole Charlene Flemming's car?"

"I've no idea whose car it was. The one I drive on the photo."

"Thanks for admitting you drove that car."

"So arrest me for stealing an abandoned car. With this finger thing...I have nothing to do with cutting off fingers. How sick is that?"

"Know her?" Sofia put a photo of Charlene Flemming in front of the young man.

"No. I never saw her."

"It was her car."

"Tell her I'm sorry."

"I could do that but why talk to a dead body?"

"This woman is dead? And you believe I've got something to do with that because I drove her car?"

"I believe you killed her."

"I don't kill anybody and why would anybody kill somebody for a car? An old one."

"People got killed for less, you killed her and seven other women." She put photos of all the other victims on the table. pointed with her finger on the victim they found this morning.

"Who is she?"

"I never saw her and I didn't steal any other car."

"We have evidence, that says something else and there'll be another cop with more evidence, evidence from Boston."

"I've never been to Boston. Cold places are not my cup of tea."

"Sure, like you never killed these women and have no idea who they are. Nor did you confess to steal the car until you had no other chance."

"Stop! Time-out! You got it all wrong and before I say another word I want a lawyer."

"Make yourself comfortably, I assume you don't have the money to afford one, it will take some time before we find one for you." Don got up. "If you remember what happened to the other two women, or what the name of the last woman you killed is, it will help you."

"If I knew those things I'd tell you so you can help these poor women. I'm not your killer and you're wasting your time, and the time of these two women, by accusing me."

"I heard these words before. Like any other story you tried to sell us."

Sofia followed her friend out of the room. It wasn't a surprise their suspect lawyered up, they all did when they realized the cops didn't buy their stories. The break gave her the chance to see Greg, see if he had no evidence and this detective from Boston should be here by the time they had a lawyer for their suspect.

"Mom?"

Sofia smiled when she saw Steve. What a nice surprise, she had no idea he planned to come and see her today.

"Don't tell me you're in trouble." She teased. "Thanks for taking him here, Andrea."

"My pleasure."

"I'm not in trouble and if I was, I know a pretty good lawyer, who happens to be here too."

"Not good news for me."

"Some traffic issue, shouldn't be your case and Mel said, she deals with this case in no time."

"Arrogant."

"She is this good. I've got something for you." He handed her an envelope.

The blonde tore it. "Dentist bill? You didn't mention toothache."

"I tried to ignore it until I couldn't anymore and Mel sent me to see Tanya."

"Sometimes your boss is smart and I'm not the right person to tell you off for not going to the dentist. Is your pain gone?"

"Yes, Tanya was wonderful and perfect as usual."

"A few months ago you would have jumped at the chance to see her."

"I grew up."

"Did you?" The blonde chuckled. "Want a coke?"

"Always." They went to the vending machine and got two cans of coke out.

"Tanya will tell you off for drinking coke."

"All she said was don't eat and drink until you feel your cheek again, I feel it, I can drink. Did you have lunch?"

"No dad, I didn't. Not real lunch."

"Why not get a fruit-nut-bar too?"

"A Snickers for you and the sandwich for me. Your mother doesn't think chocolate is lunch."

"We don't have to tell her."

"She won't ask you, she will ask me and I don't lie to her."

Sofia got them a Snickers and the cheese-salad sandwich for herself.

"No, don't lie to your wife."

"Don't lie to your parents."

"Lying to your parents is such a strong impression, I like to call it, make sure they're not worried about things, that aren't this important and select only the important information for them, they have enough other things to care about."

"You start to sound like a lawyer."

"I'm a fast learner."

"Hey man, careful, they try to trick you with the coke, get your DNA!"

Sofia turned. Behind her was the young man, their suspect, who was waiting for his lawyer. Probably somebody needed the room and he was relocated.

"Felix? What are you doing here?"

"They arrested me, be careful, they're crazy here. Don't say a fucking word without a lawyer. Ouch, hey careful or I sue you!"

"Get in there and shut the fuck up." The officer pushed him into a room.

"Do you know him?" Steve called the young man by his name. Sofia was alert, did her son know a possible killer?

"Yes, what is he doing here?"

"He is our suspect. What do you know about him?"

"Felix? Your suspect? You're not talking about the dead women in Angeles National Forest, are you?"

"I am."

"Mom, that's impossible."

"Come on, I think we need to talk." She got her arm around Steve and guided him to Don's desk. "Detective, we've got a witness."

"We...oh, hi Steve. What are you doing here?"

"He's the witness."

"What did you see?"

"He knows the suspect, a Felix?"

"Felix didn't do anything."

"We do have photos of him driving the car of the first victim and he admitted to took it."

"All right, he might bust cars and have a little joyride every now and then, he also might take some food when times are bad, but he doesn't kill anybody."

"What is his full name?" Don asked.

"Felix, I don't know more."

"Where did you meet him?"

"On the streets."

"When?"

"Don't know, two years ago? I ran away from the children's home, got into some trouble, he helped me."

"What kind of trouble?"

"Some guys robbed me, tried to take more than my clothes and the few dollars I had, Felix saved me. Without him I'd be dead now. He isn't a killer, he's a good man. As good as you can be when you live on the streets and make a living with singing songs on street corners. Like I said, he might steal but not kill."

"The evidence says different."

"Then the evidence is wrong."

"Evidence is never wrong."

"It is. Human can make it wrong when they don't consider every possibility."

"Are you saying your mother has no idea how to handle evidence?"

"No, mom is the best, but sometimes you need more than you have. Felix doesn't kill, he is innocent."

"We can't ignore the evidence over your gut feeling."

"Mom?"

"He's right, as much as I want to believe you and I do believe you when you tell me he helped you, but we can't let him go. At the moment he's the prime suspect." Sofia said sadly. She felt the concern of her son, when he told them about the teenagers trying to kill him, her heart ached and she felt like somebody tried to rip it out and she was very thankful, this young man saved Felix life. Nevertheless she couldn't let him go.

"It's not fair, he saved my life...I want to help him too."

"If you're really sure he's innocent..."

"I am."

"Okay. Then...gosh, I know you'll hate me for these words Don and I hate myself for them, but he saved Steve...see if Mel works his case pro-bono. It's a high profile case, when the press realizes he's arrested for killing eight women, is suspected to have killed in Boston too, they'll be all over the case."

"You're right, I don't like what you said." Don agreed.

"I do. Thanks mom." Steve hugged Sofia and kissed her cheek.

"He's innocent and he deserves a good lawyer."

"I hope he's innocent." Otherwise Sofia made their case just very, very complicated and harder. It was the mother, who suggested Mel, not the CSI. Was she a bad CSI because the heart of a mother was stronger? Or only human?

"You know when his lawyer boss takes the case it might become a nightmare for us?" Don asked when Steve left them.

"Yes and I take full responsibility for it."

"The evidence says he's the killer. We have him in Flemming's car, he has no alibi, the physical description fits and with his baby face and boyish charm he can make women trust him."

"You mean like he made me trust him?"

"He didn't make you trust him, his words didn't affect you, Steve's did. You trust your son, who has a good feeling for people, is a good judge of characters. Otherwise he hadn't opened up to Sara, but...when this Felix guy lives on the street, for a long time, it's likely he committed some crimes; more than stealing a bread."

"Whole-grain bread. He made the healthy choice. I know what you mean, we don't know anything about him, but when he killed eight women, why did he help Steve? Two years ago, it was the time Boston had their five victims. A man doesn't kill, flees to another city and helps a teenager, he doesn't know. Not if he doesn't have a plan and the way I understood Steve, they didn't have any contact afterwards. Or not in a way that suggests this Felix tried to make Steve his accomplice."

"Did he mention his name before?"

"No, never. I can ask Sara, if he mentioned Felix when she was around, but I can't recall a situation, he talked about him. Like he never told me about this incident with the teenager."

"We keep the conversation between us, the rest of the department doesn't have to know you suggested your son gets a shark lawyer for our prime suspect." Don said quietly.

"I take the responsibility for what I said."

"Which honors you, as your friend I'd rather not have you in the spotlight of negative conversations. Keep it between us, wait what happens and see what we can do with the information Steve gave us. Our suspects name is Felix, he was here two years ago, lives on the street, plays guitar on the streets. I'm going to send his photo out to the patrolmen and biker cops around the beaches. The Santa Monica Pier, 3rd Street Promenade, Hollywood and Sunset Boulevard are good places for musicians, a lot of people listening, give money. If he played there regularly, one of our colleagues has seen him."

"Thanks."

"You're not the only parent in this two people group, Sofia. If Susan comes to me one day and tells me, they guy I arrested saved her life and she believes he's innocent, I'd do the same. We trust our children, it's what parents do. Steve isn't my son, legally and biologically I've got nothing to do with him, but

he's the brother of my daughter, which makes him partly my son too."

"Does that make us bad cops?" Or in her case a bad CSI?

"At the moment Steve knows this guy better than anybody else we know. Lets wait what happens and continue to work the case. We do need more evidence, we have nothing more than the car, that ties this Felix to the killings. Every lawyer can argue with the same words, he said to us in interrogation. He found the car, took it. He's guilty of busting a car, not of murder. Get into the lab, find evidence, that ties him directly to the victim and I go and see detective Ricardo, see what she thinks about our suspect."

"Okay." He was right, the best thing they could do was continue with their work. And there was a lot of work waiting for them.

"You did what?" Greg starred in disbelieve at Sofia. She had told him about her suggestion to Steve, getting Mel as the lawyer for their prime suspect. It was the perfect example for: how to make your case even more complicated. "Why?"

"He believes this guy is innocent."

"Great, you stabbed us into the back."

"No, I didn't."

"Sofia, Mel Powers is a nightmare, if she takes the case, she'll make it an endless nightmare for us. She'll jump at every mistake we make or made, will twist our words and use whatever she needs against us."

"If this guy is guilty we'll prove it beyond unreasonable doubt. I won the Kinney case and she got a lot of money from him to defend him, this is a pro bono case."

"To her losing isn't an option, no matter in which kind of case."

"To me losing isn't an option neither. If this Felix killed our women, we will send him to jail. If he doesn't he deserves a lawyer, who fights for him. It wouldn't be the first time the first best suspect gets convicted because he couldn't afford a lawyer and nobody looked for the real killer after the case was officially closed."

"My only hope is Mel Powers is too busy to take the case." He shook his head again.

"Do we have some evidence, that tells us, he killed them?"

"His prints are on the steering wheel."

"Anywhere else?"

"The fast food bag and cups belong to him too. I found his prints on them, guess he threw them in the back when he finished his menu, left the cup when he flee the scene."

"That confirms he drove the car, but not that he killed her. What about the trunk?" They worked the car yesterday, Sofia knew what they found, nevertheless she wanted to hear it, to rearrange her thoughts.

"No, nothing. If he abducted Charlene in her own car, he wore gloves or made her open the trunk. I doubt he had her on the backseat, tied up or unconscious."

"Why wear gloves to open the trunk and not to drive the car? Makes no sense. Plus we have the evidence the car was driven without the keys, it supports his story."

"You start to sound like a lawyer."

"No, like a CSI. The only fingerprints we found were Charlene's. There was no trace of Angela Thorne in the car. Did he abduct her in her own car? If so, where is the car? Did he leave it somewhere? Kept it hidden? Police is looking for it, but hasn't found it. What about our new victim? Do we have her name yet?"

"No, she's not reported missing."

"Damn, that makes it more complicated. I will see Cherry soon, Don talks to the detective from Boston, who should be here by now."

"I compared the pants to the others, same brand, also two sizes too big, I wonder if he has a lot of pants in different sizes at home or if he buys them after he after he abducted the women. They didn't have the same size."

"The only thing our victims have in common is they're women in their twenties." Victim number three was African-American, Angela Thorne was Latina, Charlene Flemming Caucasian. Interracial killings and rapes weren't often, usually the killer stuck to his race. With their three victims they couldn't say which race the killer was.

"Yeah. Did he kill interracial in Boston too?"

"Yes, two Caucasians, two African-Americans and one Asian woman."

"What do you think about the suspect? What do your guts tell you?"

"Not guilty. But I might have said the same about a young Ted Bundy. They can be charming. Then again, a Bundy had never helped a teenager, he had enjoyed his pain."

"He was charming?"

"He hit on me, which pissed Don off."

"It didn't piss you off?"

"I don't care when a suspect hits on me, they try everything to get away with what they did."

"True. I continue with what we found at the crime scene, a few things are definitely from our witnesses."

"And I see Cherry, it's after lunch and I was allowed to come down to see her after lunch."

"Did you have lunch?"

"With my son, a sandwich."

"Good. At least one good thing Steve did today."

"It's not his fault I suggested a lawyer for our suspect."

"He made you believe this guy is innocent."

"I see Cherry." Sofia wouldn't start this discussion again. She did make their case more complicated and harder when Mel agreed, but if this man was innocent, she was the one, who could get him out, no matter what the press said.

Cherry smiled when she saw Sofia coming into the morgue.

"You really waited until after lunch, I'm impressed."

"If I annoy you, you aren't giving me answers. Besides I promised my fiancé to have lunch."

"She's a good influence on you. I saw your son too."

"He brought me a bill."

"Oh, not nice."

"Doctors give you bills otherwise they don't help you, right doctor?"

"I never wrote a bill to one of my patients. Ready to hear about my latest?"

"Yes."

"First of all, did you find out her name?"

"No, her prints aren't in the system and she wasn't reported missing."

"I hate calling them Jane Doe." Cherry sighed. "Takes some of their dignity away. Anyway, my guess is she's between twenty-four and twenty-six, five foot five, one hundred twenty pounds. There is a small tattoo on her pelvis, a dragon. If it's gang related I haven't seen it on any victim before. She took care of herself, I sent her dental records out, maybe we get her name this way because she did have some dental work done.

He cut her throat from behind, the same like with the other two. Or seven, I had the chance to talk to the ME from Boston, a doctor Island, she's good and her documents were more than accurate. Like the others she was raped postmortem, her middle finger was cut off with the same kind of knife. He also used this type of knife in Boston, as he also raped them there postmortem.

Did you talk to the suspect?"

"Yes."

"Did he confess?"

"No, he says he never killed somebody, found the car and busted it. Claimed, he never saw one of the victims, doesn't know them."

"Why can't they just confess to what they did? Or do you think he didn't do it?"

"I don't know, my guts didn't say he's a killer. Same says my son."

"Steve knows him?"

"He saved his life two years ago."

"That doesn't mean he is no killer, Sofia."

"I know. We can prove he was in the car, he was in there after Charlene Flemming, his prints are over hers, but we have nothing else that links him to her or any other victim. We don't have his prints somewhere else, on the steering wheel and the driver's door. Whoever killed these eight women left nothing behind of himself, why would he leave his prints on the car when he left it behind? All he had to do was wipe the areas he touched clean, no big deal. He wasn't in a hurry after he escaped the police."

"It's better to get convicted for busting a car than killing eight women. His defense can be, if he was the killer, he had wiped the prints away."

"I know." And she was sure Mel would use this argument too.

"We let the jury discuss it unless you find evidence to nail him to the women."

"Does that mean you have nothing on the killer?"

"He was careful like the seven times before. What tells me, he can't have any body hair, otherwise I had found it. Clean shaved male over five foot seven. How hairy is our suspect upstairs?"

"Uhm...I didn't check him, you're the doctor!"

"Did you see any body hair?"

"On his arms, yes. Why don't you check him?"

"I let that a male colleague do but I doubt he shaved all his hair except the arms. I assume he doesn't wear a wig?"

"No, his hair looked real."

"So do good wigs, I let it check too. Right now I think our killer is cleaned shaved. Everywhere."

"Okay. I put it on the list. When was her TOD?"

"Between five and seven yesterday afternoon. I did find something in her throat, I haven't seen in the other two." Cherry went to her computer and showed Sofia a photo.

"It's...?"

"An allergic reaction."

"To?"

"Nuts. She must have known about it, it's nothing you can ignore."

"So the killer gave her nuts or something with nuts."

"Yes."

"Did it kill her?"

"No, I couldn't find an injection mark, so he didn't use a cortisone injection. Probably he served her some food with a hint of nuts, enough to show it in her throat, gave her some trouble breathing, but not kill her She didn't suffocate, she died because he slashed her throat. No accident, murder."

"Okay, his lawyer can't use it to his advance. Anything else? Anything you can give me that identifies her killer? Something special about him?"

"No."

"Great, that means I go to Don and this detective from Boston and tell them, we have three dead bodies, one suspect in custody and nothing, that points toward one specific person. It can be almost anybody; still including women?"

"No male DNA, it can still be a woman."

"You know how to make my day more...you make it a challenge."

"Don't you like challenges?"

"I'll marry one...did I say that loud?" Sofia asked half amused, half shocked.

"You did." Cherry chuckled. "I won't tell her, doctor - CSI confidence. Whatever happens in here, whatever is said in here, isn't going out to civilians. You're safe."

"Thanks." Yes, Sara was her challenge, a challenge she mastered. The most beautiful challenge she ever had in her life.

"Detective Ricardo, this is CSI Curtis." Don introduced the dark haired woman to Sofia.

"Pleasure to meet you." The blonde answered.

"Likewise. Detective Flack told me you were a lieutenant before. Why did you change jobs?"

"Yes, before this happened." She pointed to her left leg.

"You're not a good cop when you can't chase a suspect."

"Bugger. Did it happen on duty?"

"The Hollywood and Highland explosion."

"I heard about it. I mean, everybody did. Did they tell you to resign?"

"No, they offered me a desk, I prefer to be a CSI and work outside. Better a CSI than a desk cop."

"True. Detective Flack told me the suspect lawyered up. To be honest I'm surprise to find such a young man. We estimated his age higher, late thirties."

"His young age is a surprise, that's right." Sofia agreed with the detective from Boston. "But he's the only one we can connect to one of the victims and so far he didn't give us an alibi."

"There's no record, I sent his photo to my colleagues in Boston, maybe one saw him there in the city. It's a long time ago, I

doubt somebody can remember him. The only physical evidence are his prints on the steering wheel and the door?"

"Yes."

A knock on the door let the three turn. Waiting there was Mel, her eyes on Don, ignoring Sofia.

"I want to see my client."

"Who is your client?"

"The young man you accuse of murder. Your Reservoir Killer."

"Reservoir Killer?" Don furrowed his brows.

"It's what the press calls him. Didn't you watch the latest news? He's top story. LAPD caught suspect of the Reservoir killings. I want to see him."

"Why am I not surprised you jumped at the chance to get your face into TV cameras." Detective Ricardo said to Mel.

"Welcome to sunny Los Angeles, detective Ricardo. You being here tells me there's a connection to one of your cases in Boston. Care to share?"

"Nope."

"I'll find out anyway. My client?"

"Down the hall, room seven. Don't stumble over your own ego, counselor."

"Never detective, never. I know how to move smoothly." Mel grinned and left.

Sofia felt guilty for getting her into the car. Was there the hope the lawyer would reject the request of her young helper, Sofia's son, she should have known her son was good in getting what he wanted. Plus the chance of a high media case was always interesting for Mel. Now she was Sofia's opponent; again.

"How do you know Mel Powers?"

"She was the lawyer of a man I arrested for murdering an opponent. She got him free. Bitch. It was clear she'd jump the chance to get her face into cameras again. Reservoir Killer? How did the press find out?"

"Our victim today was found by a hiker. You can asked them not to talk about what they saw, when their victim minutes of fame wave, most of them jump at it." Don sighed, leaving out the part of Steve.

"Great, with her around the case gets more difficult. After the press has a name for our killer, do we have the name of the latest victim?"

"No, her prints are not in the system."

"Cherry, our medical examiner, says she had some dental work done and tries to get the name this way." Sofia informed them.

"What else did she say?"

"Not much new." The blonde summarized her conversation with the medical examiner.

"Basically we have nothing to hold him?" Ricardo asked.

"He's the prime suspect." There was no evidence in the case, that pointed to somebody else than this Felix. Sofia knew they didn't have much, but what they had played into their hands.

"All he needs is the right judge, he has the right lawyer and he's free. Powers knows a lot of judges and I'm sure she knows how to get what she wants. I wonder when we can talk to him again."

"I bet she talks for him, makes him shut up and we get nothing."

"We need his DNA. Did you get a warrant for it?"

"We're working on it."

"Powers will work against it."

"We're better. We have to."

When Sara came home she found Steve in the garden, his Spanish book on his lap, asleep. Satisfied her son started to learn for school again, she went into the kitchen. Her in-laws would be over in a few minutes, with her daughter. Time to start the coffee and get some cookies. It was half past four, she was more than on time as she had left Angeles National Forest at four. No new fires, no body close to her, only happy people. And reporters. They came to Bouquet Reservoir, took photos, tried to get answers from her and her colleagues and went to the crime scenes. On her way home she heard the news about the case, heard about the name, the press gave the suspect in custody. And she knew it was almost impossible for Sofia to come home on time today.

"Sleepy Beauty is awake, your vocabularies must have been very interesting." She teased her son when she came back into the garden with a coffee and a coke for him.

"I knew my mother has a cold drink for me. Thanks."

"You're welcome. How was work?"

"I didn't work...did you not talk to mom?"

"Not since noon. Why? Is she all right?" There was this fear again. The same fear she felt years ago when she learnt about Sofia's accident at the Hollywood and Highland Center, when she got told her lover was in coma and it wasn't sure she'd survive.

"Yes, she did have lunch, I was there."

"What were you doing at the lab?"

"My boss sent me to the dentist after she found out I had toothache."

"I thought you're old enough to do these things yourself."

"Well...there were some many other things to do and I hoped I could handle it in another way, with tips from the internet. Didn't work out, Tanya laughed at me and made the pain disappear. She's the best."

"Did you fall for her again? What about Burrito Girl?"

"No, I don't have a crush on Tanya, I like her, she's sexy and she's my Spanish teacher. Burrito Girl is...out."

"Who is in?"

"There's a cute chick working at the dental surgery. I've to ask Tanya about her."

"A cute chick works there? This chick must be a little bit older than you are?"

"Is that a problem, mom?"

"Not for me." Sara smiled. Her son just told her about a girl he liked. The first time he shared this kind of information before she knew there was somebody special. Another sign of trust and the special bond they had.

"Good. To get back to your question, I had a dentist bill and brought it to mom. They arrested somebody."

"The man, who drove the car of the first victim and fled in it yesterday."

"He's innocent."

"How do you know?"

"Felix saved my life two years ago, he's musician, might steal food and cars for a joyride, but he is no killer."

"Wait a moment, did you tell Sofia?"

"Of course."

"And?" Somehow Sara knew this wasn't just any information for her fiancé.

"She told me if I'm really sure he's innocent I better get him a lawyer. Which I did, Mel works his case, pro bono. It will help Felix to get out of jail and gives me more vacation days than I wanted. As long as Mel works the case I can't work for her. Our deal is, when she catches a case Sofia or Don are involved in, I don't work for her. Ethical reasons."

"She's right...Sofia won't like to have her in the case."

"No, as a CSI she can't think of somebody worse, as my mother she feels obligated to help the man, who saved me."

"What did he do?"

"I ran away - again - and got myself into trouble with some teens from a gang. They wanted my money, my life and whatever else I had, Felix stopped them."

"And you're sure he isn't a killer?"

"Very sure. He's not the Reservoir Killer; which is a pretty stupid name. As far as I know the reservoir is still alive."

"It is. Okay, Mel works a case against Sofia, who had the idea to get her into the case. Complicated. I wonder what they make out of it."

"As long as they don't kill each other."

"If somebody dies it's your boss, your mom has a gun."

"Did you fight with Mel last night?"

"No, actually we managed to have an adult conversation." Sara laughed. "Satisfied?"

"Very. Are Jules and the kids coming over too?"

"No, Jules meets her doctor friends today, your grandparents are here any second." The brunette made a grimace. The smart and perfect doctor friends. Nightmare club, as she called them the last time she had to see them. After all this time she still hated them, still felt like she was punished big time when she had to spend an evening with them.

"Oh, her doctor friends, the ones, you don't like."

"I like them just as much as I like toothache. Your dentist lover also can't stand them." She had been so glad when she found out Jules's cousin - actually both of them - were nicer than the therapist's friends.

"Tanya isn't my dentist lover. She's my tutor. Grow up, mom."

"Sorry son, I forgot the new chick...what's her name and is she an assistant?"

"Her name is Marlene and she works at reception during the holidays."

"I don't think I saw her before."

"Me neither. Oh, I made an appointment for you, Tanya said you forgot it the last time and we decided you have one in October, after Hawaii, the weddings, when there's less work at the forest and you have the time to look after yourself."

"Thanks, I don't know what I would have done without a new dentist appointment."

"Wait for Tanya to tell you to see her. She doesn't forget you."

"I wonder if one of Jules's doctor friends go to Tanya's surgery."

"Hah, if they do she'll enjoy it and let them suffer. But I assume as she doesn't like them, they're not that keen about her. You and Tanya are too cool for these old-fashioned and boring doctors. I wonder what Jules likes about them."

"They're friends since high school, college and university. They must have at least one positive attribute." At least Sara hoped they did. So far she didn't find any, but Jules was a psychologist, she could look into people's head, she had to see more than Sara.

It was five when Mel allowed Sofia, Don and detective Ricardo to meet her and her client. The blonde was tensed, would the lawyer mention it was her son, who got her here? So far she and Don didn't tell detective Ricardo about it, after it was obvious the Boston detective knew the lawyer and wasn't one of her fans, it was even better to leave out this little detail.

"I want you to release my client." Mel started without wasting any time on small talk.

"He's our prime suspect." Don refused.

"He admits he drove the car after he stole it from Sunset Boulevard. If you have to arrest him, arrest him for that and we can work on that."

"It wasn't just any car, it was the car of our first victim, Charlene Flemming."

"The real killer, who is still out there while you waste time on my client, took the car with him, left it there. This way if a witness saw her leave with him, all they can give you is her car, not his. Unfortunately you don't have a witness or a video of Miss Flemming leaving with her killer because then you'd know it's not my client."

"Did you find his fingerprints somewhere else than on the steering wheel and the door? The parts anybody touches when he takes a car for a joyride?"

"We're still investigating the cases."

"You don't have anything else on him. I had a look at your reports from two years ago, detective Ricardo." Mel turned towards the other detective. "In your reports you suspect a male in his late thirties, my client is in his late twenties."

"We had no evidence about the age, it was a guess."

"A guess, that might be right. It wasn't my client, who killed those five women in Boston two years ago. He was in Los Angeles."

"He couldn't provide any evidence of this."

Oh, he had an eye witness, Steve, Sofia thought. Her own son saw him here, it was around the time when the killings in Boston stopped, Steve couldn't give her an exact date, it was possible this Felix was their killer, who just arrived in L.A. and helped for whatever reasons Steve or he had been here all the time. She couldn't prove neither one of these theories.

"He lived with a young woman together, my assistant is working to get her statement, it won't take long and you have a witness, who will tell you, my client was here."

"Does your client have a full name? All we got was his first name." Don grumbled.

"Fisher and before you ask, he doesn't have an ID or driver's license. We get these too. For today I want you to release him."

"He has no ID, no workplace, no home, he stays. Otherwise we'll never see him again. Don't forget, he might have two more women in his hands."

"Your killer has two more women in his hands, my client doesn't."

"If you had any evidence proving he's innocent, you would have shown it by now. He stays and if you want to change it, you need a judge." Don got up. "He stays. You can continue your counseling, when you're done, he goes into a cell."

"The last word isn't spoken about this."

"For now it is." Don won the first round.

Sofia was glad she made it home almost on time. It was a little bit after six when she opened the door and was greeted by both dogs, who almost made her fall down, so happily was their greeting.

"Hi guys, how are you? Did you miss your bad mommy? I'm sorry, I should spend more time with you...like I should spend more time with the rest of my family. I promise the next day off will be spend with you, we go to the ocean, you can swim, we have a picnic and I play with you."

Rantanplan licked her face while Scooby threw himself on his back and offered his belly to his owner. Time to rub his belly, make up for all the hours, he had to be without her. Sitting on the hardwood floor, the blonde rubbed Rantanplan's back and Scooby's belly. Before she met the rest of her family she had to give her dogs a few moments. They deserved it and many more.

"What are you doing on the floor?" Marie stepped into the hallway and looked at her daughter on the floor.

"I spend a few moments with my dogs, who see even less than the rest of my family does."

"You're late."

"I know, I'm sorry."

"You worked over ten hours."

"I'm also sorry for that."

"Doctor Bendler wants to see you tomorrow."

"What? Why?"

"Because she's a doctor and doesn't like the fact you spurn your health. She'll be here at four, be on time, she doesn't like it when people let her wait."

"Did Sara call her?"

"No, I did. You get married soon, when you go on like this you can rebook your tickets, instead of Hawaii you'll go to hospital. Not only because of your leg but the rest of your body won't continue to function when you treat it like dirt."

"Mom..."

"No, you listen and do what I tell you. You see doctor Bendler tomorrow and when she tells you to step back a little bit, you will do it."

"I'm old enough..."

"We're not debating your age, we're talking about your ability to look after yourself. From what I see you lack in this, you need to learn how to get a balance of your private and work life."

"Says the captain, who lived for her job for over forty years."

"I did and overstepped a few lines, that's why I know what I'm talking about. Your fiancé worries about you, your daughter needs you healthy, your job is important, I don't question it, your health and family is more important."

"We might have the killer."

"Right now I care about my daughter and not a killer. Will you see doctor Bendler tomorrow? For a full check-up?"

"Yes." It wasn't like she had a choice. Her mother decided it, called the doctor and when Sofia didn't show up, she knew would be in trouble. Rightly.

"Good. Now get up, clean yourself and see the rest of your family. Scooby, Rantanplan, you come with me." Not that happy about being called away from Sofia the dogs followed Marie. In their eyes the evening started good and there was no reason to stop what their owner was doing.

"I'm sorry I'm late." Sofia greeted her family, pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "Again. I know I promised to come home earlier..."

"You're almost on time."

"Almost."

"I count the lunch break with our son so you're on time."

"Thanks." Sofia kept Sara in her arm and sat down. "Smells good."

"You're lucky, your father knew you'd be late and made an aperitif for us and you're just in time for the curry."

"I know law enforcement people for a few years, dinner is never served on time with one on duty. How was your day, darling?"

"Not perfect."

"What happened to Felix?" Steve asked.

"He's in custody."

"He's innocent."

"No work at dinner, please." Marc stopped them. "You can talk about it later."

"There's nothing more to say. How is my baby girl?"

"She had an exciting day, we went to see Louise at the day care, your daughter was very interested in all the other babies."

"Maybe we should let her to daycare once or twice a week; if that's okay for you, Marie and Marc." Sara suggested. She saw the video Marc made from Susan at the day care and saw how her daughter liked to be surrounded by other babies.

"You're her parents, it's your decision."

"She's your granddaughter, you came her to be with her. If you want her around every day, she stays with you."

"Sara, we should decide what's best for Susan. From what I saw today, it might be a little day care experience."

"Give her grandparents two days off every week."

"Who said we won't take her there and bring her back home? We can take Louise, Eric and Jorja too. I'm sure they'll all enjoy some time in our garden before their busy parents come home. I could build a few things for them." Marc smiled.

"A little playground? The twins have one at her grandparent's place. They love it."

"We can have that too, what do you think, Marie?"

"I think we can build a children's paradise. What do you want, Steve? A slide? A swing?"

"A pool."

"A pool? You spent too much time with this rich guy."

"You asked what I want, it's a pool. Everything else is for babies."

"We make a baby playground, you can be the babysitter. You have time on your hands now."

"No, I don't. I've to prepare myself for school. Granddad and me will meet twice a week for history, Tanya helps me twice with Spanish and some biology and chemistry stuff. In return I organize her lunch during the week and wash her car."

"Can't you do the same with her dentist bill?" Sofia asked. Why did she have to pay for Steve when he and Tanya had their own payment system?

"No, the dentist bill is for my mothers."

"Thanks, we really appreciate it."

"You're welcome." Steve grinned. "Children are expensive, didn't your parents tell you?"

"What they forgot to tell me was how cheeky they can be."

"I bet you weren't better any better when you were my age."

"Mom, you are not supposed to say a single word now!" Sofia stopped her mother before she could comment on Steve's last sentence. Yes, there were a lot of things the older woman could tell, but this wasn't the time nor the place to do so. Some things had to be kept as a secret.

It wasn't yet nine when Sara and Sofia went to bed. Very early, even for them having to get up early in the morning. After dinner they went with the dogs and Susan out for a walk around the reservoir while Sofia's parents took care of the dishes.

"Where are you working tomorrow?"

"Bouquet Reservoir for the rest of the week. Saturday Henry is back and Shane and I can go back to our old area. Closer to home."

"When our killer keeps his rhythm we don't find a new body tomorrow. Enough time to answer all the open questions, like the name of the latest victim. And if we have our killer in custody everything is over."

"You don't believe this young man is the killer."

"No."

"Because Steve says so?"

"It's one reason. The other is, we have no evidence, that tells us, he lies. He admitted to took the car to a joyride, we found

his prints exactly where you expect them to be after a joyride. Nowhere else."

"Mel tries everything to get him out?"

"Of course, but this guy has no ID, no workplace, no home, no judge will let him walk. Leave alone he can't afford bail."

"You're still investigating the case, aren't you?"

"I'm working on evidence, we want to know the name, if he's innocent, we need to find whoever is the killer."

"How is the detective from Boston?"

"I like her attitude, she doesn't like Mel, worked a case with her and when she finds out it's my fault Mel is in the case, she'll kill me. I think you'd like detective Ricardo."

"Not when she kills you or threatens you in any way."

"I'm better."

"I know how to hide her body."

"So do I. Lets work together and we get away with everything."

The blonde pulled the brunette into her arms and kissed her.

"Our son has a new crush."

"Really? Whom? What happened to Burrito Girl?"

"She's out. The receptionist at Tanya's surgery is the one now. He thinks she's cute and wants to ask Tanya all sort of things about her."

"He told you this?"

"Yes." Sara grinned. "He said a cute chick works there and I mentioned, this cute chick has to be a little bit older than he is, which he only comments with the question, if that's a problem for me. Lea was right, Steve likes women, who are older than he is."

"How much older?"

"I have no idea. We should interview Tanya about her too."

"Or go there and meet her ourselves. Do you think he'll ask her out?"

"Depends on what Tanya says about her, maybe she has a boyfriend."

"So? Steve is the better choice, he's our son. Poor Lea."

"They're friends."

"Yes, but when he's involved with somebody, he hasn't got this much time for her anymore."

"I'm sure they work something out. How will we act when he brings his girlfriend home? Will we let her stay here?"

"Uhm, I want to know how old she is and what her parents say about this...gosh, I sound so damn old-fashioned." The blonde grumbled. She almost sounded like her own parents. Was it important how old Steve's girlfriend was? What her parents thought about them? She wanted her son happy and when this girl made him happy...and then there was the mother and the cop, who told her, it did matter how old she was and what the parents said. He wasn't eighteen, they had no idea how old she was, but it wasn't legal for him to have sex.

"No, you sound like a cop. When her parents don't want them to be together, she can get in trouble. He's the younger one in the relationship. Apparently."

"We have to see our dentist. Can you squeeze it in your schedule for tomorrow?"

"Hardly."

"Okay, I try it. When I leave at three, make a beeline to Tanya, I'm here on time. Mom organized doctor Bendler for me and I better make sure I'm on time. Otherwise they'll join forces and there's no army in the world, that can help me then."

"Marie told me about the appointment. I agree with her."

"No surprise."

"You should take better care of yourself, Sofia."

"I promised I will and I will see my doctor tomorrow. The leg is fine, no pain, no problems."

"It's supposed to stay like this."

"It will. Your bride will walk with her sexy swagger on our wedding day and won't limp."

"Good, this sexy Curtis swagger makes me hot. I see your sexy ass and hips sway in your wedding dress and I have you undressed before sunset."

"What about dinner with our kids?"

"We'll have dinner with them; after I had you as my afternoon snack." Sara slipped onto her lover. "I want you."

"Now or then?"

"Both times." Sara's mouth crashed on Sofia's. She wanted her lover all the time, every day. Her life was only perfect when she was with Sofia, felt her, kissed her.

Wednesday, August 7th

The electric sunlight woke Sofia up. Since one week she and Sofia had a wake-up light, that provided a sunrise in their room, helped them to wake up before the alarm clock got them out of their dreams. By four-thirty their room was bathed in bright light, like the sun shone into their room.

"It's a difference to wake up with this light, much nicer than with the alarm clock." Sara said, her eyes on the blonde. She woke up a minute ago, used the time to watch how her lover woke up. What a beautiful sight. Like an awakening angel.

"Yes, a very nice present we made ourselves. How about another one?"

"Like what?"

"Like we call in sick and stay in bed the whole day. Stomach bug."

"Stomach bug from your father's curry? Nobody believes that and Don knows you're only acting."

"He's already covering for me, I can't make him lie. Damn it. So work it is?"

"Work it is. A short day for you."

"Yes, don't worry I will be here by four. When will you be back?"

"I try to leave at four, hard to say if it's realistic. Depends on the weather and if we find more dead bodies in our forest."

"Today should be a day without a new DB, he dumps them every two days, means we have to find him today otherwise he'll kill somebody else tonight. Right now we don't even have the name of his latest victim."

"You find it out today. Like you'll find out who this cute girl is, our son is interested in."

"Oh yes! Shall we ask him about her?"

"No, we investigate and when he shares with us, we have a background knowledge, know if we approve to his crush or if we think it's better when he looks for somebody else. Not that it matters to him, when he likes her, there's nothing we can do."

"As a good judge of character she has to be nice. I hope the same for his killer friend."

"Killer friend? Not guilty until proven guilty, my dear." Sara smiled thinly. "Let's hope he is innocent for the sake of our son. And that Don arrests the real killer today before he can hurt anybody else."

"Amen." Sofia doubted their hopes and wishes became true. With no evidence giving them any clues about the killer, they needed a huge coincidence to catch the killer before he could kill the next woman tonight.

"Why are you awake? You don't work." Surprised Sofia looked up when Steve came downstairs.

"Because I take my stink bomb sister to our grandparents and help granddad with the playground. He doesn't want to go shopping alone because he's afraid when he buys the wrong stuff grandma will tell him off. This way we can share the trouble. Plus whenever you go shopping with grandparents they buy something for you. I'm sure I can talk granddad into ice cream or a burger."

"He might buy ice cream, not a burger. But if you help him he prepares a burger for you on the barbecue, which is much better than any burger you can buy."

"True. When do you go to work?"

"At seven."

"Be back home on time."

"Yes mom, I will. Will you stay the whole day with your grandparents?"

"No, only for the shopping in the morning, I meet Lea in her lunch break. Do you want to join me, baby sis?" He picked up Susan and kissed her. "Oh, there's a little bit of milk left in the corner of your mouth. Is it for bad times? Or a memory of our mother?"

"I really hope it doesn't do Susan any harm that I don't breastfeed her all the times. Twice a day, there isn't more time for being a walking milk bar. Sorry to tell you, baby daughter, your mothers have both to work otherwise we can't pay our bills. You do love us, don't you?"

"Of course she does. I have to eat all the time myself and love you." Steve grinned.

"Honey, you're fifteen, anything else would worry me."

"Why do you worry? What did he do?" Tanya came into the kitchen? "How are your teeth?"

"Fine. Thanks."

"You answered very fast, are you sure you're fine?"

"Yes! Stay away from my mouth."

"Not many men say this - unless I'm holding a drill in my hands. Are you off to work?"

"No, I stay with my sister, mom and Mel share a case, I have to stay at home today. By tomorrow everybody will know Felix is innocent and I can go back to work. We spend the day with our grandparents, have lunch with Lea and enjoy the sunshine, right Susan?"

"Sounds nice. Take your Spanish book with you."

"Claro que sí."

"And is there some curry left?"

"It is. Why? Don't tell me you want curry for breakfast."

"No, for lunch. Why don't you bring me some curry for lunch? As a part of your payment to me?"

"Sure. Your surgery is on our way to Lea."

It was on the tip of Sofia's tongue to ask about the cute reception girl. Tanya was here, she could give her - them - some answers. But would Steve like the fact his mother asked about his crush? Probably not.

"Marlene is there too."

Hah, that was her sign. Now Tanya started it and Sofia could, as a mother who is interested in the life of her son, ask questions.

"Who's Marlene?"

"She doesn't know? Sorry." Tanya said.

"Mom, you know who she is, I'm sure mom told you about the cute girl, you guys talk about those things. How much do you know?"

"Honey, I know you, it was obvious you like her. Sexy brunette, just what you want." Tanya chuckled.

"Like Burrito Girl?"

"Or a sexy dentist."

"Tell me about Marlene, who is she? Is she new? I haven't seen her before." Sofia asked Tanya.

"She's the daughter of my boss."

"Oh."

"Yes, oh. Sixteen, goes to Hollywood High, her dad offered her to work at the surgery during the holidays. She's a nice girl with - and you won't like that - a boyfriend."

"Let me guess: football player?"

"No, I don't think so. Sailor. His dad, another doctor, owns a boat and he goes on sailing trips with her."

"Great, mom, I need a yacht."

"Sure, we get you one, together with the pool, the tennis court and all the other things you need. And then you wake up and realize, you ended with two poor mothers and not rich parents."

"My moms love me, that makes me rich." He got his arm around Sofia's waist. "If she likes money she isn't the right one for me."

"With your charm you can change her mind."

"Thanks. She didn't seem to be interested."

"We need to get her attention to you. I check how happy she is with her BF, what she hates about him."

"Nothing?"

"There's always something you hate about your boyfriend."

"What do you hate about me?" Don asked when he came into the kitchen and heard Tanya's last sentence.

"Everything, you're little screwed up cheating fucker..."

"Language please!" Sofia reprinted the dentist.

"She's such a bad sport, women are always, Steve. Remember this, when you want a woman happy, let her win. Otherwise you're a bad guy. But don't let her win too obvious, otherwise she gets angry too. They're so complicated, almost never satisfied with what you do."

"Don't you have work to do?"

"I do. Lieutenant Curtis, are you coming with me?"

"Yes. You take care of your sister?"

"Of course, like I said, I take her over to our grandparents. Go and catch the Reservoir Killer, Felix is innocent."

"We see about that." Sofia kissed Steve's and Susan's cheek. Time to leave her children and go back to work. With some luck, no with a lot of luck, they could close the case today.

"Captain!" Shane stood straight and saluted to Marie, who walked down to the little picnic area he and Sara worked at. Somebody had sprayed graffiti on them, some racist slogans and the rangers wanted them removed before families came here.

"Ranger, move."

"Thanks."

"Hey Marie and oh, my baby girl, hey Sue, did you miss your mommy?" Sara took Susan in her arms and kissed her.

"She did and so I took her to a little trip. Or first I thought it's a little trip, until I found out you're not in your area, you're up here."

"Yeah, William thought when there're more bodies I'm best around, secure the scenes."

"Smart man, unfortunately the last woman wasn't found here. Sofia told me how much she missed your good work."

"They chased the killer away. So many bad people in the world, lucky you can be with your grandmother, she takes very good care of you while you have fun. It's great to be with grandma, isn't it?" Susan smiled and laughed, playing with Sara's hair.

"She'll like the playground Marc and Steve build for her. They took off an hour ago, I wonder with what they come back. Slide, swing, sand-box."

"Everything a child enjoys, grow-up fast, Susan, so many things are waiting for you."

"Like parents, who are legally married."

"One day."

"Soon." Marie pulled an envelope out of her pocket. "I stopped at your place to get her hat and found the mail. You should check this one, I've got a pretty good feeling about it."

Sara took the envelope and stopped breathing. City council. This could be their marriage license. This could be the paper, they've been waiting for this long. With trembling fingers she torn the envelope apart and pulled out the document.

"Oh my god. Oh my god. It is it! It's the license! We can get married!" She hugged Marie and kissed her happily. "Sofia and I can get married, we're having our marriage license. Your

parents will become a legal couple, your grandmother will be my mother-in-law now."

"I am your mother-in-law already. Just without law."

"Now you can be it with law. I have to tell Sofia!"

"You better call her, give me my granddaughter."

"We'll get married!" Sara pulled her cell phone out of her pocket, excited to bring her lover the great news. They'd get married soon. There was nothing in their way anymore.

"Hey, are you missing me?" The blonde's voice came out of the phone.

"Always. I've got news for you."

"Good one?"

"Pretty good ones."

"I can use some good news, what is it?"

"Your mother just stopped by with our daughter, they found a letter at home and this letter says we can get married. Sofia, I've got our marriage license in my hands!" She almost yelled the last words, it was so exciting, so wonderful, brilliant, so...unbelievable.

"Seriously?"

"Yes! We have it! We can get married."

"Wow, it's wow...I...I don't know what to say."

"Say I do."

"I do! I do! I do! You'll be mine."

"I'm already yours." Gosh, it sounded so perfect when Sofia said I do. Sara could image how it sounded when they get married, she could picture them, promising each other to love and be together for the rest of their lives.

"We need somebody to marry us...there has to be somebody around, who can marry us and isn't booked for the next weeks or in vacation. I don't want to wait, I want to marry you as soon as possible."

"Ditto. We have to look for somebody tonight, call them tomorrow. The city council. Somebody has to have time for us."

"We'll find somebody. Gosh, I'm so...the day just got perfect. I love you."

"I love you too and soon I put a ring on your finger."

"Did you choose my wedding ring already?"

"I did. What about you?"

"It's at a safe place."

"So we're good to get married. Perfect. All we need is a judge, we'll find one before our Hawaii trip. We got the license, we make the rest too. And then Hawaii is our honeymoon trip with a bonus wedding."

"Honey, I love, I'd marry you every day."

"Ditto. Now I want to go home and see you there, celebrate with you."

"I try to be back home as soon as possible. Shall I bring some sparkling wine?"

"I take care of it, just come home and be ready for a long night with your future wife."

"I am."

"Good. As much as I hate it, I have to continue so I can go home on time. I love you more than words can say, my wife."

"I love you more, my wife. See you tonight." Sara ended the call with a wide smile on her face. They'd get married! Their marriage license was here, in her hands. Again and again she starred at the document, read the words, like she feared they'd change if she didn't pay enough attention.

"I feel sick!" Shane said.

"You have no idea about love, go and clean the bench." Marie ordered. "I'm glad you've got the license."

"All we need is somebody to wed us, we really want to get married before our trip to Hawaii, use it as our honeymoon."

"Let your mother-in-law handle this problem; if you want."

"How?"

"I'll find a way to get you and Sofia married within the next two weeks. Don takes Susan to New York on Saturday, right?"

"Yes."

"How about a wedding next Sunday? Gives you some time between your wedding here and the trip to Hawaii."

"A wedding on Sunday?"

"Not the perfect day for you to ask for a day off, I know, but most of your friends have the day off and you can have a party...no wait, you wanted a party in September."

Yes, they wanted a party, but when they could get married, legally married, and celebrated two weeks later, it was strange, wasn't it?

"Can I talk about it with Sofia?"

"I want you to talk about it with her. It's your wedding, you have to make it when and how you want it. You both want it. Talk with her about it tonight, if you decide you want the wedding next Sunday let me now and I will make it happen. Let me worry about how I do it, I always find a way."

That was true. When Marie wanted something she got it, no matter how hard it was, no matter what she had to do. When she promised Sara they could get married next Sunday, in less than two weeks, they'd get married then and not a day later.

They had a marriage license. There was nothing in their way to a legal marriage. They were where they wanted to be for a long, long time. Probably always. Not that she had always loved Sara, but when she fell in love with her, she wanted it to be forever, not as an affair for a while. Her Sara. Her challenge. Her wife. Soon.

"You smile like you just found the tiny piece of evidence we need to close the case." Greg said when she saw his friend standing in front of the table, starrng at something.

"Better." She jumped into his arms. "I'll get married. The marriage license arrived, Sara and me can get married. And when we find a judge we can get married before we go to Hawaii, which means, I could be legally married within this month, within the next weeks, maybe days. No, not days but...soon!"

"Really? Congratulation." He kissed her cheek. "Finally. You waited for so long. Now nothing can get in your way, grab the woman and make her yours."

"I will. Greg, I'm so happy."

"So am I. You'll be an honored woman, Sofia Curtis. Curtis-Sidle? Sidle? Sidle-Curtis?"

"Uhm, we haven't discussed this. What sounds better?"

"Curtis-Sidle."

"Everything that makes me Sara's wife sounds good. We have our license. This is much better than getting your driver's license and that was a pretty damn good feeling."

"Well, there are many ways to get your driver's license, you can try it more than once, but you have only one chance to make Sara your wife. You took the chance. After all these years, all the pain you've been through, you get your well deserved happy end."

"This looks like a party, did you realize my client is innocent?" Out of the blue Mel was standing at the doorway, watching them. "Or are you having an affair?"

"What do you want?" Sofia got out of Greg's arms. "Your client stays in custody or can you prove he's innocent?"

"You have to prove he's guilty, not the other way around."

"Until your client doesn't give us his full name on a document and provides an alibi we believe, he stays where he is."

"I get him out within the next hours, Sofia."

"We'll see about that, counselor. There's still pending evidence."

"Nothing that will prove my client is guilty, he isn't a killer."

"That's what you and he say." And Steve. Sofia hated herself to throw this ball to the lawyer, who only had to take the chance and throw her own words back into Sofia's face. What a stupid mistake.

"It's what the evidence says." The smile Mel sent her made it obvious she knew about her chance and it was her decision not to take it. Sofia had to give the other woman credit for being fair, no matter how much it annoyed her.

"Are you here to see Felix?"

"Yes."

"You know where to find him."

"I do. Did I miss a celebration reason? Or isn't it any of my business?"

"It's not." Greg said.

Sofia squeezed his hand. "Sara just called, we had our marriage license in the mail today."

"Congratulation. It was about time, will you get married this month?"

"If we can manage I'm sure we will."

"You're lucky woman and so is Sara and Steve is a lucky boy, to him it's very important the two of you are legally married. He never said it, but you can hear it when you listen to him. I'm sure he's over the moon when you tell him."

"So am I. He'll get a new passport and ID."

"One with the names of his mothers, can't be better. Anyway, I let you celebrate and go to work. Congratulation again. Your wedding doesn't mean I won't make you sweat the next time I have you on the stand and you're not on my side."

"It also doesn't mean I let your clients get away with murder or any crime, counselor." Sofia shot back dryly.

"Good, I like to earn my success. CSI Sanders, I see you soon."

"Unfortunately."

"For a friendly man you can be very unkind." Mel grinned and walked away.

"You were nice to her." Greg poked his finger into Sofia's shoulder. "Why?"

"Because she was fair to me and she is more than fair to Steve. And no, it doesn't change the fact that she's the enemy. Work enemy."

"Wow, only the work enemy. Not the private enemy anymore?"

"I'll marry Sara soon, being jealous and making a scene because Mel does have a great taste in women looks ridiculous, don't you think? You had a crush on her, hit on her and I love you and talk to you, Greggo."

"That's a difference."

"When we're honest it's not. Don't worry, I love you and she's...okay. You win."

"I always win. Come on, future Mrs. Curtis-Sidle, we have a case to close. A killer to catch. If your son and the lawyer are right, we have the wrong one and need to find the right one."

"We always need to find the right one." Not only when it came to work. Luckily she had her right one, her Mrs. Right.

"Hi." Steve smiled widely when he walked into the dental surgery, Susan in her buggy and a Tupperware box in his hands. There she was, his cute girl, Marlene.

"Hey, are you in pain again?"

"No, I'm here to see Tanya. Okay, that sounds like I'm in pain, I'm here to bring her self-made curry."

"Self-made curry? You can cook?"

"Sure." Well, he knew people, who could cook. Wasn't it like you could cook yourself? And didn't women like men, who could cook?

Susan started crying. "Oh hey, no reason to cry, you don't have to be afraid, nobody will use a drill, you don't have teeth. It's okay." He picked his sister up and rocked her carefully, kissed her cheek. "I'm here, I take care of you."

"Your daughter?"

"Susan? No, my sister. Say hello to the nice woman at the reception, Susan. Say hi Marlene." Thanks to her brother's arms Susan stopped crying and took a look around.

"She's cute."

"I know, I adore her. You're the cutest baby ever, right baby sis? Real looker. Such a lucky girl you look like your mother and not like your daddy."

"Your father won't like these words." Marlene chuckled.

"Her father isn't my father, I don't have a father but two wonderful mothers. Our mommies are the best, aren't they? We're so lucky to have them. And look, there's mommy number three, there's Tanya."

Tanya came with her last patient before her lunch break to reception. "Marlene, could you please give Mister Kowalczyk a new appointment for next week, we have to end what we started today."

"Sure."

"Thanks. If the pain comes back before your appointment, come back and we have to squeeze you in. Otherwise I see you next week."

"Thanks doctor Santiago. See you next week."

Tanya turned to Steve and Susan. "Hello young man, hello young girl."

"She's your daughter. Kind of."

"No, she's the daughter of my boyfriend. You have two mommies, you don't need a third one. Do you need food?"

"She's always hungry."

"You're on your way to Lea, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"With or without the time to feed your sister here?"

"With. Lea doesn't have her lunch break until one, I can feed her, you can have lunch and then Susan and me take off again. You can join us for a few minutes?"

"I might do that. Come with me into the kitchen." Tanya guided them into the kitchen. "You can put her bottle into the microwave. Is this my curry?"

"Self-made curry."

"Made by you?" The brunette giggled.

"Of course."

"Mhm, you're such a great cook. Vegetarian curry, wonderful." Tanya closed the door. "You are trying to get her by lying to her?"

"She asked if I cooked it, she was impressed. What was I supposed to say?"

"You said the right thing; as long as she doesn't ask you how you made the curry."

"I watched, I know what's inside and if she wants me to cook for her, I learn how to make curry. Granddad will show me."

"Boys will be boys."

"In love and war...you know the saying."

"You didn't try to impress me."

"No, I knew I had no chance, you're way too...much in love with Don."

"You little shit wanted to say I'm way too old."

Steve shook in disapproval his head. "No swearwords, she might pick them up and her first word will be the bad s-word or f-word."

"Smart ass."

"Not much better. I tell Jules, she can use her hocus-pocus on you." Steve took the bottle out of the microwave and let Tanya place Susan in his arms. When his sister lay comfortable and safe in his arms, he gave her her bottle with milk. Hungry Susan sucked the milk.

"You are hungry, I knew it. You're always hungry. Mom Sara says you've got this from mom Sofia."

"Or from your father. He is also always hungry." Tanya put her curry into the microwave.

The door was opened and her colleague came in.

"Oh, we're having two visitors."

"Yes, Steve brought me lunch and because Susan was hungry I told him to feed her here before he leaves again."

"Your daughter?"

"No, her boyfriend's daughter, my sister."

"It's good to see some teenager care for their little siblings, learn what responsibility means. A baby is a lot of work."

"She surely is, my grandmother looks after her when my mothers are at work and I'm at school. Without her we had to give her to daycare and you like being with your family much more, don't you, Susan? Being with grandma and grandpa is fun, they're cool."

"Don't you want one for yourself Tanya?"

"No, I'm more than happy with my godchild and Susan. I like kids but I'm the wrong person to give birth to them. No, thanks. I stay here and work with you, that's my world. Don has a daughter, she's gorgeous, he's happy too."

"Good to know. See the responsibility you have to take for a baby, Marlene?" Doctor Winter said to his daughter, who came into the kitchen too.

"Dad, I don't want a baby now, I want to finish high school, go to college, university, take over your surgery and send you far, far away so you can't annoy me anymore. You've got ten more years before I take over and you can go to an island and retire there." Marlene answered back dryly.

"Tell your boyfriend too."

"He doesn't want children at all, he doesn't like them. Ruin the career."

"For the next ten years this is the best thing he can think."

Marlene rolled her eyes. "Nadine and Eve are out for lunch, mom called half an hour ago, you're supposed to call her back."

"Did you order lunch?"

"Mom told me not to order lunch for you, you're supposed to eat your salad."

"You're working here for me and not for your mother."

"When you want me to order fast food even though mom told you different, you have to increase my salary. I don't risk trouble with her over fast food and nine dollars an hour."

"Your mother will never know what I eat if you don't tell her." Doctor Winter got up. "I call her and you better order me some real food, you're the receptionist."

"I'm in my lunch break, you can call my father and complain there."

"It's so difficult to get good employees..." Doctor Winter left the room.

"One is sitting right here." Tanya mumbled. "Your mother makes lunch for your father?"

"Yes, she says he has to lose a couple of pounds, put him on a diet. Dad doesn't agree and doesn't dare to say different."

"Oh, nice. If Don ever says I've to lose a couple of pounds he'll lose something else. Is it the same with your boyfriend?"

"His father is a plastic surgeon, everything and everybody has to be perfect, otherwise it has to be fixed."

"Seriously? Wow, too much pressure for me. What do you think, Steve?"

"I think neither one of you need a plastic surgeon, you're beautiful the way you are."

"Thanks Honey." Tanya kissed his cheek. "You're sweet. I'll miss you next week when I'm in New York."

"You can stay here, if you're afraid of the dark, you can sleep in my bed."

"Oh, thanks. Don won't like this."

"We don't have to tell him."

"No, I think I go with him. Anything you want from New York?"

"A postcard."

"Deal. Although, if you don't go back to work you can join us."

"No, you take Susan, I have to look after my moms, you never know what they do without somebody around looking after them. With both children gone they might get crazy. And I'm sure they need help with the wedding."

"The woman, who gets you, is a lucky woman, don't you think, Marlene?"

Steve hoped his face didn't turn red. Why did Tanya ask Marlene all these things? He didn't want her to know about his feelings. That was so embarrassing.

"He cooks, he's good with kids, he cares for his family, sounds pretty good, yes." The girl smiled. "Only the milk stain on your shirt ruins the picture."

"Mister Moon is at reception." Don called Sofia on her cell phone.

"Who is Mister Moon?"

"The husband of our latest victim, Mrs. Iris Moon."

"Oh." The young woman was married. "I'm on my way." Now they had the name and probably also a sad story. Were there children too? Cherry didn't tell her Mrs. Moon gave birth, she could tell it.

"Don has the husband of our latest victim with him." She told Greg. "I go and talk to him. Anything new?"

"A gun."

"A gun?"

"Yes, Kyle found our suspect on a video how he leaves a bag behind at a Starbucks on Hollywood Boulevard. He got the bag and there was a gun inside. Loaded. Lynn is out to bring the guy in, who took the bag, he could be an accomplice."

"Interesting. I wonder what Mel has to say about it."

"You'll find out, she'll be here in an hour. Will you join me with her?"

"Sure. See you in an hour." She took her folder and went over to Don. With the detective sat with a young man with sad eyes in an interrogation room.

"Mister Moon, this is Miss Curtis, the CSI on the case. CSI Curtis, this is the husband of Iris Moon."

"I'm so sorry for your loss." She shook the hand of the man, who was a full head taller than she was.

"Can I see my wife?"

"Sure, I take you, just answer a few questions first, please. It can help us to find whoever did this to her."

"I heard you had somebody in custody? Isn't he the killer?"

"We're not sure yet. Did Iris mention somebody, who bothered her? Who contacted her recently? Somebody, she didn't know or hadn't seen for a while?"

"No, she didn't mention anything like that."

"Where did she work?"

"She didn't, she stayed at home. Four months ago she lost her job because the company she worked for filled for bankruptcy. She applied for a couple of jobs, but it's not that easy. Especially when you're black, there's still a lot of hidden racism going on."

"Yes, it is. When did Iris disappear?"

"I can't tell." He sobbed. "I was out of town for four days, my company planned for our group a trip to Sequoia National Park and my cell phone had no signal. I saw her the last time on Saturday. When I came back last night, I thought she was out or stayed with her parents. It was late, so I didn't try to reach her, but when she didn't respond to my calls this morning and her parents told me, she hadn't been over for a week, I got nervous. None of our friends could tell me where she was, so I went to the police and reported her missing. When I gave them a photo of Iris they told me to see detective Flack." He looked at Don. "You found her yesterday?"

"Yes, hiker found her body at the San Gabriel Reservoir."

"And it's the same man, who killed the other two women?"

"We believe so, there's a lot of evidence, that supports this."

"Did he touch her?"

Again this question. They still hadn't released the fact, the killer raped his victims postmortem. Cherry answered this question to Charlene Flemming's mother in a way it made it possible not to lie and yet not tell her the whole truth.

"She never experienced any sexual violence." Sofia chose almost the same words the medical examiner had chosen. Alive, the killer didn't touch her.

"At least something. How did he kill her?"

"He slashed her throat, the same way he did with his other victims. Then he cut off her middle finger and redressed her in red pants."

"Why? Why did he cut off her finger?"

"We don't know yet. He did it to the other women too. First the little finger, then the ring finger. It's like he's counting."

"Does that mean he's done when he killed five women?"

"We hope there won't be any other dead women." They had Felix in custody, their own suspect. When there was another

body in Angeles National Forest they could assume he was innocent; like Steve had told her right away.

"This man you have in custody...is he a monster?"

"You can't tell if somebody is a monster by looking at his face. Most serial killer look normal, even friendly, and behave like it when they talk to their neighbors and family members. They're great actors, so when somebody seems to be nice and friendly, it doesn't mean he's innocent. It only means he knows how to play people."

"Mister Moon, I'm sorry to ask you this, but it's a part of the investigation..." Don started.

"You want to know where I was, of course. I can give you the names of my colleagues I spent the last four days with. They can verify I was with them, we didn't have a car, a ranger dropped us off at a hut and we stayed there with enough water and food. If I had known what happened at home...maybe if I stayed Iris would still be alive."

"I don't think so, our second victim had a boyfriend and he couldn't do anything. The killer seems to know when the women are alone. He had waited until you're at work."

"But I could have called you the same day, when I was back from work."

"Yes and we have no idea where he kept the women. Our suspect has no ID, seems to live on the streets, we weren't able to get many information about him." Or none at all. So much for national security, apparently the NSA spied on everybody, but how do you spy on a person, who doesn't own a cell phone, computer or place to live? Nobody cared about your appearance on camera on the streets as long as no crime happened.

"Does that mean there could be another woman locked away somewhere while he is here?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you make him talk?"

"Because his lawyer is the only one who talks to us. We're not allowed to talk to him without his lawyer around."

"That's ridiculous, women might die and all the police cares about, are the rights of a person, who doesn't care about the rights and lives of other people."

"He's a suspect, not a convicted murderer."

"Sometimes I feel like criminals have more rights than innocent people."

"They don't." And yet Sofia could understand his feelings. In *dubio pro reo* was what *Justicia* demanded and it was hard to live up to this sometimes. The Greek goddess of justice gave them some tough rules and keeping them wasn't always helpful for the police nor made it their life easier. When you had no evidence, nothing to prove somebody was guilty, you had to let him or her go; even when you knew you set a killer free.

"Am I right when I say the husband had an alibi?" Greg asked when Sofia came back.

"Yes, I checked it, he was with his colleague From Sunday until yesterday. He can't be our killer. So sad. They married last year, were high school sweethearts. Young love and now he is a widow at the age of twenty-two. This world can be so sick. They lived in Glendale, Kyle will check street cameras around their home. We don't know yet since when he had her. She didn't work, was at home and apparently had no appointments the last days."

"A lot of unanswered questions."

"Unfortunately. What about the gun?"

"A Glock." He lifted the plastic bag with the gun. "Some bullets are missing, I got his prints from the gun. I wonder what his lawyer has to say about this."

"She'll find an explanation. Like we don't have any evidence the killer uses a gun at all. There was no trace of a gun on any victim."

"No, but I'd like to know what he's doing with a gun."

"Me too." Together they went to the interrogation room, where Felix and Mel waited for them.

"Do you have something new for us?" Mel asked.

"Something interesting. Do you know this?" She held up the plastic bag with the gun inside.

Felix cocked his head. "It's a gun."

"You don't have to answer her questions." Mel advised.

"Your gun."

"How do you know it's his gun?"

"First of all we have a video, showing your client how he stores a backpack in a Starbucks on Hollywood Boulevard. We also talked to the man, who stored the backpack for him, he confirmed, it belongs to your client. He leaves it there all the time. Second, we found his fingerprints on the gun, so we know it's his and he had it in his hands. There are some bullets missing, I wonder what you did with them."

"What has a gun to do with all of this? I read all your reports, there is no evidence of a gun in the cases and it's my clients right to own a gun, I don't have to lecture you about the American law, do I?"

"He's the suspect in a murder case, when he hides a gun it matters."

"How?"

"He might have used it to force the women in his car. Or make them drive him in their car to wherever he keeps them."

"Interesting story, got any evidence or are you guessing again? Or is every man with a gun a suspect now? In this case you need a bigger prison."

"Not all men with a gun drove a car of a victim and fled the police."

"The sad thing is, tonight a woman will die and you sit here, waste your time by accuse my client of a crime he never committed. Why aren't you out, find the real killer?"

"Why doesn't cooperate your client with us? Show us he's innocent."

"He knows no matter what he says or does, you will twist his words, it's safer for him when I talk for him."

"We don't twist words, lawyer twists words."

Mel smiled. "Nice try."

"Did the kid not tell you I'm not a killer?" Felix looked at Sofia.

"Actually he believes you're innocent."

"Does he? I knew he's a good kid."

"Now that we're talking about this, my client saved the life of Stephen, a killer doesn't save lives." Again Mel didn't take the chance to mention, Steve was Sofia's son. She treated Steve like he was somebody, they both barely knew. If she wanted, she could say Sofia's son contacted her, he made her become

Felix's lawyer. But she didn't want this detail on files; like Sofia also didn't want it written down.

"Which doesn't give him an alibi for the killings."

"When you find a new body tomorrow morning, will you let him go?"

"He could have a partner."

Felix rolled his eyes. "For a smart woman you're not acting smart."

"Mister Fisher, please let me talk."

"Sorry, but from what I've heard this man killed already three women and will kill tonight again. You want to believe it's me, fine, believe what you want but please don't stop looking for the real killer. I told you I found the car on Sunset, it was unlocked. I waited for a few minutes, when nobody came back to the car, I borrowed it, drove to a fast food restaurant, you found the bag in the car, you know where I went, I'm sure they've got a camera, you checked that. From there I drove up Pacific Coast Highway to Malibu, stayed on the beach before I drove to Hollywood, where your colleagues saw me. After I escaped I left the car and walked. Alone. I don't have a home, I don't have a hideout, I do have a backpack with a gun because when you live on the streets life can be dangerous. I also own a guitar, which is with the same person, who kept the backpack. He's a kind of a friend, I helped him out one night when somebody tried to rob him. I'm not a killer, I'm a musician, make love not war, play music, don't harm people. I confess to stealing the car and food when I was hungry, I don't confess to anything I didn't do."

Sofia watched the young man. For the first time he talked to them, talked about the case, told them about the car. It wasn't something new, it wasn't something, that helped them, but it was a start.

"Did you see who left the car on Sunset?" Sofia asked.

"No, like I said, I saw it was unlocked, waited for the owner to come back and took it before somebody else took it."

"Have you seen it before?"

"If I did I can't recall it. There are so many cars in this city, I can't tell you if I saw it before. It's nothing special and even a Rolls Royce isn't anything special in this city."

"Did you take anything with you out of the car?"

"No. Not even my rubbish."

"Did you notice anything special about the car?"

"No, it was an unlocked car, looked like any other car."

"What did you do with the driver's seat?"

"The driver's seat?" He looked confused for a second before he nodded. "You are a smart woman. I didn't have to adjust it, whoever drove it before is around my size. I'm six foot two in case you forgot. Am I right the poor woman was smaller?"

This was a lead! Their suspect gave them something about their killer. Six foot two. Maybe he was an inch taller or smaller, but he had to be around this size. And he drove the car, not Charlene Flemming. Did he drive it with Charlene on the passenger's seat? Did he let her drive him to where his car was, overpowered her, put her in the trunk, drove her to his place and drove the car to Sunset? Or was his car parked on Sunset and he left it there?

"You can cooperate."

"When you stop accusing me of a crime I didn't do."

"I think my client said enough now." Mel stopped Felix Fisher from saying more.

"He helped us."

"Great, can he go?"

"No, sorry. He might have given us information about the killer or he gave us a story to make himself look innocent. Before we can't be sure which side is right he stays. I'm sure the judge says the same, it's not like you haven't contact him, right?"

"By tomorrow he'll be free because you found evidence he's innocent Unfortunately the evidence will be a dead woman."

"We see about that." Deep inside Sofia feared Mel was right. No matter how deep she listened inside herself, there was nothing that called Murderer! when she saw Felix Fisher. Her guts were good, she always trusted them. Could they be this wrong? How could she not see this young man was a killer? A serial killer? Could it be he fooled her? Or was he really innocent?

After the meeting with Mel, Felix and Greg Sofia called it a day. It was almost three, when she wanted to be home by four,

she had no time to start anything new. With the bill in her hands she went to the dental surgery, ready to find out, who the cute girl was, her son was interested in.

"May I help you?" The young woman at reception welcomed her.

"I'm here to pay a bill, my son came here yesterday. Stephen Sidle."

"Oh, you're the mother of Steve? He was here today too."

"Really?"

"Yes, he made lunch for Tanya, a pretty good curry."

Steve made curry for Tanya? It sounded like her son mixed up truth and fairytale. "Yes, he's a great son, a big help."

"And pretty good with babies, he fed your daughter and it looked like he knew exactly what he was doing."

"He does, he looks after her very often. Yes, my Steve is a wonderful young man." She was sure it was better to call him a young man than a boy. This girl, the name tag said her name was Marlene, was at least one year older than Steve and girls usually didn't want to go out with younger boys.

"He also made an appointment for you, Mrs. Sidle."

"For me? Oh no, he made an appointment for his other mother, my fiancé. I'm Miss Curtis, well by the end of the month I'll be Mrs. Sidle. Or Curtis-Sidle. We'll get married." And they had the marriage license. Did she mention this? Not within the last half an hour, she should tell everybody, no matter if they wanted to hear it or not.

"Congratulation. Okay, an appointment for your partner."

"I have my appointment already, next month and I'm sure Tanya won't forget it."

"If she does it's our job to think about it."

"Great, I can't think of a better place to spend my time off...oh not there came one to my mind. And another one. And another one. Oh, looks like I can think of quite a lot of places I'd rather be." Sofia laughed. "No offense."

"No offense taken, it's not like I enjoy going to the dentist, unfortunately my dad is a dentist, I have to see one every day."

"With Tanya more or less living in the same house I see one almost every day. Sometimes I think I have toothache only because I see her. Is that possible?"

"Medically not, psychologically yes."

"It's all in my mind, I'm nuts. Great. Thanks for that."

"Being afraid of the dentist is common." Marlene took the check Sofia wrote her. "Do you want to talk to Tanya?"

"No, I see her tonight, no need to see her with a drill in her hands. I do have another doctor waiting for me, one is more than enough."

"For your leg?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

"I could see from the way you're walking something is wrong with your left leg."

"The lower part is missing."

"I'm sorry. Was it an accident, if you don't mind that I'm asking."

"You could also read my file, everything is written down in it. I lost it when the Hollywood and Highland Center exploded."

"You were there?"

"I was a cop, it was my job to be there. Unfortunately I couldn't stop them."

"You almost lost your life to save other people's life, I think that's very honorable. Thanks for making our city safer."

"I'm not a cop anymore, with my leg I can't chase criminals. Nowadays I work as a CSI."

"Still you keep or make the city safe. Will your son become a cop or CSI too?"

"You have to ask him, he can become whatever he wants."

"I wish my father would say the same about me, he wants me to take over his surgery."

"And you don't like the idea?"

"I do, but it was never a question if I want, it's like it's my destiny. Well, first I have to finish high school next year. A lot of work to get the marks I need to go to a good medical school."

"You are a good student."

"How do you know?"

"It's in the evidence." Sofia blinked at the girl. "You're working here. If your marks weren't good your father would rather see you study than working. For parents it's always more important the marks of their children are good than they having enough

money for parties, you of course don't go to until you're twenty-one."

"Of course not." Marlene giggled.

"See. Okay, I have to go otherwise my doctor will get mad and she isn't a woman you want to mess with. An angry surgeon can be worse than a dentist." And Sofia got all she wanted. She paid the bill and talked to the girl, her son had a crush on. Not that it mattered, but she approved his decision, a very nice girl.

Doctor Bendler sat already in the living room, a coffee in front of her.

"Hello doctor, how are you? Am I late?" It was five to four, she was on time.

"No, I was early. Your mother let me in and made me coffee. I can see your leg doesn't hurt."

"No, it doesn't." Sofia sat down. "No pain, no problems and yet my family worries."

"You are working a lot the last days, don't you?"

"We're chasing a serial killer. Time is precious, long hours in the lab, not a lot of time with my family and not a lot of time for sleep."

"Lack of sleep can be dangerous. Can I see your leg?"

"Sure." Nobody knew her stump better than doctor Bendler; except Sara, who knew every inch of Sofia better than anybody else. She took off her prosthesis and put her leg on the couch.

"Looks good." Carefully doctor Bendler took the leg, let her finger run over the scar. "Does it hurt when I touch the scar?"

"No, I can feel it, but it's not painful. When you told me after the amputation I'd be able to do everything I want, I didn't believe you. It seemed impossible I could ever play basketball again or go jogging. I can do all these things and it doesn't hurt. Of course I'm not as good as I was before the accident, but I can do it. You're really the best."

"A doctor is only as good as the patient is. Phantom pain?"

"Sometimes, it's annoying, worse than real pain."

"You know your leg isn't there and yet you feel the pain. What about your therapy?"

"I see my therapist once a month and your daughter at least twice a week. She's much better, even when she's not my therapist. It's enough to know she's here."

"Our family likes to be the best in the field we work. How do you sleep?"

"Good."

"Good but not enough."

"Yes."

"Step back, a little bit, Sofia. I'm not talking about don't care about your cases anymore, I'm talking about care about your health more. You need breaks, you need your sleep. You're on medication, you're not as fit as you used to be, a few months ago you gave birth, your body has been through a lot, it needs your support now. Otherwise I might give up on you one day and this day can be closer than you think. I understand long hours are important in your job, they are a part of it, but don't go over ten hours, get eight hours of sleep or at least resting time in bed. Your body needs it. You're not a help to your boss or colleagues when you break down. And you're on your way to a breakdown, even you don't feel it at the moment."

Sofia swallowed. She didn't feel bad, she felt good and her doctor told her, she was on her way to a breakdown. How could that be?

"How can you tell?"

"Being old gives you the advantage of a big knowledge. After all those years I can tell what's likely to happen. You need your rest more than others, you can't come home and rewind on the coach, you've got a baby at home, so it's more important you get all the rest you can get. Work isn't the most important part of your life."

"No, my family is."

"See, they want you healthy. I really don't believe your boss will give you any trouble when you don't work less than ten hours." Doctor Bendler picked up the prosthesis. "You do see your orthopedic regular and have him check the prosthesis?"

"Of course."

"Good. You're free to go."

"Thanks for coming over."

"It was my pleasure and it's a nice stop on my way to my grandchildren. I told Jules I pick them up today. Your mother seems to enjoy her new job as a fulltime grandmother."

"Absolutely. I don't know how we could cope without her and dad."

"Susan could go to daycare with Louise. My grandchildren like it there."

"Yes and when mom took Susan there to meet Louise, my baby girl seemed to enjoy her time there, all the other babies. Then again, she also enjoys being the center of attention and she's nothing else when she's with her grandparents."

"We're there to spoil."

"No wonder children always love their grandparents. No rules, only fun and a lot of candy."

"One day you'll be a grandmother too and can spoil your grandchildren."

"Hopefully. First I have to bring my children up to wonderful adults. So far it looks like Sara and me are doing a good job. Oh, we got our marriage license today! We can get married."

"Congratulation, when is the big day?"

"Mom promised Sara she'd make it possible that we can get married before we fly to Hawaii, making Hawaii our honeymoon with another wedding. We're having a party on September first, I hope you come over and celebrate with us."

"Why this late?"

"Because we want a small wedding and a big party afterwards. A lot of people don't have to work on September second, we thought the day is a good choice."

"I do have to work but I'm sure I can come around for a few minutes. My daughter will be here all the time, I assume."

"Hopefully. She, her fiancé and the kids can stay here."

"Sofia, they live down the road."

"So? It's closer to stay here. They can have the guest room."

"I'm sure they go home."

"Probably. What do I owe you for your treatment?"

"Another piece of cake? It's delicious."

"Oh, you're much nicer than the dentist, she wanted money. You can have two pieces of cake, one for your husband too."

"One for him? No way, if I get two, I eat them both. Some things in life you don't share. Really good cake is one of them." Doctor Bendler smiled.

When Sofia came home with her dogs from their walk she found Sara on their balcony, reading a book and enjoying the sunshine. Susan was in her bed, she had seen her daughter when she passed her room, Steve seemed to be out.

"Hello beautiful woman, you look like you're on vacation." The blonde kissed the brunette and sat on the sun lounger next to her.

"I am. For the day. Were you out with the dogs?"

"Yes, we went for a walk so they're fine for today. Where is our marriage license?"

"On the bed."

Sofia went inside to get the document. When she had it in her hands, read the words, it became more real and made her even happier.

"It was worth waiting for it."

"Absolutely. Hopefully your mom can find somebody to wed us, I'm sure she has her contacts as she always has. Our wedding dresses fit into the suitcase."

"You packed them?"

"I tested the suitcases, made sure they're big enough. They are."

"If we were rich I'd buy us a second pair of wedding dresses, one for every wedding."

"We don't need two, we're fine with one. Save your money for something more sensible."

"Like the dentist bill of our son. I saw the cute girl, talked to her. She's not only cute, she's also smart and our son lied to her. Told her he made the curry. You can impress a woman by telling her you can cook."

"Interesting. Does she like Steve too?"

"She thinks he's nice, it's a start. Do you think Lea is jealous?"

"No and he isn't one of these people, who forget their friends as soon as they're in a love relationship. He'll spend a lot of time with Lea, no matter if he has a girlfriend. When his girlfriend doesn't approve their friendship she won't be his girlfriend for long."

"I think the same. Honey? We have our marriage license! We can get married!" Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. It was only a question of a couple of days before they could become a legally married couple.

"You know whom we can thank?"

"Who we can thank? You mean somebody helped us out...mom?" Did her mother have contacts to the city council? Did she organize the marriage license? It was possible, the captain wanted them married just as much as they wanted it.

"No. Steve told me he heard Mel talk to somebody at the city council about staying ten minutes longer and get a marriage license ready."

"Mel? The Mel?" Lawyer Mel? Steve's boss? The woman, Sofia didn't want to like because she hit on her fiancé? Seriously?

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Apparently she wants us to be married."

"Somehow I lost some of my joy about the marriage. We have to thank Mel? Invite her?"

"Did she tell you about it?"

"No, not a word. Like she also doesn't mention Steve is my son and the reason why she's the lawyer of our suspect. I hate to say it, she is more than fair. She congratulated me today, was around when we talked and said, it's very important to Steve we're married and he has legally two mothers, who are responsible for him. Do you think she did it for him?"

"She likes him."

"She does, I can't argue against this."

"Maybe she did it for him." Sara kissed the cheek of her lover.

"It doesn't matter, we have our license and I tend to be happy about it, no matter if Mel helped us out or not. After all she did for us I can't be mad at her anymore and if I try I feel very stupid."

"Me too." Sofia confessed. "At least not when she's not the lawyer of a suspect, who is guilty as hell and she tries to get him out of jail. In these moments I'll always hate her. As for the rest...maybe I can even thank her."

"If we got the marriage license thanks to her effort, we can thank her because this way we might get married within the next two weeks and fly as a married couple to Hawaii, have our beach wedding and a lovely honeymoon. Just what we always wanted."

"True." Sofia sighed. All right, so the lawyer helped them, it didn't change a thing. She and Sara would be married soon and that was the only thing that was important. Her fiancé would become her wife and they could get new passports and identifications with their new name. Was there a better way to show the world how much they loved each other than sharing the same name?

Thursday, August 8th

Sofia did agree on working less and taking more breaks, she promised doctor Bendler and Sara, but it didn't include staying in bed in the morning and not having breakfast with her fiancé. She'd rather go home earlier or take longer breaks than miss out the opportunity to spend a few minutes with the woman she loved. So when she came into the kitchen and found her daughter on her thick blanket on the floor, surrounded by the four kitten, who were still not sure what they should think about the baby, she knew, her lover was in the bathroom.

"Good morning Susan, how are you? Did mommy get you out of bed to have you around? And then she left you with the cats. How are you, my dead rock stars reborn in cute cats? I bet you're hungry, let's find some food for you. Yes Scooby, you and Rantanplan get breakfast too." Her dogs were right next to her when she mentioned breakfast. First she prepared four bowls for the cats, eyed her dogs to make sure they didn't try to get themselves a little bonus, gave them their breakfast before she sat down, ate a banana and took her daughter in her arms. Time for Susan to get her milk, she waited patiently and only protested a little bit when her mother didn't pick her up immediately.

"Would you like your mother around tomorrow? Have your walking milk bar with you for the whole day?" Sofia let her finger softly run over Susan's face, watching her drink. Her daughter was so beautiful, the most beautiful baby ever born. And she, Sofia, had been the chosen one to give her life. In her, Susan had lived for nine months, had developed to what she was now. Without her, her little princess wouldn't be here. And also not without the amazing woman, who came out of the bathroom and sent her the most wonderful smile when she saw her.

"Good morning." Sara kissed Sofia. "I wasn't sure if you want to sleep in."

"I'd rather go home earlier and not miss out time with you and Susan. She is hungry and needs her milk. I think your cats were about to eat her."

"Maybe, Susan is full with milk, our four rockers love milk."

"I love our daughter and don't want her to be cat food."

"Don't worry, they won't eat her. Her two bodyguards take care of her."

"When it comes to food, Scooby and Rantanplan aren't the most trustful dogs."

"True. Open up." Sara held a toast in front of Sofia's mouth.

"Thanks. Are you going to feed me?"

"Maybe a little bit. You care about our daughter, I care about you, my fiancé. Another bite, love of my life."

"Will you do this every morning when we're married?"

"No."

"Honey, you're supposed to promise me everything, we're close to get married. Couples promise each other everything during this time - and forget it as soon as they're married."

"See, this is why I don't promise you anything I can't keep. When I give you a promise I want to keep it, otherwise I don't promise it."

"You're a brain woman again, let your heart speak."

"Finish your cheese and cucumber toast and I make you a whole-grain sandwich with chocolate spread."

"Nothing says I love you more than chocolate spread."

"How about the three words: I love you?"

"Sounds better, chocolate spread tastes better than words."

"I could show you how much I love you, how my love can effect your body."

"Honey, if you don't want me to put away our daughter before she finished her breakfast to jump you and make you come to work late."

"Sounds way too good...practice for another baby."

"Now your head isn't talking," Sofia smirked.

"Not my lust is and when I see you my lust takes over my head most times. Makes it pretty hard to resist you." Sara fed Sofia the last piece of toast and kissed her. "Good girl. I prepare your choc sandwich and then I have to go. Scooby, Rantanplan, get ready for your day out."

"What do you mean, your day out?"

"I take them with me today. We have to check hiking trails, they come with us, enjoy the forest and sniff a lot of animal traces."

"Lucky guys, they can spend the day with you. I want the same."

"I can't take tomorrow off."

"How about next Monday?"

"Maybe. I ask for it. Monday and Tuesday."

"Perfect, I'll do the same. Two days with you, time for our children, the pets and our wedding."

"Our daughter flies to New York on Sunday."

"Shi...p, you're right. We have to pack her suitcase. One week with daddy, without mommy. One week with aunty Tanya, without brother Steve...will he visit Tanya at work today again?"

"Possible." Sara grinned. "Tanya or Marlene."

"What about Lea?"

"She has to work and he'll be with her in her lunch break. He's not forgetting his best friend over some girl." The brunette placed the sandwich next to her lover. "I've to go. Here's your sandwich, I packed lunch for you, two salad and egg sandwiches, a banana and a Mars bar. There are also two small chicken salad sandwiches for the short breaks. Eat them all, take your breaks and don't forget to drink."

"I will be a good woman, I promise." Wasn't her lover cute? She packed her lunch, just like she would do for Susan in a couple of years. There was a very good mother in Sara, something Sofia had always known.

"Good." Sara kissed her lover. "I love you. And you too." She kissed Susan's forehead. "Be a good girl, grandma will be here soon to pick you up. See you both tonight."

"Take care of my ranger."

"There are two dogs, who will do that. Scooby, Rantanplan, come on, we're going. Time for work, for a walk." Excited both dogs jumped up and followed Sara. They loved taking trips with one of their mommies.

"Greggo, you look like you didn't sleep much. Did your fiancé keep you awake for the whole night?" Sofia grinned when a sleepy Greg came into the break room.

"I wish. It was Louise, she must have caught a stomach bug, she cried the whole night, threw up, we took her to hospital to

get her checked out while Alison slept at our place to make sure the twins aren't alone."

"Oh shit. How is she?"

"Better, she's got some medicine, is back home, Alison has the afternoon shift, she stays with her this morning, if Jules can manage, she takes the afternoon off and takes Louise to the doctor."

"If she can't reschedule her appointments call mom, I'm sure she can help out. Susan is with her, dad is at home too, one of them can surely take Louise to the doctor."

"Are you sure?"

"Hey, you know my parents, you know they love the twins and Louise, of course they help you. Give them a call, they're at home, enjoying breakfast until their granddaughter wants their attention again."

"Thanks, I'll call them." Greg took his cell phone and dialed Marie's number. To let Sofia listen too, he put his phone on speakers.

"Greg, how are you? Is everything all right?"

"Hi Marie, don't worry, Sofia and me are fine, Louise is the one, who isn't fine."

"What? What happened to her?"

"She caught a stomach bug, we took her to hospital last night. She's back home, Alison is with her, but Louise has to see the doctor again this afternoon. In case Jules can't reschedule her appointment, could..."

"I call Jules, she can do her work, Marc or me take her to the doctor. Does Alison have to work too?"

"She has the afternoon shift."

"Okay, one of us goes over at lunch, takes Louise to the doctor and stays with her until you or Jules are back home. In case it's infectious we keep her away from Susan, otherwise she could just stay here with us."

"Thanks Marie, I owe you a huge favor."

"No, you don't, we know we love your kids too. I call Jules and tell her to relax. You make sure my daughter looks after herself and I'm happy."

"Deal. I force her to take breaks if I have to."

"Thanks. Go to work, CSI, we talk tonight."

"Thanks Captain." Greg ended the call. "Your parents are the best."

"Deep inside they're still hoping you and Jules take your kids out of daycare and leave them with them. I don't want to know how their garden looks, it will be a huge playground soon."

"Eric, Jorja and Louise are happy in daycare and your parents aren't our babysitters...although I like the idea. Why don't they open their own daycare? Five or six children, I mean new recruits, for the captain."

"She might like it. If they want to do it, would you let your children stay with her?"

"If that's okay for Jules of course. They can't have a better person to look after them than the captain and nobody can make more delicious food for them than your dad. Does it mean you let Susan stay with them and don't send her to daycare?"

"My baby is interested in other babies, but I feel much better when she's with my mother and I can call her anytime, ask how she is, put her on the phone."

"Good reasons. I have the weekend off and really look forward to spend some time with my family. We might drive to San Diego, visit my parents. Depends on how Louise feels. Don flies to New York on Sunday, right?"

"Yes and he takes my daughter with him. He's a thief."

"He's her father and he loves her. Your angel will miss you and enjoy her time at the same time. How does Sara feel about it?"

"She whines more than I do; I never thought this could happen. My girlfriend loves our daughter and can't be without her. So much for she's not a good mother."

"Her old fears. Did her mother or brother call?"

"No!"

"Good. I'm not sure her brother does accept her decision and stay out of her life."

"He comes close to her and I shoot him! He didn't help her, he doesn't belong into her life. Same for her mother. If they both don't stay out of Sara's life, they get in serious trouble with me. My mom has many friends with influence, I do have friends, who do me some not all that legal favors. They make my girlfriend sad and I make them suffer!" As much as Sofia

respected the law, when somebody hurt Sara, she didn't care about the law. Her life was Sara, her own law was her lover had to be happy, everything and everybody, who made Sara sad, had to be removed. No matter how.

Sara whistled once and twice to get the attention of Scooby and Rantanplan. Her dogs were busy with various traces, not really caring about her.

"Scooby! Rantanplan! Hey, get here. Now!"

"Your kids are better trained." Shane chuckled.

"We didn't and don't train our kids, they're just perfect. Unfortunately these dogs are too much a teenage Sofia, not caring what people ask them to do. Hey guys, want a treat? Yummy treat?" This worked. Both dogs came over to her, so she could put them on their leashes.

"You stay with me now. No more sniffing around, this is a on leashes area."

"Exactly, no extras for ranger dogs. Did Sofia call?"

"No, should she?"

"It's the second day, you know better than I do that it's possible there's a new body."

"Then she has to call Cherry, she's the medical examiner. Not me."

"You're her girlfriend, she informs you."

"No call so far and I hope there won't be one. They have one suspect in custody, the man, who drove the first victim's car."

"The one, you don't think is guilty."

"Yes."

"How long will he stay in custody? In case he's innocent."

"He has a damn good lawyer, he'll be out soon. Especially when they find another body today. In theory he might have a partner, who continues his work. Or their work. This is what Don will say and the lawyer will point out, there's no evidence to support this."

"No evidence, no proof, no conviction."

"For educated people it's: in dubio pro reo."

"Smart ass."

"University makes you smart, you should try it one day."

"I prefer to stay dumb. Oh, look at this." Shane stopped and pointed to broken pieces of glass. "They smashed at least a six pack, and I'm sure they did it on purpose. Want to hurt animals and other people. You have kids with you, they run ahead, stumbled and fall into broken pieces of glass."

Sara tied the dogs to a tree a few yards away and helped Shane to pick up the broken pieces of glass. Sometimes she wonderer what was going on in people's head. How could they do such a stupid things?

"Sometimes I wonder if we need cameras on every tree to make sure idiots are caught."

"Then you also need people, who watch the videos and make sure everybody is caught. Let's close the forest to the public, we watch over it and nature can do whatever it wants to do. No human being messing around."

"Nice idea, although I'm sure a lot of people will disagree with you. They like our forest."

"Also true." Sara picked up the last piece of broken glass and get the dogs to continue their walk. Another mile and they'd reach Bouquet Reservoir. There she'd ignore a rule and let her dogs get into the water for a short swim before it was time for them to go back to their car and check another trail.

"How far are you with the wedding preparation?"

"Hawaii is planned, all we have to do is pack our suitcases. The Los Angeles one is out of my hands, Marie wants to organize somebody to wed us before we fly to Hawaii. It will be a small ceremony, as we want to celebrate after we return from Hawaii. I do have your invitation with me."

"Seriously? Cool."

"Yep, it's in the...red pants!"

"Which red pants?"

"Red pants!" Sara repeated and pointed to something red under a bush. Now Shane saw it too.

"Do you think...?"

"Hold the dogs, will you?" She gave him the leashes and walked carefully towards to what she thought were red pants. With every step she came closer it looked more and more like she was right and when she stopped five yards away, she saw

shoes and two legs. Her eyes still on the scene she pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and dialed Don't number.

"Tell me it's a social call." He greeted her.

"I'm about a mile south of Bouquet Reservoir on the hiking trail and see red pants hidden under a bush. Before I get too close to make sure it's the same MO, send your ME and CSI here. There are definitely women shoes and when I look at the area around the bush, I can see more insect activities than anywhere else here."

"Fuck! We're on our way."

"Hurry up, I do my best to secure the crime scene." There was no need to get any closer. Red pants, dumped in the forest, the second day, everything pointed towards a new body of the Reservoir Killer. She doubted he had changed his MO and there was no hope the poor woman under the bush was still alive.

As much as Sara loved to see her lover, loved the fact she didn't have to wait until the evening until she could be with the woman she loved, she'd rather see the blonde on another occasion than for another murder case in Angeles National Forest. Watching Sofia leave the SUV, walking over to her, Sara paid extra attention to the long and slender legs. Not only because she liked these legs - especially when they were wrapped around her own - but because she wanted to know if her partner walked the way she used to. Doctor Bendler checked on Sofia, Sara wasn't entirely sure, the blonde would tell her if there were small problems. Not because she wanted to keep Sara out of her life but because she didn't want her to worry.

Pleased to see no difference in the way Sofia walked, seeing some of the famous Curtis swagger, she got her mind off the blonde's legs and back to the forest and the dead body she found an hour ago. The third in ten days.

"Are you all right?" Sofia asked when she stood next to Sara.

"Yes, I'm fine. Shane took the dogs to the car, they're not in the car, just behind it with water in the shade and he started to get names and photos of people, who were around. The killer won't be here, he dumped her during the night or late last evening,

but it will make it easier for you and Don to go through with your work. Hey Greg."

"Are you okay?" He pulled her into his arms. "Sorry you have to find another body again. You're not supposed to see them anymore."

"I'm fine, don't worry."

"Hello Sara."

"Cherry." Sara smiled at the ME. "Nice to see you although the reason why we meet could be nicer."

"Invite me to your wedding and it will be the best reason ever."

"You're right and your name is on the list. I didn't touch the body, figured she's dead as he has been more than thorough with his work the last times. Sofia, you find a little bench stick in the ground, it's where my last footprints are, so you know exactly how far I went and what my shoes look like. Not that you haven't got a print of them already. Greg, Shane and me secured a fifty yards radius from the body. We assume the killer used the hiking trail for less than a hundred yards. You can park on the road and be here within a minute or two. He must have carried here, there were no skid marks around, so he must have parked on the road and not driven into the forest. No cameras, no signs of people being here today. We did find some garbage, the usual stuff like paper wraps, bottles and cans, nothing that looked absolutely new. Besides I doubt he left anything behind, he's too good."

"There's the reason why I prefer her as a witness, she gives us a full statement, secures the scene and tells us all we need to know before we even ask. You're the dream of every CSI, Sara." Greg smiled.

"Thanks. You have to check everything, I didn't process the scene, only did, what I could do without endangering your case. Good luck with the rest, Shane and me will be around, give us a call when you have a question."

"What about fires?"

"So far no fires in this area, you can work without a hurry. If there is a fire, we let you know."

"Perfect."

"Do you have some spare time on your hands tonight?" Sara lowered her voice when she spoke to Greg. This was private, not for all the other people, who were around.

"Sure. Why?"

"I'd like to see you, have dinner with you."

"With me or my fiancé?"

"You can bring your fiancé and your kids, but if you want a night out, leave them at home. I want to have dinner with you, Greg" Sara repeated.

"What's wrong?" Usually Sara didn't ask for dinner this way. Was there a problem? Something he could help with?

"Nothing, I only want to spend some time with my best friend. If he has the time."

"I do have a sick kid at home, but your in-laws take care of Louise, so by the time I'm home she was at the doctor, Jules is back and chances are good, I can come over. Maybe I take the twins with me so Jules doesn't have to look after all three of them. One sick child is enough work, no need for two very active kids, who need an eye on them all the time."

"What's wrong with Louise?"

"Upset stomach or something like this. She'll be fine, the doctor promised and I'm sure Alison will also have a look after her. I give you a call when I'm done with work and know when I can be with you."

"Okay. If there's something with Louise let me know and we reschedule our dinner."

"I will. See you later, ranger Time for the CSI to work the scene. My beautiful blonde colleague has already started."

Sara looked over at Sofia, who was with Cherry with the body. Yes, her lover was already at work, taking photos, looking for clues, fibers and trace.

There was no visible difference between the new victim and the other three. Beside of the fact she was missing her left index finger. Her throat was slashed the same way, probably with the same knife, the pants she wore were two sizes too big. Sofia wondered if they would find any traces at this crime scene. Back at Bouquet Reservoir. Why? There were still police officers patrolling, not as many as after the second body,

they had to divide their people to Bouquet and San Gabriel Reservoir, but they were here. Then again, it was a big area, it was impossible to make sure nobody arrived and left without being noticed. Plus the possibility he could have dumped the body anywhere else in Angeles National Forest. So far it had been the only detail they knew. Maybe another important detail was Bouquet Reservoir, there had to be a reason why the killer came back here. Almost eighty miles between the two reservoirs, there were various reservoirs and lakes in between, why here? What was the connection? Was the killer located in the middle? Somewhere in the North Valley? Or did he live around one reservoir and worked close to the other?

"Do you think he carried her?" Greg asked when they had a break to drink some water.

"If he had taken the car to here we would have found skid marks. The road isn't far away, she is a small woman, an average strong man should be able to carry her from the road to here."

"Dead weight is heavier, he must have worked out, be strong. How heavy is she? Around one-twenty?"

"Would be my guess, maybe one-fifteen. How did he get her here without leaving anything of him behind? He must have wrapped her into something, an awning. Something smooth, with a clear surface. Not a blanket, there would be traces of it on the body."

"Thanks to all the crime shows on TV people learn how to commit crimes with leaving less and less evidence behind. They know what we can do and how they make less mistakes. These shows should be banned from television. It's not like they teach good people how not to become a victim."

"If you want to get all the shows off the screen that aren't helpful there wouldn't be much on TV anymore."

"No loss. Same for all these social network pages. They're more a problem than a help."

"Why? Did the twins ask to have their own Facebook page?" Sofia chuckled.

"No and they won't get one until they're at least twelve. There's no need the whole world knows where my kids are, what they're doing and what they wear. These pages are an El

Dorado for pedophiles...hey, maybe our victims are all on one these social web pages and the killer found them their."

"We can check. Are you done?"

"Yes, it's time to get back to the lab. Did Don call with any news?"

"No. Greg, if we're not mistaken the killer has already his next victim. We have less than thirty-six hours to find him and save her life."

"I know. And when we come back to the lab, there'll be a lawyer waiting for, wasting our time with the demands to let her client free. Mel will have heard about the new body and use this to get her client free."

"Honestly, I don't think he is the killer. He drove the car, I believe he found it, stole it. It fits the profile, there's no killer bell ringing."

"He's the only suspect."

"I know." And Mel won. Which didn't feel as bad as it might have felt a few weeks ago. She only hoped when they had the real killer the other woman wasn't his lawyer too.

"There's another thing that worries me." Greg suddenly said.

"What's that?"

"We had three bodies here and one at the San Gabriel Reservoir, the killer seems to know where the police is..."

"No!" Sofia stopped Greg before he could continue, knowing where he was going with his sentence. She didn't want to hear it, it was ridiculous.

"I know it's ridiculous, I know it's a waste of time but when this goes to trial the defense lawyer will ask why we never investigated in this direction.

"Because it's nonsense."

"We know that, Don knows it, but it doesn't mean a thing in court. There are certain rules we have to follow and when you find three bodies in one area, you have to ask the people, who are around. Not only hikers, also the ranger."

Which meant Sara. Especially Sara, she knew better than anybody else where the police was. Her lover as a suspect. Or person of interest. She couldn't ask Sara to come to the department and answer them questions. It was so wrong. Okay, Sofia herself couldn't talk to Sara anyway, they were engaged.

Neither Greg nor Don as their close friends could do it, meant, somebody else had to talk to Sara. What a waste of time. Her lover had nothing to do with this. The problem was, like Greg said, there were certain rules and one said, talk to all people, who were around. Officially. Especially when this person found three of the four bodies.

It was so weird to watch Sara being questioned by somebody. So weird and so wrong. Her lover didn't do anything wrong and yet she was in an interrogation room and was questioned about the Reservoir Killer case. If the brunette had any idea who killed all these women, she had told them already. She was on their side, not only because she used to be a CSI but national forest ranger were a kind of law enforcement too. They made sure their forest was safe for everybody, just like the police did in the city.

"She's doing good." Greg said. He was on a break from his work and joined Sofia, who stood behind the one way mirror and couldn't get her eyes off Sara. There was a lot of work on her desk, work she had to do, instead of standing hear and listening to what Sara was asked and answered.

"It's not like she can say something wrong, she's innocent. Not a suspect."

"We know this, when it wasn't her, she'd be a suspect. Mitchell is fair to her, asks all the questions he has to ask without implying anything."

"I know." Nevertheless she had preferred to have Don, Kyle or Lynn in the room with Sara and not detective Mitchell. He wasn't a friend; and that was the reason why he was there and not one their friends.

"I can't the day out of my mind when she was brought in here because she was suspected to be a drug dealer. She was so vulnerable and so pissed off. It took me ages to get her cleared and back home. After that her bouts started."

"You questioning her wasn't the reason why she had bouts, it was because of what Trevor did to her. Today is different, she is relaxed, she knows it's protocol and there are no reasons to worry about anything."

"If it was Jules sitting in there, would you worry?"

"Yes."

"See, she's in there, she's my fiancé, I don't want her in any possible threatening position. We don't have a suspect anymore, Sara makes a good suspect. She knows the forest, she knows where the patrol cops are, she knows how to leave no evidence behind and secured three crime scenes, had the time and possibility to hide evidence and tamper with the scene."

"Where's her motive?"

"There isn't one."

"See. Mitchell thinks the same, it's only to complete the circle. Why don't you get back to work and find the one, who is really responsible for the killings? I have the feeling we will get called in by a lawyer pretty soon."

"Mel can take her suspect, she doesn't need us to help her. When the judge, whom she will have called already, orders to let her client go, they can take off and we can continue with our work."

"We should do so."

"Yes we should." Sofia took one last look at Sara. Her poor lover, why couldn't she be with her? Make sure she was fine? It was her job as her fiancé to look after her.

"Mom, what are you doing here?" Steve looked surprised at Sara, who walked down the hallway of the police station.

"I could ask you the same, son. Are you here because you want to be here or because you were taken here? Did you throw with coke cans again?"

"No, I came here to see if Felix was released already. I heard about the new body in the forest and...was it you who found her?"

"Yes."

"Not again." He hugged Sara. "Mom says you're not supposed to see dead bodies anymore and I think she's right. You chose to be a ranger for a reason."

"Unfortunately killer don't ask your mother first before they dump bodies. It's better for the police when I find them, I can secure the scene."

"Is that why you're here? To bring evidence?"

"No, I'm here because I found three of the four women, that makes me a person of interest."

"I beg your pardon?" His eyes filled with fury. "They believe you killed the women? Are they nuts?"

"Hey, calm down, Stephen." Sara put her hand on his shoulder. "It's the rule, they have to do it. It has nothing to do with anybody believes I'm the killer, it's part of the procedure. They'd do this with anybody else, Shane had to answer the same questions. We were there, we had the chances to interfere with the crime scene, the knowledge where the police was and I know how to leave no traces behind. It's okay, they have to do it in order to go with a solid case to trial later. Otherwise the defensive lawyer can use this against them. I'm sure Mel can present you a couple of case, in which she did exactly this. It's nothing personal, they were all nice to me."

"It's a waste of time. Why did mom not talk to you? Or Don?"

"She's my fiancé, he's the father of my daughter."

"They know all the answers. Sofia knows exactly where you were all the nights and in the evenings. At home with us, where you belong."

"Yes, with my family."

"Hey Steo, how's it going?" Felix came with Mel out of a room. "Did they catch you?"

"No, I came to see if they let you go."

"Did you get me this ass kicking cool lawyer?"

"Me? Never." Steve grinned. "She's my boss."

"Seriously? Aren't you a little bit young to be a lawyer?"

"He works part time for me. Hello Sara."

"Is she your social worker?" Felix pointed to Sara.

"Nope, my mom."

"Since when do you have mom? The last time we met you didn't have any family."

"Things have changed, I've got the best mothers in the world. You met the other one too."

"I did? And why two?"

"Coz they'll get married soon, which makes me a very happy son. You met mom here, she asked you a couple of questions. A beautiful blonde woman."

"You're kidding! This hot chic is your mom?"

"This hot chick is my fiancé." Sara said calmly.

"Oh, lucky woman."

"You might want to consider your words, Mister Fisher." Mel advised. "Sara doesn't like it when people hit on her fiancé. And when she's done with you, there's no need for me because there won't be anything left of you."

"You know her?"

"Well enough to tell you to stay away from her fiancé. Not that you had any chance."

"Life is crazy. Okay, I'm free to go you said, thanks for your help, Mrs. Powers. If there's anything I can do for you, let me know. You find me somewhere on Hollywood, Sunset or Santa Monica, maybe 3rd Street or the Pier, depends on the day and the weather. I've to get my guitar. Want to join me, Steo? I think I owe you a coke."

"You owe me more than one coke, you owe me a whole burger menu. Mom, is it okay when I go with him?"

"Sure, you know what you're doing and from what I heard, this young man looked after you already once."

"Can't have a pretty boy like Steo killed by some junk, can I? Come on, baby boy, you mommy lets you go...does she have to approve everything?"

"Screw you! If you want to make fun of me because I love my mom and respect her wishes I'm going to punch the crap out of you."

"Thanks, I've got two witnesses now."

"I didn't heard a thing." Mel gave Felix a firm look. "Be nice to him or you get in trouble with an ass kicking lawyer. Out of my eyes now!"

"Yes Ma'am. Sexy mom, bye bye."

The women watched them walk away.

"So you got him out."

"He's innocent, like Steve said."

"Why did you become his lawyer?"

"Steve asked me. I like your son, there was no reason not to do him a favor. Now Mister Fisher is free a man again, Steve can come back to work tomorrow. Or enjoy his last days off, whatever he prefers. Or his mothers want him to do."

"He likes to work for you, why should we tell him to stay at home?"

"So he can help preparing the wedding?"

"There are no preparations necessary. The Honolulu trip is booked, we'll have a small party when we come back and my mother-in-law is looking for somebody, who weds us before we fly to Hawaii. You don't have - by any chance - anything to do with our marriage license? It appeared very quickly after we talked about it."

"Why would I want you be married as soon as possible? With every day unmarried I've got another chance to get you, show you I'm the better pick than...what was her name again?" Mel smirked.

"Not working on me, Mel. I heard through the grapevine you're in a relationship. Still. You've been together for a while now."

"Me?"

"Yes, she's a prosecutor, quite an interesting combination. What will you do when you and her are on the same trial? Working against each other?"

"Have hot and satisfying make-up sex later. I had no idea you are into the scene and their gossip. You're barely out."

"I've got two children, there's no time to go out and have fun all night. Besides, I've got my wife with me, why go out and look at second best choices?"

"You're a pretty good dancer, you enjoy dancing, your son is old enough to look after your daughter, he's pretty sensible too, the perfect babysitter. It would be nice to meet you again and have a beer with you."

"Why don't you come over to our wedding celebration?"

"Are you sure Sofia will not divorce you when I appear?"

"No, she knows you ordered somebody to work a few minutes extra to get us our license. She might even be thankful."

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"Wow."

"Don't get too excited, go back to work."

"What about you?"

"I don't go back to work, I go home and spend some time with my daughter after my son took off with your former client. You get your invitation for the celebration. See you around."

"What do you want for your wedding? Is there a wedding gift list?"

"Nope, there isn't. We have all we want. Us."

"You're sick in love. I come up with something more... not sick." The lawyer grinned. "Good luck for the wedding. I'm sure you'll be more than happy."

"Thanks." Sara smiled. She was also sure, she and Sofia will be more than happy. How could she not be happy when she was married to the most wonderful woman in the world?

"Kristin Zimmerman, twenty-four from Eagle Rock was a university student before she became our victim number four." Don put a file on Sofia's desk with a photo of their latest victim. "Her mother reported her missing this morning. They were supposed to have dinner last night."

Another sad story, another mother, who lost her daughter. Would the same happen to her one day? Since she was a mother she asked herself this question whenever she found a dead female body, a daughter of somebody. A daughter like Susan was. You were nine months pregnant with your child, make plans, look forward to watch her grow up, become a mother herself and then somebody takes her and all your dreams away.

"Is her mother here?"

"On her way. Do you want to join?"

"Could you ask Greg, please? I think I'm not...the right person today."

"I can also take detective Ricardo with me. She's still here, a pretty good cop. Shares some of yours and Sara's attitude."

"More Sara's, I'm not that rude." The blonde smiled.

"Without coffee you can be this rude. Okay, I take her with me. Did you find anything helpful?"

"No."

"Mister Fisher is released."

"How is...?"

"She's fine and at home."

"Good. Don, I get crazy with this guy not leaving anything behind. How is that possible?"

"I have no idea."

"Me neither." The blonde sighed. "I take Lynn with me and have a look at her apartment. I doubt we'll find a trace of him there, it's unlikely he abducted her from there, but we have to give it a try. Do we know where her car is?"

"Gone. Traffic is already looking for it."

"Maybe he takes the cars of the victims to his car. Steve's friend said he found the car and it was far away from the areas Charlene was."

"Was there anything on their laptops? Did they share anything?"

"They were all on Facebook, we checked their friends list, no hit. Which surprised me, Angela had like a thousand friends. Can she have possible known all these people?"

"Unlikely. Don't some just befriend others to have many friends? Like 'oh, we're, in the same group, let's be friends'. It will be hard to find anybody, who has only people on their friend lists, who he or she met already and call a friend in real life. Does your son have a Facebook account?"

"I have no idea. Maybe." Now she'd ask Steve later. Not that it was bad or she disagreed with it, she just wanted to know now. And did she need a Facebook page too?

"Nice little apartment." Sofia took a look around Kristin Zimmerman's apartment. It was an one bedroom apartment in Eagle Rock, on a side street.

"Yes, a pretty nice apartment for a university student. I don't see any evidence of a man in her life." Lynn looked closer at the photos pinned on the wardrobe. A lot of photos of Kristin, barely any with men on her side and when, it looked like they were only university friends.

"She had a job, worked part time as a waitress in a pub on Sunset. You make some good money in tips on a busy Saturday night. She was a good looking woman, I bet some men tried to get her attention by giving a generous tip."

"Or meet a killer."

"Or meet a killer." Sofia repeated. "I can't find her car keys or any other set of keys. She must have taken them with her, means, he took her outside."

"Or took the keys with him to drive the car."

"No signs of a struggle. Who would you trust? Trust enough to let him get close to you to overpower you?"

"We're talking about a stranger? Nobody. Except for all the people in the mall or in a supermarket on a busy day."

"I'm quite sure we can rule a supermarket and the mall out, too many witnesses. What when somebody rings on your door?"

"I don't expect being attacked when I open the door...and there should be a sign of it. She has a cabinet next to the door, there are frames on it, they look undisturbed. Blitz her with something like chloroform?"

"Take the keys, carry her in her car and take her to his car. I wonder why we didn't find the other cars. He left the first one."

"Which was a mistake, he might have realized that and hides the cars now as well. He is a smart guy, otherwise we had arrested him already."

"Do you think he is a cop?"

"Maybe. I did have a look for cops and CSI coming from Boston to Los Angeles within the last two years. Two. Kyle and me checked both, they've got solid alibis."

"You and Kyle spend a lot of time together at the moment."

"We work together, we're not getting back together, Sofia. We're both in relationships, we're happy and we're much better friends than we were a couple. He can't hold a candle to Dirk, who, believe it or not, doesn't forget any anniversary and treats me quite often with roses, candle light dinner and little gifts. How often do you give Sara little gifts?"

"Not often enough, she deserves more than I can afford."

"So do I."

"When will you make Dirk pop the question?"

"Next year. We're already saving money for our honeymoon, a trip through Europe. A huge party and then I want kids."

"You can have kids before you're married. Worked perfectly for me." Sofia found the diary of the young woman and opened it. The last entry was about some university party and that she had a good night at the bar, made a lot of money in tips. She

didn't mention anybody especially generous or annoying. Browsing through the pages she couldn't find a hint Kristin met one of their other victims. At one point, Sofia was sure, they were all at places like the Santa Monica Pier or on Hollywood Boulevard, but not together, not on the same day or even the same month.

"Shall we canvass the neighborhood? Ask when they saw her the last time? If she was with somebody?" Lynn suggested.

"You can start, I stay here a little bit longer."

"Honey, you know as good as I do that won't happen. The cop doesn't leave the CSI alone. Never. If the suspect comes back to the possible scene, the CSI needs to be protected. You are my CSI now, I take care of you and it doesn't matter - on the paper - you were my lieutenant before. If I leave it would be a violation of rules and three years ago it had gotten me into trouble with you. We both go or we both stay."

Sofia smiled. "I taught you well." No, Lynn wasn't allowed to leave her here alone. The blonde wouldn't mind, but as her friend pointed out so well, it would be a violation of rules and Sofia taught her officer better.

The good thing about her interrogation was she could go home early, something Sara really liked.

"Hey Marie, I'm off work early today, where is my lovely daughter? I can take her with me, give you an afternoon off."

"I'm only a few yards away from your house. Louise is sick, Greg asked Marc or me to look after her, he's with Susan in the park and I'm with Louise."

"How is she?"

"Better. One or two days and she'll be much better and ready to play with all the others again."

"Good. All right, my daughter is with her grandfather in the park, no need to call him and ask him to get her back to me, you're with Louise, the twins are still in daycare, my son is out with a former suspect..."

"What did you say? Where is Stephen? With a criminal?"

"Well, yes, he is a kind of criminal, his lawyer managed to get him out. I'm talking about the young man, who was arrested for killing the four women. He was in custody when the last one

was killed, it can't be him and there was no evidence he was ever close to one of the women. Steve and he met at the department again and Felix, the former suspect, invited Steve to a burger menu for helping him. Your grandson organized the lawyer."

"I need a serious conversation with him."

"No, this guy saved his life two years ago. Or saved him from serious injuries, I think he won't be a threat to your grandson."

"He better isn't. Is Sofia still at work?"

"Yes, she out with Lynn, looking at the victim's apartment."

"A former lieutenant protected by a officer."

"Two friends out doing their jobs, no ranks needed. Something smells odd here, burnt."

"Burnt? The car is on fire?"

"No, I'm on foot, went to the small seven-eleven around the corner to get some..."

A loud bang made Marie flinch. She didn't have to be an expert to know, something just exploded.

"Sara? Sara?" No answer. The connection was gone, the brunette couldn't hear her anymore. What did happen? And how was Sara?

After they talked to half a dozen neighbors they hadn't found anybody, who had seen Kristin with a man leave. Her neighbor, Mrs. Randall, saw her leave three days ago in the morning, around half past seven, the time she usually left for university. Their next destination was the university, get her class schedule.

"This woman, Mrs. Randall, seems to know everything what's going in this street. She's sitting behind her window, watching every step me make." Sofia said.

"Annoying on one side, very helpful on the other. If he had taken Zimmerman out of her apartment, Mrs. Randall knew about it, could give us a description."

"A license plate or told us, he took her car. We had a neighbor like her when I was younger, always at the kitchen window, observing you. As kids we believed she worked for the FBI and filed everything we did. Mom told my brother and me, when we do anything illegal, our neighbor will see it and report it to

the FBI, who would come and take us to a place for bad children, away from our family."

"Not a nice thing to tell your children."

"No, it worked anyway. We didn't dare to do anything until we realized, the old woman wasn't filling anything for the FBI, she was only bored and used us and the other kids as her entertainment. Actually, she was quite nice, she gave us lemonade once or twice when it was very hot."

"You lived in Vegas, there are only hot and very hot days in summer."

"Mostly, yes." Sofia got into the car. Another thing she had to get used to, she wasn't the driver all the time anymore. Most times she drove when she went to a crime scene, when she was investigating with a cop, she became more and more often the passenger.

"Want to drive?" Lynn read her mind.

"No, your car, you drive. I give Don a call, maybe he got some new information for us, he should be done with talking to Zimmerman's mother. If she could provide a name of a boyfriend or anybody else, we have another place to go." Sofia dialed Don's number. "Yo detective, got anything new? We didn't find any clues in her apartment and her neighbor told us, she saw Kristin leave three days ago at half past seven in the morning, the time she always left when she went to university."

"Her mother gave me the names of her best friends, I will talk to them. There was no boyfriend, her mom said, it had been a while that Kristin was in a serious relationship. Can you and Lynn go to her workplace when you're done at university and talk to her boss? I wonder she took some of the guests home."

"Yeah, we can do that. Any news on the car?"

"Nothing. She didn't tell her mother about any threads or men, who followed her. I've got a list with names of people she saw regularly. From her doctors to favorite supermarket to sport clubs."

"Okay...hold on, there's another call coming in." She checked the number of the call coming in. "Hi mom, can I call you back?"

"No, you can't. Sara had an accident. She's at the Hollywood Palms, not seriously injured and I'm with her."

"What did happen?"

"There was an explosion and the blast pushed her off her feet. She'll be fine, only needs a check-up."

"Mom, how serious?"

"When I have to guess she has the same you had after your first motorbike accident. See if you can come over, she could use her fiancé by her side. And you won't be able to concentrate on your work now anyway."

Her mother was right. Sara had an accident, Sofia had to get to her as fast as possible. The description her mother gave her, calmed her a little bit down. The same Sofia had after her first motorbike accident. A couple of bruises, scratches and a concussion. The trouble she got from her parents was worse than the injuries. Hopefully it was the same with Sara.

"How are you?" Sofia almost jumped into Sara's arms. There was her lover, on a bed in a hospital room. A bandage on her head and a right leg, as well as a couple of patches on her arms and leg and one on right cheek.

"I'm fine."

"You don't look like you're fine, what happened? Who tried to attack you?"

"Nobody."

"Sara, you're in hospital and you are covered in bandages and patches. Did somebody attack you?"

"It was an accident."

"An accident? What kind of accident?"

"Science accident."

"Here we are, I think I've got a *déjà vu*." Doctor Bendler came into the room. "You look like you had a rough day, Sara. Will you fight me today again like you did when we first met? I can't send you to Jules anymore, you know that."

"There's no reason for me to see a psychologist and I plan to see you son-in-law for dinner, Alison. He will tell Jules everything."

"We might find something to fight about if you're talking about dinner tonight."

"I do and I won't fight with you, only get up and walk out of the room and the building. You can't hold me against my will."

"Now, didn't I tell you years ago not pick up a fight with me? When I want you here for a night you stay, no matter what you want. I can you chain to the bed."

"Get real."

"Could anybody tell me what happened? And more important, how serious you're injured, Sara." Sofia stopped them. She wanted information before she went crazy about her lover being injured and in hospital.

"Your fiancé became part of a science project, chemistry, if I'm not mistaken. It wasn't planned the student is more than sorry for what he did, which doesn't change the fact you have a concussion and a twisted shoulder and ankle."

"Nothing serious, like I said."

"Serious enough to stay a night, be under the watch of a doctor."

"I'll be under the watch of a cop/CSI, at home in my bed, which is much better than a hospital. Oh, and there's a doctor in the house too. Just one level below me."

"A dentist isn't a help."

"Alison, I won't stay. Sofia can take me home, I lay down and relax, stay in bed until tomorrow and that's it."

"Tomorrow? You won't work for the next days. First of all you can't walk without crutches, which will be hard to handle with the bruised shoulder, and second, you need to rest longer. If I let you go..."

"There is no if."

"IF I let you go, and it's my decision and not yours, so IF I let you go, you stay in bed for the next two days. No walking around, no garden party, nothing. You can read unless you're having a headache, listen to an audio book or watch movies, I don't care, but you won't leave the bed for more than a short trip to the bathroom. Which reminds me, no showers alone in case you lose balance. And I want one of your in-laws with you when Sofia is at work. These terms are not negotiable."

"You're a nightmare."

"Ditto and I accept your agreement. Lean back, let me have another look at you."

"That's doctor harassment, worse than police harassment."

"Shut up, we want you fit for your kids and the wedding, it will take less time when you do what I tell you." Doctor Bendler checked Sara's eyes with a little flashlight, took a look at her ankle and moved her right arm a little bit. "Do you have painkillers at home?"

"More than enough."

"Not Sofia's you can share most things in a relationship, not your medication. Sofia, I want you to make sure Sara does exactly what I told her."

"I do my best but when I'm at work..."

"Don't worry, I talked to your mother, she promised me to make sure Sara stays in bed and I'm sure my daughter will have a conversation with her too when she comes over for to look after her. For you it will be dinner in bed, Sara. No sitting at the table, you have to lay down."

"Spoilsport."

"Whatever it takes to make you recover. All right, I want you to get your car at the front entrance, Sofia, while I organize a wheelchair and let somebody take Sara there."

"I don't need a wheelchair, some crutches will do it." The brunette protested.

"I said my conditions aren't negotiable. A wheelchair or you stay in this bed. Make your pick."

"You're not invited to our wedding anymore."

"If you don't listen to what I told you there might not be a wedding. You're both two very stubborn women, both very smart but absolutely unreasonable when it comes to your own health."

"We can look after each other." Sofia smiled a little bit. She would make damn sure her lover stayed in bed, if necessary she'd chain her to the bed....come to think about it, it was a nice idea, if Sara wasn't injured.

"Do that. Your mother took good care of my granddaughter I heard."

"Yeah, where is Louise? Did mom take her with her?"

"No, your father is looking after her while one of your housemates picked up Susan so she can't catch Louise's infection. Where's your son?"

"On his way to here, I called him. I call him again, tell him to go straight home, we're on our way too. Honey, stay in bed until the wheelchair is here. I know it's pretty humiliating but it's for your own best. Believe somebody, who has been through this. I love you and I'm so glad you're not seriously injured." Sofia bent over and kissed Sara. There were no words that could describe how released she was that Sara would be fine within a couple of days. Sofia knew better than anybody else how much different it could end when you were involved in an explosion. It had cost her half of her left leg, with a bruised shoulder, ankle and a concussion the brunette was off pretty good.

"Now tell me exactly what happened." Sofia put Susan next to Sara on the bed and their daughter tried to turn so she could face her other mother. The brunette picked her up and placed her on her belly, stroking softly with her finger over her daughter's cheek. Such an adorable child.

"I was on my way back from the seven-eleven when suddenly something blew me off my feet. A garbage can. Somehow I managed not only to fall on my right shoulder but also involve my right ankle in this incident and hit my head on the sidewalk. Luckily the wound isn't that deep, it will be invisible on our wedding photos when I use some make-up."

"I don't worry about our wedding photo, you'll look stunning anyway, it's in your nature."

"No, that's in your nature." Sara pulled Sofia closer and kissed her.

"Mom! Mom, are you all right?" Steve stormed into the room.

"Yes I'm fine, thanks."

"What happened?"

"I try to figure out the same since I saw her in hospital, she's withholding information."

"Sit down, Sweetheart." Sara patted on the mattress for Steve to sit down. Now her family was complete and with her. Perfect. Much better than being caught in a hospital room. She repeated what she just told Sofia.

"Who blows up a garbage can?" He wondered.

"A seven year old boy."

"You're kidding, right?"

"No. Little Stephen got a chemistry kit for his birthday and today he was doing an experiment. According to his plan the lit of the garbage can was supposed to pop off due to the reaction of some chemicals. Somehow he must have taken too much of everything and added some wrong chemicals to it as well and then not only the lit blew off but the whole can exploded. With quite a force. He was ten yards away, hidden behind another garbage can, as he was told in the book to watch from a safe distant."

"Where were you when the garbage can exploded?"

"Right next to it."

"Ouch."

"That's why it blew me off my feet. It was an unlucky coincidence."

"Will you sue the parents? Breach of duty of supervision?"

"No. I can't sue a boy who has the same name as my son and it wasn't his fault. Nothing serious happened."

"You are injured."

"Yes and his parents apologized a couple of times. No need to call your boss and give her a new case."

"I bet for you she'd work pro bono too." Steve grinned. "She likes you."

"She helped already enough with the marriage license."

"How? Did she...?"

"Yes, she did."

"How do you know? Did she tell you?"

"Your mom and me aren't stupid, we know Mel has some influence and we're thankful for her help. Aren't we Sofia?"

"As thankful as I can be when it comes to a woman, who hit on my fiancé."

"Mom, Mel's involved."

"We know. You, my son, have to help me with your other mother. She's supposed to stay in bed the next two days. I have to check with my boss if I can stay away from work tomorrow or at least come home at lunch time. Sara's special doctor will come over at one point, check if she's a good patient."

"Jules?"

"She's Sara's special doctor too, but I'm talking about Jules's mother. Jules and Greg will come over for dinner, their kids are taken care of by their grandmother."

"I want my baby boy here." Sara protested.

"Honey, you can't play with him, you stay in bed, cuddle with Susan and we get the dinner in the bedroom, have a kind of picnic."

"I can sit."

"You're not allowed to sit. Don't argue with me, I heard every word your doctor said and when you disobey I tell her."

"You're not the right person to judge, Mrs. Workaholic."

"I'm the right person to judge. You, mom, stay in bed and you, mom, will take a day off tomorrow. You worked already a week in a row. Go and talk to your boss about it, I stay here with mom and Sue and then I start with the dinner. Lea comes over too and I let Tanya know she needs to change your bandage tomorrow morning before she goes to work."

"She's dentist."

"So? She can change a bandage, she's a doctor and I'm sure she learnt this kind of stuff too."

"You all act like I'm half dead."

"Luckily you're not and because we want you fit for the wedding we make sure you stay in bed and relax. It's what a loving family does." Sofia kissed Sara. "I see if I get tomorrow off, Susan's suitcase needs to be packed too. You stay in bed."

"Bite me."

"I might do that later when we're alone. Start with the dinner, Steve, Greg and Jules will come over around six. Susan, make sure your mother stays in bed."

"My daughter is on my side, aren't you Susan?" Sara kissed her daughter. She was the only one, who didn't tell her what to do or not to do. Her daughter was a good to her, not like the rest of her family and the mean doctor.

"Mom told me you're still a nightmare patient and she suggests you should see a therapist because of that. So I'm here, tell me what happened and why you and her can't behave like adults." Jules sat on the edge of the bed, took Sara's hand. The smile on her face couldn't hide the worries in her eyes and she gave Sara

than just a good look over. "Does it need to be changed?" She asked, pointing with her chin to bandage around Sara's head.

"Tomorrow morning, Tanya will do it. She said, she hadn't done any medical work out of the mouth for a while but it won't be a problem. As long as she doesn't use a drill."

"Don't worry, she worked in a hospital when she was younger to earn some money, she knows the basic stuff and will not use anything else than a new bandage on you. Does your head hurt badly?"

"I took a pill, it's better now and the world doesn't spin anymore. Where are my babies and your wonderful boyfriend?"

"Greg's in the kitchen, the kids are at home. You need to relax and not children to play plus we don't want Susan to get Louise's stomach bug."

"I can relax with children, look at my daughter, she's asleep in my arms." Sara kissed Susan's head. A few minutes ago, after Sofia fed her, Susan fell asleep in Sara's arms, lay in her mother's arm and looked like this was the most peaceful place on earth. Probably it was for her, a kind of reminder of the months in the womb, warm, safe and close to the heartbeat of another human. Sara understood exactly why her daughter was so comfortable, the best sleep she had was when she rested her head on her lover's left shoulder, able to listen to the heartbeat and the breath. No sounds were more comforting.

"You look like a mother with her baby in one of these women magazines."

"I look happy."

"You do and I hope you are."

"Yes, this little accident doesn't change it."

"A young boy did this to you?"

"A science experiment going wrong, not his fault. I'm sure Greg told you what he did with his first chemistry set. You need little throwbacks on your way to master. Without mistakes you can't learn."

"You're a very understanding woman."

"I'm a mother, I can understand the fear of the parents. What if their son had been seriously injured? They're not only feeling sorry for me, they also blame themselves for what happened to

me and might have happened to their son. I doubt he'll be allowed to play with his kit alone the next years."

"There she is, all snuggled up with her daughter, a little bit bruised but still with this amazing smile." Greg came in the room. "A little advice, stop fighting with my mother-in-law, she the same kind of woman your mother-in-law is, you don't want to make them angry."

"I leave you alone and help Steve with the dinner." Jules got up.

"Is this what happens when your personal lieutenant is with you all the time? Or at least your favorite CSI? You should come back to me, work with me, I can look after you." He sat down and pulled her carefully in his arms without waking Susan up. "You scared me, Sara."

"Sorry."

"Not your fault." He kissed her cheek. "For a second I was reminded of what happened to Sofia."

"Strangely this thought never occurred to me. I felt the pain in my ankle, it had to be there and I could see it. Yes, there was some blood, my head hurt big time, but nothing that looked like I was seriously injured. Plus there were people right away, looked after me and the doctors were with me faster than I thought. Like they flew in."

"The Royal Flying Doctor Service? We're not in the Australian Outback but if they fly a little detour to help somebody in Los Angeles, it would be you, you're worth the detour."

"Thanks. Are there any news on your case?"

"No and it's not important now, you're important. Will you get fit for the wedding?"

"Of course! Alison looked after me, give me a few days and I can walk again without any pain, the wounds will heal and with some make-up magic I'll look good enough on the photos."

"You'll look breathtaking, Sara, you always do. Especially when you smile, a killer smile, that makes everybody fall in love with you."

"Stop hitting on me, your fiancé is outside and so is mine. Ouch." Laughing hurt, one or two of her ribs had to be bruised too.

"They don't have to know. Are you really all right?"

"Yes. I stay in bed tonight, also tomorrow to make Alison and Sofia happy and should be back to work on Monday."

"Monday? I doubt you'll be back on Monday, stay home until you're fit again. You're going to get married in a few weeks, you make sure you recover completely and then you go back to work."

"You sound like Sofia."

"It's because I love you too."

"Will you come with us? For the wedding?"

"Is that what you wanted me to ask? Why you asked me to come over? Invite me to Hawaii?"

"I know you can't have the week off and it's ridiculous and I shouldn't ask you this because it means you pay a lot of money for only a short trip and...can we forget it?"

"What does Sofia say about your idea? It's supposed to be a close family wedding. You, her and your two kids."

"I know...you're family too...you're the only family I have apart from the kids and Sofia's family." Her mother and brother weren't her family, they never had. Greg had always been there for her, always loved and supported her. He was her only family, not in DNA and blood, but when you married somebody, you became a family without sharing DNA.

"Like you said I can't leave for a whole week, Jules can't come with me...I can talk to her, to my boss and when they're both fine and if Sofia is fine with your idea too, I might be able to join you for two days. Fly over in the morning, arrive at noon, be with you when you get married and fly back the next morning so I'm back in L.A. in the evening. It's crazy, it's a lot of traveling time and barely any time on Hawaii, but I'd do it."

"Really?"

"You're my sister, when you want me around I'll be around."

"I love you!" Sara kissed him happily. "Thanks, thanks, thanks. You have no idea how important it is you're there."

"You want me and not my fiancé, that makes me proud."

"I love Jules, she's very important to me, but you're my little brother."

"I'm sure we can work something out, sis." He smiled. "First you get better, then we make your dreams come true. How about that?"

"We're having a deal." Sara was sure when she asked Sofia if Greg could join them, explained to her lover why it was important to her, her fiancé would agree. Greg as their visitor would make their wedding even better.

"When we take a photo of you and show it to our chemistry teacher he might understand why we prefer to stay out of his course. Chemistry is dangerous." Lea said and leant onto Steve's shoulder.

"Chemistry is a very interesting course and you need to go there so things like this don't happen." Sara disagreed.

"How can you think about school? We're right in the summer holidays."

"My parents placed my school books on the kitchen table this morning, a sign I'm supposed to have a look inside and prepare for the new year."

"I had my first lessons already."

"Flirting with Tanya aren't lessons."

"I don't flirt with Tanya, we're studying."

"Right, you flirt with Marlene."

"You know her?" Sara was surprised.

"Yes, met her today when Steve and me went to the surgery to have lunch. A place that smells like dentist isn't my favorite spot for lunch."

"Why did you go there then?"

"I was curious how the new...how did you call her? Burrito Girl ?Was. She's much better than Selena Gomez."

"Don't you keep any secrets from each other?" Sofia wondered. Lea seemed to know everything about Steve and knew it before his parents did.

"No, we keep secrets from our parents, if we kept them from each other, we couldn't have each others back."

"What are your secrets?"

"None of your business."

"Steve, don't you want to tell me a few secrets about Lea?"

"No mom, I don't."

"He's such a nice boy. How was your meeting with this Felix?"

"Good, it's fun talking to him, he played on his guitar later and I think he's pretty good. And he thinks you're sexy. A sexy

blonde, I will introduce him to Lea tomorrow, another sexy blonde."

"You want to set me up with a criminal?"

"He's not a criminal...okay, he steals food sometimes and takes cars for a joyride...nothing I didn't do too."

"You stopped. I hope."

"Yes, you stopped, we all hope." Sara sent a firm look at her son.

"Apparently, otherwise I'd end up in jail and afterwards in a state home because they take me away from you. Not a smart move. I like it here."

"Good."

"Somebody has to teach the little girl all the important things in life. How to have fun, help her sneak out later to meet her boyfriend." He smiled at his sister. "And look after Lea, she needs a lot of supervision too."

"I can do that myself."

"Sure you can but I can do it better."

Lea rolled her eyes. "Smart ass."

"Don't teach my sister this kind of words."

"She doesn't understand yet, the first thing she'll say is mom. Or nana. Depends. The captain does spend a lot of time with her and I'm sure she wants to hear her granddaughter call out for her grandmother. In a few months."

"Or weeks." Sofia said.

"Poor Susan, so much pressure on you. Stay with me, in my arms you can be a baby, no need to come up with words or whole sentences. I'm happy when you smile at me." Sara took Susan's hand and played with her fingers.

"She is nothing else than a baby. A stinky one. Come here, baby sis, I change you."

"And I take care of the dishes." Lea got up. "You need to rest, Sara."

"Thanks Lea, I'm aware of that, it's why I'm in bed."

"Stay there a little bit longer, Sofia can entertain you. Steve and me take care of Susan."

"Are you staying over?"

"Yes, I'm safe from my books here and we both are back at work tomorrow. One day and one week to go and then it's time for real summer holidays."

"Are you going somewhere?"

"Not sure yet, maybe to visit my grandmother up the coast for a few days."

"Up the PCH is a nice trip."

"Yeah, when Steve and me have our driver's license we want to drive up to Frisco."

"Sounds like a nice plan for the next summer holidays."

"Yeah, a week off from changing diapers. Wahoo." Steve grinned. "Sleep tight moms, I take Susan to bed."

"Thanks. Nice dreams, son." Sara smiled. It was annoying to be forced to stay in bed, on the other hand it was great to see how Steve looked after his sister and took responsibilities for her, gave his mothers some time alone.

"Do you think there are many things Lea knows about Steve and we have no clue of?" Sofia asked when they were alone.

"A couple, we didn't tell adults everything when we were young, you share your secrets with your friends. I'm sure there aren't any bad secrets."

"No...and I'm glad they have each other. She's a wonderful friend."

"They make a great team and I'm glad her parents don't have any problems with her staying or the other way around. Steve does sleep in the guest room when he stays over, she sleeps in the guest room too - most times. And she isn't jealous because of Marlene. Poor Steve, he doesn't have an excuse to go over for lunch when Tanya is in New York, not that he will have much time when he's with Mel again."

"Whom I invited to our wedding party today." Sara confessed.

"I thought something like that. After what she did she deserves an invitation."

"I did something else regarding our wedding."

"What's that?" The blonde snuggled into the arms of her lover. Five minutes to relax before she'd get them both into the bathroom.

"I asked Greg to be around when we get married on Hawaii. I know we said it's family only..."

"He is family."

"Yes. I...I think I'd feel like something is missing when he isn't there. He can't come over for the whole week, but maybe for two days. Would that be okay for you?"

"Of course. He'll be my brother-in-law. Are you mad when I don't invite my brother to Hawaii?"

"No." Sara laughed and kissed Sofia. "Thanks."

"For not inviting my brother? You're welcome. I did invite him for the party afterwards."

"Of course, he's your brother."

"The first time he'll be here in...a long time."

"Let's hope my brother doesn't show up, he's screwed up enough to ruin everything with his appearance."

"There'll be one or two or more cops around, who are more than happy to arrest him. Or we let Tony shoot him. He saved you once."

"Yes." Sara chuckled. Looking at this from a distance it was quite funny. Hopefully Sam stayed away, there was no reason why he should know about their wedding, they had no contact, no common friends.

Friday, August 9th

When Sara woke up, her head and the rest of her body hurt she was confused before she remembered why she felt this sore. The explosion, the bruised shoulder, ankle and the concussion. Her left hand moved away from her own body, looking for her lover. The sheets were still warm but the place next to her was empty. Sofia must have left her a few moments ago. Hopefully she'd come back. The blonde could stay at home today, there was no reason why they should leave the bed early. Maybe her lover got Susan, fed her, took her with her to their bedroom and they all could snuggle up and enjoy a lazy start into the day.

Five minutes later she was still alone in bed and didn't want to wait anymore. Carefully she got up, closed and opened her eyes few times when the room started spinning. Slowly, very slowly. Step by step she got to the door and walked into their own little kitchen area upstairs. Steve was sitting at the table, eating his cereals and reading the newspaper online while Sofia breastfed Susan and listened to the radio. When she saw Sara she smiled before her face worried.

"You're pale, you shouldn't walk."

"Good morning." Carefully Sara sat down and closed her eyes.

"You were gone, I was lonely and felt like I need to find you and get you back to me. And I want to see the bathroom too."

"I come back as soon as Susan is ready with her breakfast, bring you your breakfast."

"Mom, are you feeling all right?"

"Yes Steve, I'm fine beside all the pain. Can I have some painkillers with my breakfast?"

"Sure, I get them and I get you to the bathroom." He got up and offered her his arm.

"I'm not that old."

"No but you're not steady, let me help you, you'd do the same for me."

She couldn't argue this. "Will you say goodbye to your sick mother before you leave?"

"Of course and I'll be back for lunch."

"Very nice, your mother likes it when you come home early. Does Lea come over too?"

"She has to work until five. I have to wake her up when I leave which is in ten minutes." It was twenty-past seven, he had to leave at half past seven to be in the office at eight. Lea didn't have to start until nine, so she could sleep longer.

"You're like an old married couple."

"That's why we don't have sex, old married couples sleep in separate rooms and don't have sex anymore. Get used to the thought, you'll be married soon."

"This won't happen to us." Sara slapped her son playfully.

"Don't worry, your mother and I will have a lot of sex after our wedding ceremony, that's why you have to take care of your sister in the honeymoons."

"I don't need more details, thanks. Lea, wake up! It's time for you! No more sweet dreams of me." He gave Sara a slap on her rear end and turned to the guest room.

"Did you just...never mind." No reason to discuss this issue with him now. She needed to sit, the room started spinning again and she felt a little bit sick.

With Susan in her arms Sofia came into the bedroom, where Sara was in bed, looking out of the window.

"Here is your happy daughter, ready for a few minutes of playtime with her mother before she needs some more sleep. Why don't you entertain her and I prepare your breakfast. Breakfast in bed, isn't that nice?"

"Will you feed me?"

"Yes."

"Can I eat from your sexy body?"

"If there weren't any kids around and you weren't on sick leave, yes. Wait three more weeks and you can eat whatever you want off me."

"Such a long time. How about tonight?"

"Maybe." Sofia smirked and left the room, trying not to look too much like she was on a flight. Sweet, sweet temptations. A half naked Sara in her bed, asking her to provide food she could eat off her. Having Sara lick jam or honey off her was...making her losing her mind if she couldn't cool herself off. Lea was still in the kitchen, Susan in the same room and

there was the possibility Tanya came up any minute to change Sara's bandage.

"From whom are you running away?" Lea asked when the blonde stormed into the kitchen.

"Myself. There are sometimes moments in your life when you have to run otherwise you might do something you don't regret but which is not appropriate at this time."

"Oh, let me guess: a half naked Sara in your bed."

"Yes."

"Tough one."

"Very tough."

"I can give you some privacy."

"Thanks, but we have Susan in the room and Sara needs her bandage changed by Tanya."

"Who will take your daughter with her tomorrow."

"With her and Don. We have Steve...and you?"

"Well, I'm not sure what my parents say when I stay here for a whole week to replace Susan. When we say you need me here for wedding preparation they might understand."

"You want to do flower decoration?"

"I work not too far away from a wedding shop, my shop wouldn't be such a big help...unless you want a weird wedding." Lea worked in a little shop on Sunset Boulevard, that sold unusual decoration and hardware. From little things like a Marilyn Manson salt shaker, Steve bought for Greg, to decoration, books or a shower head Lea gave as a late birthday present. It changed it color every five seconds, make her having a shower like an old disco experience.

"Actually I'd love to have some unusual stuff for the party. Nothing is more boring than an ordinary wedding...gosh...do you think a theme wedding is...too strange?"

"You're from Vegas, the most famous place for theme weddings. What do you want? Elvis?"

"No...something Sara likes...got an idea?"

"Maybe. Yes."

"What?"

"Sorry, I think I talk about this with Steve and when he likes the idea, it will become your surprise party theme."

"He's with us on Hawaii."

"He has me, I prepare everything and I'm sure I find some helping hands. Your parents should love my idea too."

"What is it?" Sofia asked again, very patiently. Or was it more suspicious?

"You'll love it. Almost as much as Sara." Lea got up. "Go back to your better half, I'm off to work. See you later, blonde mom."

"Later, older daughter...you must have my DNA, this blonde hair isn't Sara."

"No, all yours."

"Mine is in the bedroom." She checked her tray again. Coffee, cereals, toast, fruits, cheese, jam and honey. All Sara needed. Time for a breakfast in bed for the love of her life.

"Mom and dad are looking after Louise again." Sofia read the text message she got from her parents. "She's still not fine, not that bad that she needs to see the doctor again, but not well enough for day care. I bet they talked Jules into this so they have a baby around after we told them we're here with Susan. They're addicted to babies."

"They love Louise, the twins and Susan and since they're looking after them they look much younger."

"I won't tell mom you think she looked old before she looked after Susan." Sofia grinned.

"Marie never looked old, but she looks much younger now. There's a difference. You don't look like you did when we met first, but you look younger than you are. And you're the most beautiful woman in the world. I'm going to marry the most beautiful woman, which makes me the happiest and luckiest woman on earth."

"No, that's my job. How is your head?"

"Much better. Caffeine helps. A great mix with pain killers."

"I'm not sure about that."

"You know what the best medicine is?"

"What?"

"Come here!" Sara grinned.

"And then?"

"I show you."

Slowly Sofia walked from the balcony door to the bed and got pulled into Sara's arms, who groaned when the weight of the blonde fell on her bruised ribs.

"You're okay?"

"Stupid ribs, they don't like you close. The rest of my body and my heart and soul can't have you close enough." Carefully Sara managed to get on top of Sofia. "Susan sleeps, doesn't she?"

"Yes."

"Good. Everybody is at work, we have the place for ourselves. Any idea what we can do with an empty house?"

"How about a big party? Invite all the neighbors."

"One possibility. What else?"

"Eat all the sweets and ice cream."

"Another possibility. What else?"

"I don't know, what do you suggest?"

"How about we practice a little bit."

"What shall we practice?"

"Our wedding night. I need to know a few more things, like do you prefer my lips here." Sara lowered herself and sucked on the left side of the blonde's throat, who had problems to control her breathing. "Or is this side better?" Sara changed to the right side, making Sofia moan. "Or do you like it best when I do it right in the middle." She kissed the middle of the front side of the throat.

"Gosh..."

"You seem to react to all three very good. Interesting."

"Like it's very interesting." Sofia gasped for air. "What your left hand is doing."

"Oh, I didn't notice it is doing anything." The brunette smirked coy. Her left index finger was rubbing over the right nipple of the blonde, teasing it, pinching it softly.

"It is."

"I see...you seem to react to it."

"Honey, you're having a concussion and a bruised..." Sara pressed her mouth on Sofia's, her tongue demanded entry to play with the tongue of the other woman while her left leg pushed Sofia's legs apart and her left hand went straight down to find her lover very wet and hot. The little cries that escaped

in between kisses showed the brunette the protest had been a fake, not real.

"Sara, what about...?"

"Ssh, I so don't care about the pain, I want you and I can feel you want me too. Now. And not next week. We have to use the time we're not married."

"Because there won't be any sex after the wedding?"

"Only sex with the person you're married with. These two weeks are our last chance to have sex with somebody we're not married to."

"When you say it like this it's...ohmygod, don't stop that!"

"I have no intentions to." Sara lowered her head again and sucked on the blonde's throat. There'd be a massive hickey later, but she so didn't care. She wanted and needed Sofia now and the blonde felt the same.

"I'm not sure Alison put me on a sick leave to have sex in the late morning." Sara let her finger ran over the soft skin of her lover's upper arm, having her head rested on the blonde's shoulder and her eyes closed.

"It might have not been the best for your shoulder and ribs."

"They did complain but the rest of my body adored every second. I feel much better now."

"Do you? No more headache?"

"Only a bit. All in all my state of mind is happy now. Satisfied."

"My state of mind is wondering what I can do have this every morning?"

"Win the lottery so we don't have to work anymore."

"Right, I give it a try after you married me. I mean, when I make Sara Sidle marry me, I am a lucky woman and the lottery should be a walk in the park."

"Funny." Sara slapped her lover playfully.

"We ignored the phone twice, shall I have a look who tried to reach us?"

"I get the phone, you have a look after our daughter, maybe she is awake and wants her mothers with her, wants to play with them. A little walk..."

"You stay in bed, you heard what your doctor said, no walks, only the bed. I get Susan and some ice for your ankle while you can check the phones." The blonde kissed her lover on the forehead and got up. Sara was ill and she had to stay in bed, it didn't change that she seduced her before, they had sex in bed, and being in bed was the rule. Doctor Bendler didn't say Sara couldn't have sex.

"I will feel ill when you treat me like I'm half dead." Sara took the cell phones. On her own and the one of her lover was a missed call, both were from Marie. Unlike other couples they had no problems when the other one checked the cell phone. Not that Sara checked Sofia's cell phone every day, why should she, but she had no problems when her lover read her messages. There was nothing to hide.

"Hey Marie, you tried to reach us."

"I did. Aren't you in bed?"

"Of course, Sofia doesn't let me go anywhere."

"But you were too tired to answer your cell phone?"

"We were too busy with a new way of therapy."

"I can imagine your way of therapy, the house is empty, Susan asleep."

"Yes."

"Your mother-in-law disturbed you because she has some important wedding news for you."

"You never disturb, when we're busy we just don't answer our phones. Are you coming over for lunch?"

"No, Marc and me stay with Louise at Greg's place. You and Sofia need to ask for a day off before you fly to Hawaii."

"The Friday? We have it off because we need to pack our suitcases and prepare everything for the trip."

"You might want to do that a few days earlier. You'll get married on Friday; legally. Which is in two weeks, start to send out the invitations today. An old friend of mine, who is a Justice of Peace, can wed you in the garden. Say around three in the afternoon."

"Are you serious?" Marie found somebody, who would wed them before the Hawaii trip and do this in the garden? So they could invite their friends and have a little wedding celebration

afterwards? Those were the best news since they got the marriage license.

"I don't joke about my daughter's wedding, I've been waiting for her to get married since she's twenty-one. Can I give him a call and tell him you take the appointment? Or do you want to call me back after you talked to Sofia?"

"She's here." Sara looked at her lover, who came with Susan on her arms in the room. "Honey, would you like to marry me today in two weeks? In our garden?"

Stunned she looked at her lover. "I beg your pardon?"

"Your mother found a Justice of Peace, who can wed us in two weeks, here in our garden. If it's okay with you?"

"What a stupid question, of course it's okay with me. More than okay." Sofia took the cell phone. "Mom, I love you! Of course we want to get married in two weeks, tell me what we have to do?"

"You have a list with things you need for the wedding, cross off the judge, you have one. Do the rest, write invitations for the wedding, prepare the garden, make sure you have packed all your things for Hawaii so you don't have to worry about them on your wedding day. Make sure Sara is fit for the wedding and have enough breaks so you're fit too."

"We do have a lazy day."

"I'm sure you were very active and that's why you didn't answer my call. If you need any help with the party let your father and me know, we can organize some snacks and drinks. I assume you don't want a big party, as you have planned one for September."

"Yes, we want the ceremony and afterwards coffee, champagne and finger food. Gosh, it becomes so real, Sara, we need to make a list with people we want over on Friday. Not too many people, we should go to bed early, the flight to Honolulu is at ten, we need to be at the airport by eight, get up at six. Latest."

"Honey, calm down, you will make it without a problem, your father and me are there, Don will be back and helps you, your son is a smart boy, who can arrange a lot of things, all you have to worry is yourself and your daughter."

"Thanks. Steve will be delighted to hear about his moms getting married so soon. And he'll look so cute in a tuxedo...oh, we need to buy one..."

"Send your father with him, let them have a men's afternoon in the shops."

"Good idea."

"Louise is crying, I have a look what she needs. Talk to you later."

"Thanks mom. We owe you big time for the judge."

"Just get married to the wonderful woman and I'm more than happy."

"So am I, so am I." Sofia sighed happily, ended the call and kissed Sara. "We have a wedding date. Two more weeks. Time to panic because we haven't planned anything and there are so many things to do."

"Grissom once said something like if you want to go fast, go slow." The brunette got her left arm around the blonde and pulled her closer. "Why don't you sit here with Susan and me and we think about what to do next, what is important and what we can skip because we don't really want it."

"Okay...do you want to invite Grissom?"

"Is this your first question when it comes to our wedding?"

"No, it just crossed my mind after you mentioned him and it is a part of the guest list. I don't want too many people around on Friday. My parents, our housemates, Kyle, Lynn, Greg, Jules...or shall we invite our old colleagues?"

"I think we should invite them to the party in September. Like you told your mother, we need to go to bed early so we can get up at six and prepare for the flight. When we start the celebration at three, it's over fifteen minutes later..."

"You sound so romantic!"

"Sorry, it's a matter of fact. Then we sit with them in the garden, have a few drinks and end the party around eight, which gives us enough time to clean up and prepare the last things for the flight. So, you can give me the laptop, I write the invitations, send them via email. Not the classic style, but easier and faster. Not to mention cheaper. I prefer to spend my money on my wife or the party and not on paper."

Second, while I'm taking care of the invitations you can have a look in the garden, where we want to get married, how many seats we have, if we need some more. Then you can come back, we take another nap, watch a movie, talk about our wedding, have Susan in our arms and plan what we give your mother for doing us this huge favor. Also how much we pay the Judge of Peace."

"With the last question my mom might help us out, if he or she is a friend of hers, she will know how much we should pay. We should send an invitation to my brother, right?"

"Yes. He's your brother, we should let him know about the ceremony. Does he know we'll fly to Hawaii on Saturday?"

"Not yet."

Sara grinned. "You might want to call him while we're in the garden. Any special high school friends you want there?"

"No. Our Vegas colleagues, if they have the time. I decide if I want my old volleyball team there, probably not."

"You decide, Susan and I start with the invitations." Sara laid Susan next to her, took the laptop and started it. Two more weeks and they'd be married. Legally married. Legal parents of Susan, a real family.

"Hey." Steve smiled when he saw Marlene.

"Oh, hi, what are you doing here? Tanya doesn't make a lunch break today, she'll go home in ten minutes."

"I know."

"Are you a patient or his girlfriend?" Marlene looked at Lea.

"No to both. I'm here because we use Tanya as a taxi back home."

"Her last day at work."

"Yes, I'm sure we'll have a barbecue party tonight, celebrate her last evening before she and Don take my baby sis to the Big Apple. Why don't you come along? Our garden barbecues are fun and pretty good."

"No, the BF and I are having a weekend on the yacht."

"Also nice." Lea said. "Although I can't imagine any better place than Steve's mother's garden. Their barbecues are perfect. You should give them a try."

"Who is perfect?" Tanya asked.

"You, of course." Steve grinned.

"Oh, my sunshine, you're such a wonderful man. It's a pity I'm taken, but when I leave my boyfriend for you he might shoot us both. You know he has a gun and shot people before. We can't be more than friends." She messed up his hair.

"Such a shame."

"I know. How is your mom?"

"Annoyed she's in bed and they have a big surprise for us."

"In this case we should go home ASAP. I'm off Marlene, see you in one week. Enjoy your holidays."

"At work? Thanks, I will. Have a good time in New York."

"I will. Shall we go? I'm hungry and want to know what the surprise is. Maybe they decided to come with us to New York because they can't live without Susan for a week."

"Doubtful, they have to work."

"Why aren't you at work?"

"I worked three hours today, Mel says we have to make sure not to become illegal with me working too many hours. Lea's boss care about these things."

"No, he likes it when I work a lot."

"How comes you're here and not at work?"

"Steve had Lynn taken him to the shop, when my boss saw her in her uniform he told me it was time for me to go home." The girl grinned. "Before the cop starts asking how long I worked. She can come along more often."

"I thought you like your job."

"Of course, which doesn't mean I don't want an early weekend."

"We all want early and long weekends." Tanya got into her car.

"So, what do you think about Marlene, Lea?"

"Her boyfriend has a yacht, she prefers to spend the weekend with him, what can I say? She seems nice but I'm not sure if she wants to spend her weekends with the XBOX, on a beach with a little picnic or a walk with your baby sis. Her boyfriend is upscale and you're just a normal boy. And younger."

"What is it with women and the age thing? Age doesn't matter."

"Yes it does."

"Bullshit. This one year."

"Give it another ten years and one year doesn't matter anymore. With sixteen it matters, younger boys are children."

"Girls." Steve rolled his eyes.

"Look on the bright side, you know now she doesn't want to go out with you and you learnt this without losing your face. Gives you more time for Lea and the preparation for your mothers' wedding." Tanya said. "Marlene is nice, I like her, but there are more nice girls out in this city. The nicest one is in this car and your best friend."

"I know and I love Lea dearly."

"Oh, you're so cute. I love you too."

"And I'd so love to see you as a happy couple...even when it would fuck up all the friendship. So leave it, stay friends, it's better to be friends than lovers for a while and then you lose each other. Show it's possible for boys and girls to be nothing more than friends."

"Amen." Lea blinked at Steve. Their relationship was perfect, why change a thing?

Sara hated to admit to herself she still had a headache and felt a little bit dizzy when she walked to the bathroom. Staying in bed was the best option for her, if she liked it or not. On the bright side, she got a lot of time with her daughter this way. Susan slept in her arms or next to her, she could see, feel, smell and hear her all the time. They didn't spend this much time together since Sara went back to work. On her days off she didn't have the time to stay with her daughter all the time, there were too many other things to do, no time to watch Susan sleep. And she looked so beautiful.

There was the other reason why being in bed all the time wasn't the worst option today. Her fiancé was here, she spent most her time in bed with Sara.

"I think we can fit twenty people in our garden. When Greg, Kyle and Lynn can borrow us a few chairs we'll be fine." The blonde took the camera on the desk and took a photo of Sara and Susan. "You look like this is exactly what you want, your dream in live."

"Being with my fiancé and my daughter? Yes, I like this a lot."

"Your son is home too, he's downstairs, preparing lunch with Lea."

"Oh, she's back?"

"Yes, Lynn took Steve to the shop and Lea's boss feared the question of the officer, how long his helper had been on duty today or the whole week. She worked already thirty hours."

"They both work too many hours. Her parents don't tell her nor her boss off, we didn't tell Mel to give Steve less hours."

"No, he enjoys his time there and as long as he isn't too tired at the end of the day, I don't want him to slow down. It's only one more week before he needs to concentrate on his study and Mel did tell him, the last two weeks are not for work." Sofia made a face. "She's too nice, I can't hate her anymore."

"Poor darling, want to kiss me? Maybe it makes you feel better."

"Kissing you makes me always happy." The blonde sat next to the brunette and kissed her. "Two more weeks. There are already a few pins and needles in my stomach."

"Second thoughts? Now that it's getting serious?"

"No! Of course not."

"Good."

"What about you?"

"No, all gone. Jules did a good job. As usual. I'm sure I won't be a terrible wife and our love won't stop because we're married. And if one of us or we both wake up one day and our love is gone, I'm sure we had a wonderful time as a married couple. There's no guarantee for anything, but when you don't risk anything, you'll never have great experiences."

"I honestly can't imagine to live without you. With every day we're together this feeling grows stronger and stronger and I love you more and more."

"You are my life and the thought of being without you is like imagine somebody rips out my heart." Sara snuggled into Sofia's arms. "You gave me everything I ever dreamed of, I feel love in a way I never felt before, you gave me children, a home, you made my life complete. Not to marry you would be more than stupid and I'm a way too smart person to do something stupid."

"Absolutely. Our wedding is the only sensible thing we can do." The blonde agreed. "The head and the heart agree, so it must be right."

"I'm glad we made a rational decision, as a scientist I can live with them best."

"Science isn't always helpful, it blew you off your feet."

"Bad luck."

"Do you need to sleep a little bit?"

"No, I'm fine."

"I'm glad to hear that." Tanya marched into the room, followed by Steve and Lea. "I can see you're getting special blonde treatment, looks like it helps you a lot. Sit upright, the doctor will check your eyes now."

"You're a dentist, not a..."

"I'm a doctor, sit." Tanya sat down and took a little torch. "My aunt told me to look after you, I don't risk trouble. Follow the light."

"Usually when you follow the light you're dead, I don't want to die, I have two children to look after and a wedding to come. Two."

"From what I see you can have two more of each. Did you stay in bed?"

"Yes. Only bathroom trips."

"Good. As a special treatment you're allowed to join us at the barbecue tonight. Sitting on something comfortable, that allows you to lie down."

"We're having a barbecue tonight? I didn't know this."

"Steve invited Marlene over, she declined because her BF and she have a yacht date. In case she wakes up and realizes Steve is the better choice we need the barbecue." Lea explained.

"Ah okay. Do you approve with his choice?"

"She seems nice and that her boyfriend has a yacht mustn't mean he's a jerk. Sometimes rich people can be cool too. Lou is the best example. Shall we invite him for tonight?"

"Why not."

"If you kids want a barbecue party, you organize it. Sara stays in bed, I stay with her. We have a few more things to organize for the wedding. Today in two weeks we'll get married. In the

garden and legally by a Justice of Peace. Mom called an old friend and he agreed to do us this huge favor."

"Really?" Steve hugged his mothers. "We'll be a real family? No, we are a real family, but the rest of the world will accept us as a real family?"

"Yes. Granddad will get you tomorrow morning, time to buy a tuxedo."

"Oh, you'll look so cute in a monkey suit." Lea teased.

"You have to wear a skirt. Otherwise you're not invited."

"Don't listen to him, Lea, you can wear whatever you want, you're always welcome at our wedding. So are your parents. Our son needs a tuxedo, he's the best man. I'm not sure what Susan should wear, we might have to go shopping for her." Sara said, looking at her daughter, who lay on her back, hands and feet in the air, catching invisible flies or other things and laughing at them. She had fun and was happy around her family.

"It's getting serious, so serious. You're on your way into the trap. No, you're already caught with one toe. Your chance to turn and run before you're caught completely. Act fast and smart, run away. With me." Jules pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "I'm so glad you get married before Hawaii. You deserve a honeymoon as a legally married woman."

"Thanks. You'd run away with me?"

"No. I want to marry your best friend, who will fly for two nights to Hawaii."

"Are you mad?"

"Honey, I love you, I know he's important to you, if you want and need him there, I want him there too. Your parents offered to help me with the kids, they will invite the twins over for these two nights, Louise and I will stay with my parents, a nice change for us too. I don't want to be in the house without Greg. It feels empty and wrong."

"You're sweet - and so not rational; finally." Sara snuggled into Jules's arms. "Thanks for letting him go. He's closest thing to family I have...well...you know what I mean."

"He's your best friend for over ten years, he's more a brother to you than your brother. I know what you mean."

"I want to pay for his flight ticket."

"I'm not sure he likes that."

"Can you make him like it?"

"No, your brother, your discussion. I'm glad you'll be my sister-in-law soon, which makes Eric, Jorja and Louise your nephew and nieces."

"Yeah, my baby boy. Where is he?"

"Outside, playing with his twin sister while his little sister is with her grandmother. She gets better, I hope we can take her here on Sunday."

"Poor baby. I want to see my boy."

"Sofia told me you're allowed to leave the bed when they prepared everything outside and you can sit or lie there."

"Tanya checked on me, she says I'm better."

"Your dentist plays GP? Interesting. Did she pack her suitcase?"

"Yes and she packed Susan's too. Together with Sofia, who gave your cousin a million instructions about our daughter. Not that you won't tell her the same tomorrow."

"She takes our daughter away for a week. How would you feel when she takes Louise away?"

"I wouldn't give her my daughter unless Don comes with her. He's the responsible one."

"He's perfect with babies, a real daddy. Hopefully he can change her mind about their own children."

"No, he can't." Jules shook her head. "It has never been Tanya's wish to be a mother, no matter with whom she was together. Another reason why she got divorced, her husband wanted children. She loves Susan, Louise, Jorja and Eric, but she hates the idea of being pregnant. If he wants children with her, it has to be the same way he had a child with you. Through an surrogate mother."

"Maybe they do agree on that. Do you believe they stay together? You said once, you knew Tanya's wedding wouldn't last forever."

"It was obvious the day she got married. My cousin does like to do crazy things, we all knew we couldn't talk her out of it. Some people want to make mistakes to learn from them. Don and Tanya...I don't know if it's forever, nobody can tell, but I

have a good feeling for them. He knows how to handle her, he keeps her on a short leash without taking away her freedom. She likes the fact he has a real 'man's job', likes sport, video games and is a family person, who respects her wishes. They have a lot in common, which is very helpful."

"Absolutely. I will say a little prayer they get married one day."

"I had no idea you believe in God."

"Who said I pray to a God? I'm saying my prayer to the universe, the universe is pretty good in making wishes come true. I brought me Greg, gave me you and two kids and made me fall in love with the most wonderful woman in the universe, who loves me too. The universe is perfect."

"Mom, do you mind when I give Felix a call and invite him over?"

"Since when does he have a cell phone? When we wanted his number, he told us, he doesn't have a phone." Sofia asked.

"Lea gave him one of her old phones and I bought him a sim card yesterday. Now we can call him."

"Track him."

"Mom!"

"He is a criminal."

"He's a friend. Can I call him or is my friend not welcome?"

"You make sure he doesn't cause any problems."

"Yes mom."

"A special delivery." Greg carried Sara out in the garden and placed her carefully on a sun lounger. "You stay here, I get you a blanket and a drink."

"We have over eighty degrees, I don't need a blanket."

"At one point you might need one. We don't want you to catch a cold." He kissed her hair. "Stay tucked in, big sis."

"Baby bro, I have to look after you, not the other way around."

"No, the brother has to look after his sister. Talk to your sweetheart, she doesn't look all too happy."

"Missed me?" Sara opened her arms for Sofia.

"Always." The blonde sat down and put her head on Sara's shoulder. "Our son invites a criminal to our place."

"Felix?"

"Yes. He and Lea organized him a cell phone, so they can call him. Does it only feel wrong for me?"

"I'm afraid so. Honey, this guy might not be a perfect man, might have overstepped a few rules a couple of times, but he also saved Steve's life. Our son wants to thank him, they seem to have fun together, why not let him have him over? He won't walk around and steal things with a cop and a CSI in the house."

"I call mom, it's always good to have a captain around. She'll make him behave."

"Over forty years old and still calling for her mommy. Interesting." Sara kissed her lover. "I bet you had friends your parents didn't approve with. Let him have his fun, he tells us about his friends, doesn't meet them behind our backs. We should worth ship his trust and not tell him off for being open to us."

"I know, I know. Am I a bad mother again?"

"No, you're just like your mother, which is natural. One day you'll scare away his girlfriends and Susan's boyfriends. Just like Marie."

"You're making fun of me."

"A little bit. The invitations are all out to our possible guests, I asked them to reply within five days so we know how many people come. And I called your favorite pizza shop, they'll deliver ten pizzas for our wedding party. For both."

"I love you."

"Also four dozen muffins from our favorite bakery."

"I adore you."

"Money can't buy your love, but food can."

"Food of the heart, you know exactly what to use to make me yours."

"Unhealthy food, pretty easy." Sara closed her eyes and savored the soft smell of Sofia's perfume. They did organize a lot already, it felt good to know the marriage was on its way and not too far away. It was almost here.

Sofia's eyes followed the young red haired man. No matter how sure Steve was this Felix was a nice guy, in her eyes it was better to be safe than sorry. If this guy tried to get too close to

their belongings, disappeared for no reasons inside the house, she'd haul his sorry ass into jail and no lawyer would get him out.

"You don't look too happy about your son's guest." Suddenly Felix stood next to the blonde, an easy smile on his face. "Want to check my pockets?"

"No, you'd enjoy that too much, I let a cop do it."

"Ouch. I assume you won't believe me when I promise not to steal anything."

"You stole a car."

"I borrowed it. My plan was to take it back to the same spot where I found it."

"Sure."

"He looks guilty!" Marie joined them, gave Felix a hard look.

"You're the car thief."

"I'm a friend of Steve and you must be the mother of Miss Curtis. Beauty runs in the family."

"Suck it up, boy."

"Wow, you're a rough lady. Another thing that runs in the family."

"I'm not a lady, I'm a police captain. Ladies paint their fingernails, I kick your ass up your throat when you make one wrong move. Understand?"

Sofia had to admit, her mother was back to her best. She treated Felix the same way she treated Sofia's first boyfriends. None of them came back after they met the captain for the first time. Back then Sofia was very, very angry, today she was glad her mother hadn't lost any of her attitude. And she could see how the young man became a little bit nervous. He tried not to show it, tried to keep his easy smile, but she saw the little twitch in his eyes and she knew, her mother did see it too.

"Sure thing. You're the boss."

"No, she is, it's her house. You treat her and her property with respect or you won't be happy in this city anymore."

"Grandma, what are you doing?" Steve heard the last sentence of his grandmother and was shocked how she treated his friend.

"Just telling your friend the rules. If he sticks to them everything is fine."

"You do have a pretty...interesting family, Steo."

"Sorry Felix, they're...cops."

"No kidding."

"Mom, grandma, could you be a little bit friendlier, please? Pretty please?"

"We are nice."

"No, you're not, you're nasty. Felix doesn't know you, he doesn't know you're both amazing women, who I love and adore and who do have a big heart. Give him a break, he's not here to rob us. Do your fav son and grandson a favor and be nice. Thanks." He kissed Sofia and Marie on their cheeks.

"Come on, Felix, we get mom and grandma another beer, they like their beer cold and served with a steak."

"Steak and beer, no problem." Felix flashed a smile and followed Steve.

Sofia looked at her mother. "What do you think?"

"I think this Felix understood the rules."

"Yeah."

"What does Sara think?"

"She says we should trust Steve. As a foster child you know who to trust and screws you over. Steve trusts Felix, he can't be too bad."

"He hit on Lea."

"Who had a good laugh about it, called him an old man. I love this girl."

"She's the best company for our son. We need to find a girlfriend for him like her. Only with dark hair."

"I'm sure our little boy can look for girls himself." So far he wasn't successful with his choices, but they were good.

"How is your head?"

"Steady on my shoulders without causing any pain."

"Your ankle?"

"Attached to my leg, not causing any pain when I don't stand on my foot."

"Your shoulder?"

"Connecting my upper body and my arm, not causing any pain."

"Your ribs?"

"Protecting my heart, some are fine, others give me pain when I laugh."

"Will you stay in bed tomorrow?"

"I won't promise you something I don't keep. I won't take the dogs for a walk, I will stay at home, but I might not stay in bed the whole day. If my ankle agrees I go into the garden and read there. And now come here and stop being a nurse." Sara pulled the blanket away so Sofia could slip under it and pulled her lover into her arms.

"I feel like we forgot something."

"What? All lights are out, the doors are closed and locked, all pets are in the house, the kids in their beds."

"I mean about our wedding." Sofia sighed. "Why does it look like we're having no stress about it? All couple I know, who got married, went nuts a months before the date. Or even months."

"Because we're not having an ordinary wedding. We don't need a church and a priest, we don't need to book a room somewhere, don't have a party in a restaurant, don't want a professional photographer. We want a small wedding with our friends, we have the Justice of Peace in our garden. All we need is invite the people we want here, order some food, drinks and that's it. Everybody has cell phones with cameras, Steve and Lea want to make the music, which is absolutely fine from a computer, we don't need a live band. Our dresses are in the wardrobe, we have rings. You always tell me I look good, I think you're the most beautiful woman in the world, no spa or make-up appointment needed. All I will do is see the hair dresser before we get married, but I had done that anyway. There are some not that dark brown hairs on my head and I think, in order to make them feel comfortable, they need some color."

"Are we not paying enough respect to our wedding? And you are the most beautiful woman in the world."

"We could argue about this, to you are the queen. About the respect? We plan our wedding the way we want it, not the way people expect weddings to be. It will be one hundred percent us."

"I want the wedding to be perfect, I want you happy."

"Honey, what makes the wedding perfect to me is that I can marry you. This tiny little detail is the only thing I really care for. Not the dress, the party, the food. You. You are the only one who matters, not what the rest thinks. When you're happy our wedding is perfect." Sara kissed Sofia softly.

"Say 'I do' and I will be happy."

"I do, I do, I do."

"Perfect." And it gave Sofia goose bumps all over her body. All she had to do was imagine Sara standing in front of the Justice of Peace and saying these two words. I do. They shouldn't change their love, their relationship, what they feel for each other, but right now they seemed to be the most important words in Sofia's words. I do. In two weeks she could say these words and hear Sara saying them. I do.

Saturday, August 10th

"Stay in bed."

"Good morning, Honey." Sara ignored Sofia's order and sat up.

"I want to have breakfast with you."

"Then let me help you."

"Usually I'd say I can walk alone, the idea of being in your arms, on the other side, is so nice that I agree. You can help me, carry me. I'll hold on to you - with my lips on your throat."

"Another hickey? I'm sure my colleagues will have their fun with the big one you gave me yesterday. I can't put enough make-up over it to cover it."

"Tell me not to do it again and my lips stay away from your throat."

"No chance." It was way too good what Sara's lips did to her and she wanted her to do it again.

"Is Susan still asleep? O did you look after her already?"

"No, she's sleeping. Our daughter starts to sleep longer; finally.

Want coffee or tea for breakfast?"

"Coffee is good for my circuit."

"Eggs?"

"No thanks. Hey Scooby, are you ready to get my breakfast?"

"Of course he is. You and Rantanplan get your breakfast after your walk. Steve takes you out later, I don't have the time for it and Sara can't walk. How much toast?"

"Two please. I feel useless sitting here and watching you."

"You're not useless, you're ill. When I came back home you did everything for me. In good and bad times, remember it, it will be part of our wedding."

"I do."

"She really knows the most important part, very good." Sofia smiled and put the coffee in front of Sara, who paid her with a kiss. The currency her fiancé loved most

"How is Sara?" Greg asked.

"Better. She promised not to walk around today, stay in the house or the garden and spend her time with Susan."

"Your daughter will be delighted to have her mother with her for another day. Not that she is in bad hands when Marie is

with her, I'm sure it's different when your mother is with you. There should be another connection. When I see how my kids react to Jules, how much love and affection they show towards her, it makes me jealous. Sometimes. As a father you never come this close to your child."

"They love you, but they were for nine months in her body."

"Yes, lucky kids."

"Without you they wouldn't been there, wouldn't be alive. You're just as important as Jules is." Did Susan react different to her than to Sara? Sofia wasn't sure. Yes, she was pregnant with their daughter, but she had Sara's DNA. Which one was more important? Was one more important than the other? Or was the only important thing the love you gave your baby? She did believe so. "Is Louise better?"

"Yes, much better. She laughed at me this morning. Nothing is better than your child laughing at you before you leave the house."

"It's a special kind of happiness." The blonde sighed happily. She had kissed Susan goodbye, her daughter was still asleep when she left. Maybe the barbecue last night made her very tired, she had been awake for a great deal of the evening.

"Anyway, how far are you with the case? Did you find anything? Any new leads?"

"No, no new leads. We're waiting for the call."

The blonde nodded. The call. It was the second day, soon there should be a call from Don, a new body in Angeles National Forest. Number five. Was it the last one? Or did the killer plan to continue? Why stop when the police wasn't close to catch you? But he did kill ten women, ten fingers, there weren't more. Continue with the toes? Another ten? Also in Los Angeles? Or in another city?

When her cell phone rang she didn't have to look at the caller ID. She just picked it up and answered it. "Where, Don?"

They found themselves back at the south side of Bouquet Reservoir, less than half a mile from where they stood two days ago. This seemed to be his favorite spot for dumping bodies. Their new victim was in her twenties again, she was slim and petit, long brown hair, green eyes.

"A mother."

Cherry's first words hit Sofia like a sledgehammer. A mother. Did she know the victim?

"How do you know?"

"I can see the scar of the c-section."

"When did she give birth?" Worst case scenario: a dead woman, a mother, a baby alone at home. Less than forty-four hours for a baby to survive alone. With the time she spent with her killer, their chances to find the baby alive were zero.

"Three or four years ago."

"Then somebody must have reported her missing. Unless the child lives with the father and she isn't from here."

"Don runs prints already."

"Good. Her thumb is missing, do you think she's the last one?"

"Depends. If his mission were ten fingers yes. If his mission is ten fingers in every city, no. When he extends his mission to toes, he has ten more to go. Unless we catch him. He's been killing for over a week, women in L.A. are getting anxious and I can understand why."

"Me too." Sofia let her eyes run over the body. A slashed throat, the huge pants. It all looked like before.

"Her name is Tessa Wilkinson, twenty-eight from Hollywood." Don stepped closer. "Her husband reported her missing two days ago. She never came home from work."

"She has a child, hasn't she?"

"I only have the basic information from missing persons. Why do you ask?"

"Cherry said she had a c-section."

"Shit. Any difference to the others?"

"We have only started, from what it looks, it's the same."

"The press will learn about this within the next hour and come here with helicopters, cars and whatever else. Hurry with the work or you'll have them looking over your shoulder all the time."

"Keep them away from us, you're the cop."

"I do my best."

"So do we." And the last times the best wasn't good enough because their killer was better. He was a step ahead all the

time, did he stumble this time? Left something behind they could use? Or would they end up with empty hands again?

"Mister Taylor, is it right that you found the body?" Sofia approached a man, who sat not too far away from the crime scene next to a black and white, drank tea and looked pale. He used the car as a shield from the press. Don had been right about them, but wrong about the time. Less than fifteen minutes after he found out who the victim was, were the first reporters at the scene, took photos, shouted questions at them and sent news to the rest of the city.

"Yes." He got up, a tall man, built like a bear, huge arms and a beard like Santa Claus.

"I'm CSI Curtis. I need to take your fingerprints so we can rule you out."

"No problem. This was the Reservoir Killer, wasn't it?"

"We have to wait until the examination is done, the ME took the body with her."

"Female, at the reservoir, red pants, it looked like the reporter described the scenes in the news. Or do you believe it's a copycat?"

"I have no idea. Did you touch her?"

"No. I saw the red pants, went closer to see what it was, saw the body and backed up. I'm a hunter since I'm ten years old, I know how a dead animal looks and she looked like a dead animal. It was impossible she was alive, her throat...we use this kind of cut for the rabbits to let them bleed out. Does he do the same?"

See the women as prey? As an animal? He cut the throat, most of her blood was gone, but it never looked like he tried to get all the blood out. She had a vampire case years ago, the killer back then drank all the blood. Creepy.

"Cutting the throat is a fast way to kill."

"Very efficient. A dangerous man."

"Why do you think it's a man?"

"Women don't do these kind of things."

Sofia knew women did this kind of things too. She had seen enough evidence to know, women were as vicious and brutal as men.

"Did you see somebody around? A car? Anything out of the ordinary? Other hikers?"

"No, I stopped at the road to walk through the wood to the reservoir, find a good spot to fish. Away from other people, a quiet place. If there had been other cars I had taken another spot."

Their killer were gone, he must come here during very early in the morning, the insect activity told her, the body hadn't been out over night.

"Were you in this area the last days?"

"I tried the north side the last days, the catch was bad so I changed today. Should have stayed up north, now I don't get to catch anything, will become a suspect because I found the body and you guys think the first witness is the best suspect and have to get a lawyer."

"Nobody accused you of anything. We will ask about your whereabouts, you tell us them, we check them and I'm sure there won't be any further investigation necessary."

"The missus is nagging me all the time to get another hobby, this will support her. Women." He rolled his eyes. By calling the police, doing his civil duty, he got himself in trouble.

Sara watched the news about the new body on television while she had her ankle up and cooled with some ice. Janis and Jim, two of her cats, joined her and slept on the backrest, curled up to little balls while the dogs snored on the carpet.

"There's mom." Steve came with Susan on his arm in the room and saw Sofia on television, how she was looking for evidence.

"She doesn't look happy."

"No, the fifth dead body within ten days. The press calls the CSI and police already incompetent and suggests women in their twenties to buy guns, protect themselves as the law enforcement teams of the city aren't capable of doing their jobs. These people have no idea how much pressure lays on them, how much and hard they work. Sometimes you don't find evidence."

"No evidence is evidence too, right?" He sat next to his mother and gave her Susan, who started giggling when Sara kissed the tip of nose.

"Yes, it suggests the killer knows about evidence, might be a CSI, a cop or somebody, who works or worked close to this area. Which makes investigating harder, nobody likes to look at their own colleagues and it's what Sofia is doing."

"She's not checking on Greg, is she? After all, they called you in."

"They had to, I called them three times because Shane and me found a body. It's part of the investigation to look closer at us, ask us questions. Any defense lawyer could argue the investigation is incomplete when our interviews are missing. Sofia hated this more than I did."

"Not the first time you found yourself there."

"No, it's where I found her, or she found me. Depends on the point of view."

"Did they really haul you off into the department?"

"Yes, I was in bed, cops came into the room, cuffed me, pulled me out of bed, transported me to the department without answering my questions and let me wait forever in an interrogation room. I was really mad, tired, irritated and when Sofia stood in front of me I gave her everything but a warm welcome. She asked me a couple of questions, got me a coffee and took me back to the motel. She never believed I smuggled drugs, but she had to treat me like all the others from our group. As I learnt she was right about the drugs, our excursion was used to smuggle drugs into the United States, I smuggled them in. There's a question on the passenger information card at the airport, asking if you packed your suitcase yourself. I did pack it myself, but I never checked the toilet bag my friend gave me because it didn't fit in his suitcase anymore. Who would? In ninety-nine percent you see tooth brushes, shavers, shampoo and those things. In this case it was cocaine."

"Mom helped you out?"

"Yes she did and I didn't thank her. Luckily she didn't care how rude I was, she stayed, came back, made me spent time with her. And when I got sun burnt pretty badly she helped me out too. Not to mention the bouts I had."

"What caused them?"

"The shock from the police storming into my room. It reminded me of how vulnerable I am, that I couldn't protect

myself and people could do whatever they want with me. Like when I was a child and the friend of my father raped me. Repeatedly. At this time I didn't know it was my childhood, that messed me up. I got a bout and ended up in hospital when I came here to look at the room Tony sleeps in now. Sofia and me wanted to celebrate me moving in when Don came into the house and calling out to Sofia, she'd be in trouble. She had parked in front of his garage to annoy him, a little joke between them, for me a memory of my childhood. When a man called I was in trouble it meant I was about to get beaten up or worse. I started shaking and lost conscious. They called an ambulance, I ended up in hospital. Alison was my doctor, I fought with her, wanted to leave, she didn't want me to leave unless we knew what caused the bout. There were no physical reasons, she sent the hospital shrink to me, I refused to talk to him, she told me if I didn't cooperate, she'd keep me in hospital. So we agreed on I see a therapist, Jules.

My plan was to let Alison believe I called the therapist and not go there, but Jules called me, made an appointment with me. I went there, thought she was a patient too because she sat in the waiting area with coffee and muffins, she introduced herself after I told her therapy is a waste of time, we had coffee, muffins, talked a little bit and I had to admit, it wasn't as bad as I thought. Jules didn't do the kind of therapy she does with other patients, she bent a few rules, improvised and made me talk.

A few weeks later I saw the man who raped me at a petrol station. I ran to Jules, had another bout. It was when I decided I had to press charges against him. Sofia and Jules helped me, Sofia came with me to San Francisco, see my mother, who told me to leave the past in the past, telling me it was all my imagination. My brother, Sam, who appeared here too, wasn't a help, made everything worse. To cut a long story short. Sofia and Jules helped me to deal with everything, when Jules and Greg became a couple, she sent me to her cousin, who is nice but not as perfect as Jules is. With doctor Luria I ended the trial and my therapy. Sofia and me made it clear to Sam he wasn't welcome here and I didn't want to see him again. Never. The phone number of my mother is blocked, I don't take calls from

San Francisco and I didn't have any contact with her or Sam and don't want them in my life anymore. They're not invited to the wedding, they have no idea I get married, they don't know about you or Susan and if you ever see a man from San Francisco, who tells you his name is Sam, don't let him in the house, call Don, Lynn or Kyle. They asked him to go a few times and will make sure he leaves."

"I call the Captain, she'll shoot him."

"Yes, Marie won't be nice to him, she hates him."

"I can see why. If these cops hadn't haul you off to the department would you have met mom?"

"No. Los Angeles was supposed to be a stop for a few days. Sofia was the reason why I stayed. My excursion group was gone, I could have joined a new one, but I lost interest after being used as a drug mule. A new start was necessary and she provided a cheap accommodation in a nice area. I like the warm weather, I like the fact the ocean isn't far away and when I decided I want to work in a national park or national forest, Angeles National Forest was the best opportunity. Not that I hadn't done anything else to pay the rent. There wasn't much money left on my account and therapy is expensive, even when you have a very good insurance."

"So there was a bright side of being arrested."

"In the end, yes. Without ending up in interrogation I wouldn't get married, I wouldn't have you and Susan and wouldn't be happy."

"What about Grissom? Mom said he was important."

"He is my ex fiancé, my former boss from Las Vegas. He was very important, he was the reason why I came to Las Vegas, where I met Sofia. So he has an important part of Sofia and me getting married too."

"Will he be here too?"

"I invited him and his girlfriend. Sofia doesn't have any problems with that. Anymore."

"No jealousy?"

"I'm about to marry her, there shouldn't be a reason for jealousy and yet I know, there'll always be reasons. For both of us. You can trust your partner, but you don't trust the rest of the world."

"Mom does trust Greg."

"He's my brother. We have the same relationship you and Lea have."

"A pretty good relationship. We decided we'll get married in case we're both forty and single."

"Okay, why not. I hope your friendship stays alive this long. Unfortunately life can break friendships apart. Being in a relationship, moving to another city, going to another college."

"We'll go to the same college and all my girlfriends have to accept Lea or they're not good for me."

"Did she say so?"

"I say so. Do you think Marlene would have any problems with Lea's and my relationship?"

"I don't know her...are you sure she'll leave her boyfriend? For how long are they together?"

"Tanya said a few months, she found out a few details about them. He's eighteen and will go to Harvard next month. Leaves her alone here, I can be there for her. Although, when she goes back to high school I won't see her anymore. Any idea how to make her meet me?"

"Do you have anything in common?"

"Not that I know of."

"Find something. Use your resources. You know a famous Hollywood star, ask Lou if he invites the two of you over."

"And then she falls for Lou, great plan, mom."

"If she isn't interested in you, you can't make her like you. It's her loss, not yours."

"She's cute and I like her sense of humor."

"Does she know you and Lea are only friends?"

"Yes. I need to find a way to her heart. Tanya's trip to New York is not helpful."

"No, they should all stay here." Sara grinned and tickled her daughter. If Tanya and Don stayed, Susan stayed too and she didn't have to miss her daughter. A whole week. That was longer than eternity.

"The killer took Tessa's car, her husband said it's not at the car park of her workplace and not at home. We have the license plate and run cameras, traffic cops are informed." Greg sat next to Sofia, handed her a coffee.

"They didn't find the other cars. Leaving the car behind was a mistake he made only once." The blonde felt like no matter what they did and found out, it wouldn't help them at all. "The check on the cops and CSIs... did you find anything?"

"No, our colleagues seemed not have been to Boston during the first five murders."

That was one relief. Investigating a colleague was the worst thing. "Good."

"You look exhausted, what's wrong?" Worried Greg took the hand of his friend.

"I've no idea what else to do. We tried everything, we looked at everything and here we are, day number ten of the killings and we have no clue who the killer is, where he is and if he'll continue."

"We can't close all cases."

"We lost the baby kidnapper two years ago, that was bad enough. I don't want a serial killer on the loose. Did you hear what the press said? We're useless, stupid fools."

"Since when do you listen to the press?"

"Since I feel they're right. We didn't do any good. All the hours we put into the case and we came up empty. One suspect in custody, who is innocent. If I was a citizen, I wouldn't trust the law enforcement of my city. No wonder they tell women to buy guns and protect themselves. Soon we'll have dead young man, shot because they approached a woman, who felt threaten and killed him."

"We do what we can. If there was something to work with, we'd do it. Don't be too hard on yourself, Sofia."

"All I want is a safe city; for all the men and women, who live here. And especially for our children."

"I want the same, believe me. We make the city safer for all of them, but it's impossible to have a place like L.A. without crime."

"I know." Sofia got up. "Cherry should be done with the autopsy, I go and see if she found anything helpful. Did the husband tell you something we can use?"

"No. We know when she went missing, we can't track her cell phone, it's switched off. Her car is somewhere and nobody called him with information about his wife's residence. He

called friends and colleagues when she didn't come home, none of them saw her. I wonder how he gets them, how he finds them. She's from Hollywood, worked in Hollywood too. No connections to the other victims, we showed him photos, names, he didn't know them, didn't know the companies they worked for."

"It's a mystery. Not one I like." Slouchy the blonde went to the morgue. One good news. One thing to work on. Was it too much to ask for just one hint?

"Before you ask, she is a perfect copy of the rest." Cherry destroyed all her hope.

"Oh shit."

"The only difference is not helpful, it makes the case even worse."

"What is it?"

"She was pregnant. Four weeks."

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" So the killer killed two people.

"Yes. He raped her, he used the same blade to cut her throat, to cut off the finger. What the hell is he doing with them? Why does he cut them off?"

"I have no idea. I know nothing."

"You know a lot of things, but he is very good in not telling us anything about him."

"He's better than all of us."

"No, he is a step ahead because he has all the time in the world, had all the time in the world to prepare his killings. He vanished two years ago in Boston, two years is a long time to plan your next killings. I'm sure if you take two years to prepare the abduction and murder of five women, you could do it without leaving evidence behind. He is a pro, he knows about evidence and that's why we barely find anything."

"We looked at our colleague, cops, nobody looks shady."

"I'm sure you'll find him, Sofia."

"How?"

"He'll make a mistake, nobody is perfect."

"Sara is perfect."

"Oh, that's cute. Doesn't fit the topic, but so cute."

"It fits the topic, she'd be perfect in killing people and not getting caught. And the rest of her is perfect too." Sofia was

sure, if Sara worked the case with her, as a CSI, they'd catch the killer.

A feeling of complete relaxation overcame Sara when two hands were placed on her shoulders and started to give her a light massage. What a way to wake up from a little nap.

"How do you feel?"

"With you giving me a massage like in heaven. Where are my babies?"

"Playing with their grandparents." Jules sat next to Sara. "We didn't have the chance to talk alone yesterday. How do you feel with your wedding appointment?"

"Like a dream will come true."

"No more fears you might ruin your wedding?"

"Every now and then, I wonder what we do in case this doesn't work out. A stupid thought, why think about something you can't influence? You get married because at the time you say 'I do' the other one is the person you want to be with for the rest of your life. I have this feeling with Sofia for a while and it grows stronger and stronger every day. There aren't any better preconditions."

"You'll be a happy couple. You are already."

"I want to see you marry Greg. Soon."

"Next summer. Middle of August. We started planning, a summer wedding. First we'll have a civil marriage and after that we go to the church. Tell your boss you want a week off in the middle of August, your little brother is getting married and will need you. So does his future wife. Not to mention your godchild, who will look like a little angel in his tuxedo, holding the rings."

"Aaaah, so cute." Sara sighed happily. "Really? In August?"

"Yes. Greg preferred May first, but we want deep blue sky and in May and June the sky is too often overcast. Especially in the morning, when we want the first ceremony and the second in the afternoon. You inspired us."

"Did we?"

"Yes, telling us your wedding is in two weeks was...wow, we have to start planning too. We want a huge wedding, so we

need a lot of time to plan. After your wedding we'll engage you into our. A lot of appointments and responsibility for you."

"Thanks." Sara smiled. Organizing a traditional wedding? She had no idea what to do, but it was Jules's job to tell her what to do.

"You'll be the maid of honor, in a nice dress. We'll go shopping, you, me and the other maids of honor."

"Your horrible doctor friends?" As much as she loved Jules - and she loved her a great big deal - the idea of spending a lot of time with her friends wasn't something she liked. The last times they were nicer to her, had to after Jules told them to be nice, but there was a difference between nice and nice. She did survive seeing them on Jules's birthday, on the children's birthdays and other evening events every few months, but seeing them frequently on a short period of time? A nightmare.

"My lovely friends, my annoying cousin and your beautiful fiancé, then wife. I want six maids of honor, all in the same dress. Like in a fairytale."

"Six? Oh boy, no wonder you can't afford a vacation for your children and your fiancé. I'm glad Sofia and me have a cheap wedding. Two best men...or do you want to be a maid of honor? You can wear whatever you want, there are no rules. I'd like to see you in a hint of nothing. How about you wear your birthday suit?"

"Are you flirting again?"

"Always. My future wife is fine with it, I'm allowed to flirt with you."

"Interesting. The lawyer became a devil when she hit on you, I'm invited to your wedding when I flirt with you."

"You're our friend, you'll marry my brother, that's different. Sofia and me love you. We don't love Mel, we accept her."

"A start for her." Jules kissed Sara's hair. "Tell me, how can I help with your wedding?"

"Actually we pretty much organized everything. There'll be pizza, muffins, salad and that's it for the Friday. Start at half past two, end around eight. The big party in September...you have to ask Tony, he made it his mission to organize everything. The most important thing is you're there."

"Believe me, I'll be there. There's no way I let you get married without me. I'm partly responsible for the wedding."

"You're a good influence." Sara closed her eyes. She just discovered another positive aspect of her being on a sick leave, she could spend time with Jules. Usually she'd be at work, have no time for her friend, now she was at home and could meet her. Or wait for Jules to come around, as she wasn't allowed to walk down the road.

"We have him on camera!" Excited Greg came into the evidence room, where Sofia processed some of the traces, she found this morning.

"We have whom on camera?"

"The Reservoir Killer. Or." He stopped himself from being too enthusiastic. "We have somebody on camera, a man, who drove the car of Tessa Wilkinson three days ago. The day she disappeared. There's no sign of her, he's the only passenger, but it was at half past five in the afternoon, at a time when she should have been on her way home. We either have her killer in her car or somebody, who stole her car and she got abducted on her way home without a car. Which I really doubt because if she had noticed somebody stole her car, she had called her husband and the police."

"You're kidding me, right?"

"No." He put a photo in front of her. On it was a man in his thirties, driving a dark car. "This is the car of Tessa Wilkinson, we checked the license plate. I asked her husband if he knows him, thought it could be a friend, who bored the car. He has never seen him."

"This is him?"

"Most likely."

"Do we know where he drove to?" A little bit of hope raised deep inside the blonde. A photo. They knew for whom they should look.

"No, he was filmed on Los Feliz Boulevard, our colleagues are looking for more video material. He goes west, they'll check cameras on every street. If we're lucky we get a few more shots of him."

"Sunset. They should try Sunset. Felix found Charlene Flemming's car there, maybe he parks his own car there, takes the victim's car to his and then takes them to wherever he keeps them." Or he might even keep them on Sunset, it's a damn long street."

"From where the camera caught him it's three quarter of an hour before you reach the ocean, in rush hour...a lifetime. Brandon and two others are checking on videos, getting more of them. Maybe we are lucky."

"After all the bad news we had we deserve some luck. Can I do something?"

"Continue with your evidence, I'll do the same. Three people are on the videos, the rest of us has to stay focused on the rest. I sent Don the photo, it's running through the computer. If we're more than lucky this guy is in the system and we find him without looking through thousands of video material hours."

"He looks...normal. Why do the worst always look so normal?"

"It's how they became the worst. The shifty and mean looking ones get caught sooner because people see them. This guy blends in, he's your average neighbor, the guy you see jogging in the morning."

"The nice, helpful people. Just like Natalie." Sofia grumbled. Natalie Davis blend in perfectly, killed a lot of people, abducted Sara and almost killed her. For Sofia, the young woman was the worst psychopath, she had ever seen. Unimposing and more dangerous than any venomous snake.

"Oh, here you are, I was looking for you." Tanya smiled when she saw Steve.

"Why?"

"I need a favor."

"What? Shall I replace Don on your flight to New York? I can do that."

"Cute. I don't want to get into jail for having an affair with a minor. Besides I'm not the one you want. And your mom sits next to you."

"So? I know all those things." Sara said.

"There is nothing to know."

"What favor do you want?"

"I don't know where I had my head but somehow I packed the key to the medicine cabinet accidentally. Could you go there on Monday and take it back to the surgery?"

"Accidentally?" Sara started laughing. She didn't believe one word. "You packed it on purpose so Steve can go back and see your receptionist. "What a cheap trick. And Sara liked it, it was a good idea.

"They don't need the key first thing in the morning, it's early enough when you take it there around noon." Tanya ignored Sara and her tease.

"You didn't happen to pack four more keys? So I have to go there every day while you're away? Or forgot something I have to send you to New York? Send you via fax?" Steve grinned.

"I'm not that senile."

"Of course not. Yes, I can take your keys back around lunch time, maybe I find somebody, who wants to have lunch with me."

"Smart guy."

"Are you trying to set my son up?" Sara cocked her head.

"Somebody has to help him, if his mother isn't a help I have to do it."

"Can you also make her forget the BF?"

"In my head I'm working on that, if I find the solution in New York I call you. Where is Lea?"

"At home. Every now and then we spend some time apart. Her mother took her out for a shopping trip, some mother and daughter time."

"So you have some mother and son time."

"Taking care of my mom, who did try to sneak out of the house."

"A little stroll down the road." Sara rolled her eyes. When her head was fine, the world didn't spin and the crutches helped with the ankle, there was no reason not to go out for a few minutes. She wasn't a prisoner, she was a free person.

"Not today and not tomorrow. Monday you can see your doctor and when he says you can walk again, you're free to go. Doctor Bendler said different and if you don't listen to her, I call

grandma and she'll call the doctor. You'll have both here telling you off."

"You're not a big help."

"I am and one day you thank me for it."

"To me this sounds wrong. Sara should tell you, one day you'll be thankful for whatever rule she just made." Tanya chuckled.

"Can I help you with something? Don packed Susan's suitcase, is there anything else you need a hand for?"

"Sure, you can clean the house."

"Uhm no, not this kind of help. What about the wedding?"

"Everything is organized for Friday."

"Amazing. I mean my wedding was kind of spontaneous, but our party afterwards was...well planned and it took us a while to have everything together."

"How many people came to your party?"

"Three hundred, we have big families."

"See, there's the difference, we may have thirty. A garden party, no DJ, no caterer. Only music from the stereo, delivered food and that's it. This way we save money, Hawaii is expensive and we want to take our kids to another vacation in winter. Well, I hope our son joins us and doesn't think, time with his mothers is too boring."

"I like vacations. Where will we go? Florida?"

"I thought more about a place with snow. Your first skiing experience."

"Yeah, I knew I've got the coolest parents ever."

"And because we're so cool we have no problem when you take Lea with you. Or your girlfriend."

"Lea. When I go on vacation with my girlfriend, I don't want my mothers around."

"He's a smart boy." Tanya smirked. "Parents ruin a good vacation with the better half. No matter how open-minded they pretend to be."

Steve laughed. A vacation trip with his girlfriend, a nice dream. Unfortunately a dream, that didn't seem to come true any time soon.

"Did you find him? Is he on more videos?" Sofia sat on the edge of Brandon's table. Her colleague had spent the last four

hours in front of the TV screen, watching surveillance videos from shops and traffic cameras on Los Feliz Boulevard and all around.

"No, I'm still on Los Feliz, Ginger and Paul check Hollywood and all cross streets west of where we caught him. Do you have any idea how many cameras there are?"

"A lot. But you have a time frame."

"We do, nevertheless it's a hell of a lot of work."

"I know."

"We have his name." Don came into the room, Greg by his side.

"We do?" This sounded too good to be true. A name. When they had a name, there had to be an address and an address meant, they knew where to look for their killer. There were only a few steps away from arresting him, making the city safer again.

"His name is Jared Frasier, he's thirty-nine and from Cincinnati."

"Cincinnati? I wonder what brought him to Boston and Los Angeles. Where does he live now?"

"We don't know. Last known address in an empty lot in Cincinnati. He's a cop. Or was a cop. Homicide."

That explained why he left barely any evidence. He knew all about evidence, how to avoid leaving traces behind. They were looking for one of their own. Somehow Sofia knew it.

"I talked to his captain, Frasier left the force two years ago, just after the killings in Boston stopped. Maybe he was afraid Boston police knew his name. He was a good cop, good when it came to the cases, pretty bad when it came to people. He had a couple of reports for police brutality, didn't get along with his colleagues and was the 'weird' cop. When it came to solving cases his rate was higher than of anybody else. When I told his captain about our suspicion he said, maybe Frasier was this good because he knew what was going on in a killer's head. Birds of a feather flock together."

"And there's nothing about him in Los Angeles?"

"No."

"What about credit cards? Bank accounts? He must pay his rent, go shopping."

"Nothing. it's like he doesn't exist anymore since he left Cincinnati. My money is on a new ID, new driver's license and credit card. We're working on it, his photos is out, when he leaves his house we'll find him."

"Unless he left the city and is somewhere else."

"I called the FBI too. Which reminds me: a Catherine Willows says hello. I didn't know you know Feds."

"Cath? She's...right, Sara mentioned something like she left the crime lab in Vegas a few months ago and joined the FBI. We worked together in Vegas, she was the swing shift supervisor for a while, changed back to night shift later. Sara will be delighted when I tell her this." Sofia smiled. Cath. What a long time ago. Wasn't it crazy how the past sometimes stepped into your present and made you smile?"

"Will the FBI come here?"

"A couple of agents from the L.A. department are on their way. Greg and me bring them up to date and then I'll handle the case over to Shania and them."

Right, it was his last day today, he flew to New York tomorrow. His new captain, Shania Stones, was a woman, who reminded Sofia sometimes more of a movie star than a police captain. She was good, very good, but she looked more like a movie star. Maybe it was part of being a Los Angeles cop. The blonde worked with the captain a couple of times when she was a lieutenant, Stones outranked her, but never treated her like she was better than Sofia.

"How does she feel about working with the Feds?"

"There are better things in life, but when he left the city, we need them. Detective Ricardo stays until Tuesday and will go back to Boston when there are no more bodies. Missing persons has five women on the list, who fit the profile and have been reported missing the last four days."

"He could be continuing his work."

"Hopefully we catch him soon. By knowing his name we're getting closer."

"Does he have family in Los Angeles?"

"No, all his family lives in Cincinnati. CPD is on their way to talk to them."

"I doubt he kept in contact when he got a new name."

"Probably not. Did you find anything new?"

"No, he didn't leave anything behind. A homicide cop. No wonder we barely found anything and I bet he told the victims he's a cop, showed them his old badge. Who doesn't trust a cop? Damn it."

"If we can't catch him today, Shania will catch him tomorrow. Don't worry, his days are over."

Sofia hoped Don was right. Somehow she doubt it would be easy to catch Frasier and when they found him, he was likely to put up a fight. Men like him didn't go down quietly, they preferred to go down in a blaze of glory.

"Are you missing me or checking on me?" Sara asked with a smile when she picked up her cell phone. The number on the display told her, it was her lover, who was calling her.

"I'm always missing you when you're not with me. How are you?"

"Fine, no need to worry. I'm in the garden, Susan and me play on the blanket, Steve tries to teach Scooby and Rantanplan not to eat food that falls off the table. I don't have to tell you how much success he has with this lesson. Tanya prepared everything for the New York trip, all we have to do is take them to the airport tomorrow, most of the luggage is in the car already."

"Can't you hide Susan somewhere?"

"I'm not allowed to walk, have to stay in the house or the garden."

"Right. Do you think we have a chance they forget her? Like in "Home alone"? Leave the kid at home and fly away alone."

"No. They have to take one child with them, not nine or how many it were in the movie. We have to say goodbye to our daughter tomorrow."

"What a nightmare."

"She'll be fine. How is the case going?"

"Right." That was the reason why she called Sara. the case, the news. "We know his name. Oh, lets say, we found a man, who drove the car of the latest victim, after she went missing. He's a former cop, homicide and left his hometown after Boston PD was close to catch the killer two years ago."

"Do you have him in custody?"

"No, we have no idea where he lives, but with his name and his photo, we should be able to catch him any time soon. It's the best lead we have."

"Sounds like a solid you. I hope you don't plan to stay in the lab until the police caught the guy. I want you back home in two hours."

"I do my best."

"Honey, you come home in two hours or I tell your doctor and your mother."

"When they catch him..."

"Greg is the leading CSI on the case, it's his job to interrogate the man. You are the most beautiful CSI, you're the smartest and the one, who used to be a perfect cop, but you're not number one on the boss list. In a few years you might be the leading CSI again."

"I was the leading CSI a couple of time." The blonde pouted. She wasn't a damn rookie, she knew what she was doing. And she learnt enough about all the new toys in the lab since she was a CSI again.

"In this case you aren't. Your fiancé wants you back home and your daughter wants to spend the evening with you before she flies to New York. Two hours. Every minute you stay in the lab longer is a minute less with our daughter."

"All right, all right, I'll be back then."

"Good."

"It's not like it's a punishment, I only...we might close the case soon."

"And when you do, you did your part to solve it. It's enough when you do your part, you don't have to do the work of other people. Took me a long time to understand this, but since I'm engaged to a wonderful woman and have two children, I know home is always better than work."

"You're right." Sofia looked up, Lynn came into the room. "My favorite officer just came into the room, maybe she has good news. I see you in two hours, give our kids a kiss. Shall I bring dinner?"

"No, we'll cook something for you. Or Steve will. See you soon, love you."

"Love you too. Later Darling." With a smile the blonde ended the call.

"Did I mention I really like Sara?" Lynn asked with a smirk.

"You did say so when she and me became an item. Why do you say so now?"

"Because she makes you forget the case, makes you think about yourself. She's good for you."

"She's perfect for me. Are you here to tell me Frasier is under arrest?"

"No, I'm here to get a coffee and see how you are before I go out and look for Frasier again. We concentrate Hollywood and West Hollywood, the places, where we saw him or where he left the car."

"I want to play with his name, see if I can come up with aliases he might use. Dig into his past, sometimes they use names of idols of their childhood. As soon as Cincinnati PD has sent all the files about him, I can continue."

"Good idea. You will come up with a lot of names, but it's a start. But don't forget to go home on time."

"How could I? My fiancé reminded me how much she misses me."

"Soon to be wife. I know how you look in your wedding dress, but I want to see you and Sara next to each other in your wedding dresses. It will be stunning."

"Tell me about Sara in her dress."

"She'll take your breath away." Lynn grinned.

"Of course, she always does. Give me details."

"No chance. You have to wait two more weeks."

"I will." Sofia smiled dreamily. "It will be wonderful. She'll look wonderful. Do you think I will look all right? I mean, the dress is long, nobody will see my prosthesis but maybe when I move in the wrong way...shall I wear a pantyhose?"

"Bullshit, your family and friends are there, we all know about your leg, why hide it? Besides, you do have amazing long legs, but everybody will look at your stunning smile, how you put the ring on your wife's finger and - most important - the kiss. Your leg won't be the focus of interest."

"Can you do me a favor?"

"Depends." Lynn smirked. "Shoot."

"When you get your camera, can you zoom it on Sara the whole time? I want to see every movement of her eyes, every hint of a smile on her face."

"There won't be a hint of a smile, there'll be a huge grin. She marries you, she'll be the happiest woman in the world. And when we hear a loud bang during the ceremony, it's the breaking of hearts of people, who wanted to marry you."

"Oh, you're so nice to me." Sofia hugged her friend. It was good to have a friend with you at work, they always knew how to lighten up your life.

"Back on time, am I not great?" Sofia had her arms wide open. Back home, on time and her lover and daughter in the garden, enjoying the sunshine.

"You're perfect, come here." Sara sat up. "That's why I'm going to marry you. Isn't that right, Susan? We love your mommy and because she's perfect we'll chain her to us for the rest of her life."

"Somehow I like the idea of being chained." Sofia sat down, kissed Sara gently and picked Susan up to kiss her daughter's cheek. "I love you. Both."

"We love you too."

"Did you spend the whole afternoon here?"

"More or less yes. I'm not really good at carrying our daughter around, so we stayed here before I dropped her and me. Our son is over at Lou's place, he called him and invited him for a dip in the pool. He and Lea will come back in two hours, Playstation night."

"Why didn't you join them? At the pool. Cold water, swimming, all good things for you."

"Because then we need a babysitter for Susan and me too and I want them to have fun. Lou will order unhealthy food and become the coolest guy on planet."

"He is already the coolest guy on the planet. He's a damn sexy action movie star."

"Who got brushed off by you."

"No action movie hero is as sexy as you are." Sofia nibbled playfully on Sara's earlobe. "One day we'll have a house of our

own and can have sex in the garden without having to worry about a housemate watching us."

"You are a house owner already."

"At the moment - or for the next years - we'll have housemates. Maybe in eighteen years, when the kids are all away, the mortgage is paid, we can live here alone."

"Alone in the huge house? After over twenty years living with other people, we are supposed to live on our own? It won't work."

"You might be right. No sex in the garden. When we go on vacation on our own, like in sixteen years, we can book a house somewhere far away and try to sex there."

"Or take an afternoon alone on the beach. Sex on the beach."

"I'd love that too. How about we have some sex on the beach during our honeymoon?"

"You know exactly what I want."

"You want me." Sara snuggled into the arms of her lover.

"Look how peacefully Susan sleeps here with her mothers. Do you think she knows she'll go on her first vacation trip tomorrow? Shouldn't she have her first holidays with her mothers?"

"Daddy won this race. Where is Don?"

"Bringing his captain up to date on the case. The search for Frasier is on, we haven't found him yet, but sooner or later we will."

"When he's caught will you take a day off? Or two?"

"First Greg can take a few days off, he worked the whole time."

"No family time."

"My fiancé will be back at work and be very busy, it's summer. Which meant we'll have to come up with breakfast or dinner dates. Depends on your shift. One thing is for sure, we'll have each other every night." Sofia kissed Sara. "What do you think about having dinner here? Like a picnic. Or don't we have anything after our son took off?"

"He took off after he prepared dinner, all we have to do is heat it up. Picnic is a good idea, we didn't have one for ages. And then we can talk a little bit more about our wedding."

"I love wedding talk." The blonde got up. "Want something to drink too?"

"Are you playing milk bar?"

"Yes, but not for you." Sofia grinned.

"Not? Not fair, I'd love to suck on your nipples, as far as I remember, you liked that a lot."

"We just established we can't have sex in the garden. Sorry Honey."

"Yeah, I'm sorry too." Sara sat up and followed her lover with her eyes. What a nice ass. All hers. She'd marry the woman with this sexy ass. She could touch it whenever she wanted, sink her teeth in it. What a lucky bastard she was.

Susan started crying next to her.

"Hey baby girl, what's the matter?" Carefully she picked her up, which wasn't that easy with the bruised shoulder. "I'd walk around and rock you a little bit, but I'm afraid that's not a good idea. Your mom is a little bit disabled the next days, you might have noticed I look and walk quite funny. But we can play here. Look, I let myself fall backwards carefully and then I lift you up...or I don't." Too much pain and her arms shook unsteady. Unfortunately it didn't make her daughter stop crying.

"What's wrong, darling? Why are you crying? Are you hungry? Need a new diaper? No, you don't smell. What's up? Or are you just...cross?"

"She's a baby, she cries." Sofia came back in the garden and took Susan in her arms. "Or do you want your other mom with you? Did you miss me? I left you the whole day alone and instead giving you your dinner, I walked away again. You've got every right to complain. Come, we play wild horse." She carried her daughter to Scooby, who followed her into the kitchen, hoping for some treats. Instead he became the horse of Susan. Sitting her daughter on the back of the dog, holding her so she didn't fall, Scooby started walking, more to get away from them than playing horse. It did the trick, Susan stopped crying and laughed. The dogs were real magic, Sofia discovered a few days ago, whenever she played horse with the dogs, her daughter started laughing. After a little ride through the garden she carried her daughter back to Sara.

"I think I give her her dinner first and then we can eat."

"Yeah, she might fall asleep again."

"Of course, a good daughter doesn't cry all the time. Especially not when her mothers need to talk about the wedding." Sofia gave Susan her breast and the baby girl started drinking immediately. "How do you want my hair to look?"

"Blonde."

"It has been blonde for years.

"And it suits you very much. Open. I like it when you hair falls over your shoulder, we'll be here in the garden, maybe the wind will play with it softly. I love to watch the wind play with your hair."

"Okay, open hair. Any make-up wishes?"

"Just how you have it every day. I know people love to dress up for the wedding, wear a lot of make-up, but I want to see the woman I marry and not a collection of make-up brands. What do you want me to do with my hair and my face?"

"I want your hair the way it is and the same amount of make-up you have every day. Just like you want me. I want to marry you and not a make-up model. We want a cozy wedding with friends, you look amazing the way you are, no need to change anything. Or...does your dress give me a full view on your shoulders?"

"Why?"

"I'm a little bit caught in a dream, a dress that leaves your shoulders free, your hair up, so I can see your neck, see your pulse point and imagine how I kiss your neck and throat...and then I'll have to concentrate not to jump you and miss half of the wedding. Forget the hair up thing, it will distract me."

Sara laughed. "I'm sure we'll be too excited to think about how sexy the other one looks."

"Not to see how sexy you look mean I'm blind and not excited. I can't be too excited to notice I'm about to marry the most beautiful woman in the world."

"You will marry yourself? Is that legal?" Sara kissed her lover.

"No, that's why I marry you. You asked me to marry you. Here in the garden. Another reason why I like the garden wedding so much. Shall we make Rantanplan and Scooby wear a tie?"

"No, they don't want that."

"I'm sure there are kind of monkey suits for dogs. People are crazy, they come up with a lot of weird things."

"You just came up with the idea, crazy woman."

"Crazy in love with you."

"Not as crazy as I'm in love with you." Sara sat behind Sofia and hugged her, her head rested on the blonde's shoulder, watching their daughter drink. A peaceful family picture.

Sunday, August 11th

Sofia felt like somebody ripped out her heart. "You can't take her, that's child abduction!"

Don cocked his head before he shook it amused. "Honey, taking our daughter to her grandparents after you and your fiancé, the mothers, agreed on it, isn't child abduction. No judge will tell you different. Susan goes with her daddy and his girlfriend on a little vacation, meets her grandparents and gets spoiled for a week. That's not child endangerment."

"Mother endangerment?"

"No, crazy mother losing her mind."

"You're taking away my baby!"

"I'm glad I've got myself under control." Sara said to Tanya.

"What did you take?"

"Tranquilizer Jules suggested and Alison gave me."

"Seriously?"

"No."

"You're doing good."

"I whined the whole night."

"She'll be fine. He won't take his eyes off her. And I'll look after both of them."

"He can take his eyes off her when she's with her grandparents. The two of you want to have some time alone too, go out, discover the great nightclubs and of course the shopping malls."

"My suitcase is empty, guess why." Tanya grinned widely.

"Shopping time."

"No, time to go." Don took Susan out of Sofia's arms. "Say bye-bye to your mommies."

"Bye Honey, no, stay with us!"

"She'll be back in one week." He kissed Sofia's cheek. "Be strong." A kiss for Sara. "I promise I take care of her."

"I know. Bye Susan, we love you and miss you." Sara kissed her daughter's forehead. "Have a great time in New York."

"Say hello to your grandparents and come back soon. You too."

Sofia hugged Don and Tanya.

"We will. Say bye to your sleepy son."

"Tell him not to forget my keys." Tanya chuckled.

"He won't."

"Okay, time to go or we miss the flight." Don pushed.

"Not a tragedy." Sofia mumbled and got into Sara's arms. Together they waved to Don, Tanya and Susan until they were out of sight.

"I'm not going to cry." Sara established.

"Me neither." The blonde agreed, burying her face in the hair of her lover, biting on her lips. Nevertheless the tears came and she found herself crying in the arms of her lover, who cried too. So much for no tears.

"We should go home before we cause a scene."

"People are already looking at us." Sara sniffed. "Let's go home to our son, we can give all our love to him."

"The problem is, he doesn't like the idea of us pamper him. He's a cool teenager, an adult."

"He's our baby boy, the only child we have left."

"Our poor daughter. She's boarding, flying away from her mothers. Do you think she'll miss us? Look for us?"

"Of course but her daddy and grandparents will dry her tears." Sara took Sofia's hand. "Come on, we can get some lunch for our son. And the older daughter, who stayed over last night." When they looked into Steve's room to see if he was awake to come with them to the airport, they found him sound asleep in his room. Together with Lea. The girl sat asleep on the bed while he had his head in her lap, both had their Playstation controller in their hands, the picture of the last video game they played, were still on the TV screen. Savoring the view of their son and his best friend, they decided to let them sleep and left without them.

"I have to go back to work, make it dinner for me."

"If I get the chance I come over for lunch in the lab."

"You won't drive!"

"No, I can't drive, I look for a chauffeur. Don't worry, I don't endanger our wedding." Although she hated being a kind of caged in the house and being only able to walk and leave when somebody was with her. Her shoulder still hurt, the ribs too. Her head felt fine, the biggest problem was her ankle. She could only limp and it wasn't a good idea to drive when your right foot didn't work the way it should.

"Seven more days until we have our daughter back and twelve days left until we get married. We're on two countdowns." Sara said.

"At the moment I'm not sure to which one I want to come ASAP."

"Take the wedding, Susan will be back with us when we say: I do."

"It sounds so great when you say these two words. Almost as good as my favorite three words."

"Beer, chocolate, steaks?"

"They're second." Sofia laughed.

"I love you." The brunette kissed her lover. Magic words. There were more magic words than I love you and I do, but at the moment these words were the most important ones for them.

After Sofia took Sara back home she drove to work. Today she started a little bit later because of the trip to the airport.

"Did you cry?" Greg asked when he saw her, knowing where she had been.

"Yes. Sara too."

"I'd cry too when my babies take off for a week without me." He supported her and gave her a big hug. "Susan will miss you too although she'll enjoy her time with daddy and her New Yorker grandparents. What do the Los Angeles grandparents say about their week off?"

"First they were enthusiastic about going to Vegas for a few days, then they wanted to meet my brother and I bet in the end they'll stay here and you don't have to worry about a babysitter for the next week. You can take Jules out. And if they really go, you can bring your kids to us, we'd love to have them over."

"You have one child at home."

"Right now we have two at home, our older daughter is there too. They are fine on their own, doesn't want us around all the time. It wouldn't surprise me if they go to Lou's place again. He has the weekend off."

"I know, he invited Jules and the kids to spend some time with his godchild."

"Can they take Sara with them? I'm afraid she'll get bored and take off on her own."

"My lovely fiancé planned this already. She knows your fiancé, knows, she needs supervision. You can relax."

"Good. Sara did plan to come over for lunch, that won't happen when she's with Jules and the kids at Lou's place, but she'll have fun and is in good hands."

"How does she feel?"

"Much better, no more headache and if the ankle didn't hurt all the time she walks, she'd go back to work tomorrow."

"She stays on a sick leave?"

"I think so, she can't drive with her ankle, a few more days at home won't hurt her."

"Time to plan the wedding."

"We're done with that."

"You're amazing, I never met somebody, who had so less stress with planning their wedding. Usually people get crazy about it months before the ceremony."

"We don't have a big wedding, not like the one you plan."

"Hey, I plan to get married once in my life and I'll marry the most wonderful woman I ever met, so I want a huge party. Two ceremonies and a million guests. Or so."

"A million guests? Maybe you want to get a little bit smaller. Two or three hundred? With your family from Norway?"

"If they want to come they're more than welcome. Can I book your extra room for my guests?"

"It's all yours."

"Thanks."

"Good morning, CSIs." Shania Rock came in to the room.

"Sofia, how are you?"

"I'm fine, how are you, Captain?"

"Ready to make an arrest."

"You caught Frasier?"

"No, but your colleagues found him on camera, this time he is in another car, one that doesn't belong to any of the victims. According to traffic it belongs to Vince Burgh, a forty year old security salesman from Bel Air. A team is on the way to get him in."

"Is it the same man?"

"According to the driver's license." She showed Sofia and Greg the driver's license of Vince Burgh on her tablet. The same man.

"He did have some surgery done. His cheeks are more developed, the chin is stronger, he changed his hair color."

"No big deals, we're in L.A., a lot of people have plastic surgery here every day. Mister Sanders, will you join me in interrogation when our colleagues take him in?"

"Yes. I prepare a folder."

"Thanks."

Greg left the room. Captain Rock waited until she and Sofia were alone. "I'd like to have you over in his apartment when Burgh is here. I called a judge, a warrant is on its way. Your boss will be with you, he is with the team, who is out there."

"No problem."

"Can I ask you a personal question?"

"Sure."

"How bad is it to watch your former colleague do the police work while you have to wait until you're called on the scene?"

"It's getting better every day."

"I'd love to get you out there, have you involved, I always appreciated your opinion, you were a damn good cop. When you go there, I'd like you to look at the house as a CSI and as a cop as well."

"It's not like I can switch off my cop's eyes." Sofia smiled a little bit.

"Which is good. If you ever decide to come back to LAPD, let me know, you're always welcome in my team. I can always need you."

"Thanks, but I'm not a desk person."

"You could train cadets."

"I think about it." Training cadets meant a nine to five day, no overtime, no emergencies. A very good offer. One, she had to consider. Not for the near future but for one day. After all she still felt like a cop and getting her badge back would mean a lot to her.

Sara was surprised when Jules picked her up to take her over to Lou Lee's villa. She woke up Lea and Steve and drove with Jules and the kids to Hollywood.

"They're somewhere over the country, up in the air, I hope Susan is fine. What if she has problems with her ears? The pressure of the take-off is big and she's so small and..."

"Sara, she's fine. Her father is with her and she has a doctor with him."

"A dentist."

"A dentist, who brushed up on her knowledge about child diseases when she became an aunt. Tanya might not have a degree or doctor title in this area, but she knows a lot. Said, with all the kids around her, she has to be able to help them in case of emergency."

"I didn't know that. Or did you make that up to calm me down?"

"No." The therapist handed Sara a cold lemonade. "Jorja, stay away from the pool!" She got up and picked up her daughter, who tried to climb over the fence of the pool.

"She really loves water." Lou said, Louise on his arms. He had people put up a fence the last days to make it safe for the children to run around his garden.

"Yes, she does. Thanks for the fence."

"Hey, I want my godchild to keep her sister. A safe garden means more visits. I hope."

"Whenever you invite us and we have the time we come over and enjoy your villa and all the service. Marian makes delicious food and I always eat too much...which isn't good actually."

"She told me she'll fix sushi."

"I love her."

"She's an angel and without her my home wouldn't feel like home. Talking about an angel..."

"You can hear the flattering of her wings." Sara completed.

"Hey Marian."

"Hello Sara, how are you? I heard you had an accident?"

"Only a little science experiment gone wrong." She told the housekeeper the last time to call her Sara and not Miss Sidle.

"If you need any painkiller let me know."

"I'm fine, thanks. This self made lemonade and the fresh fruits are more than helpful."

"See the bright side of it, you can stay at home, have more time to plan your wedding and take off to your honeymoon in two weeks. By then you should be able to walk again."

"Jules's mother gave me a this flexible cast, I can walk when I wear it."

"Which doesn't mean it's good for you to walk. Do you have cream for it?"

"No."

"Nowadays people forget old traditional medicine, you're all too much into science."

"I'm a scientist."

"Yes, you are." Marian patted Sara's head and went back into the house.

"There's nothing wrong with being a scientist. Do you want to become a scientist, Eric?" She asked her godchild.

"Wanna be with Sara."

"Oh, I want to be with you too."

"Sara play?"

"Yes, we can play. Look Lou bought some nice games, we can play them."

"Football?"

"No, see my foot? I can't play football with you."

"Bad foot?"

"Yes, a very bad foot. Sorry, we can only play sitting."

"Okay." He turned and got a few cars out of the box with toys.

"Play cars."

"All right, lets play with cars." The best medicine not to think too much about how much she missed Susan was playing with Eric, let him distract her and make her smile.

Sofia waited another ten minutes before she called her boss.

"Hey William Rock told me to come over to Frasier's house when they have him."

"You can come over, he's not here. The police secures the area and keeps looking for him."

"Did he know they came or is he just out of the house?"

"It's too early to be sure. Come over."

"On my way." Sofia got her kit and went to her car. No suspect in custody. Her boss didn't tell her much, didn't mention anything about evidence of the victims being in the house. What if Frasier wasn't their killer? What if he knew they were coming? What if he had another place and saw them in his house in Bel Air? He could have been a block away, saw them storm into the house and take off. Another city, another name, another plastic surgery.

It took her twenty minutes to get to Frasier's home. Three police cars were parked in front of the house and she saw officers walking around. Could you make it more obvious that you were here waiting?

"Officer." She smiled at Kyle, who stood at the door, securing the crime scene.

"CSI Curtis, good to see you. Your apartment is right here on the first floor."

"How does it look inside?"

"I think you'll be surprised."

"Actually I don't want any surprises anymore. They're too often bad." She sighed. Usually when she got surprises at work they meant more work and dead bodies.

Slowly she walked into the house. From the front door she came directly into the kitchen . And stopped. That was a surprise. The kitchen looked like one of the kitchens in the furniture market. Spotless. Unused. She continued into the living room, which looked the same. Like new. The same with the bathroom and the bedroom, where she found William.

"What is this? A life sized three dimension furniture market advertisement?"

"Why didn't you use the name home?" Her boss asked.

"Because it looks like an advertisement and not like a home. He used the house so he has an address. This isn't home, this is...an expensive alibi. And when he has a second house or apartment, he might have a second ID too. Did you talk to his neighbors?"

"No, I had a look around."

"Did you find anything?"

"No."

"Did you look?"

"I took a good look at the rooms."

"I didn't see any powder or other evidence of you taking evidence."

"No."

Sofia sighed. Sometimes William reminded her of Grissom. Not much of a talker, kept his ideas to himself.

"I start in the kitchen."

"He never used his fridge, when you don't use your fridge in Los Angeles, you don't use the rest of your kitchen. His TV isn't even connected to the power. It's all a fake."

So her boss did look, he did check. And he was right, the whole place was a fake, just like the man, who rent it. Vince Burgh.

"There is no camera in the building." The blonde said.

"No."

"Okay, I check every drawer, maybe there's something that leads us to him." She needed to do something. Even when this apartment was never used, only a faked address, she had to check for prints, find hints.

A faked home address, they were back to zero. If he had an apartment to throw them off his back, he had another ID, another car or various license plates, another apartment. And it was only a question of time until he found out they were at his place.

"We landed safely and on time on JFK, are all fine and had a good flight. Our daughter charmed all the flight assistants and waits with her auntie or third mommy, however you want to call her, Tanya, for our suitcases. Do you want to talk to her?"

"Yes." Sara let out a deep breath of relief when Don called her and told her all those details, she shouldn't have to worry about.

"Say hello to your mommy, Susan."

"Oh my baby girl, how are you? Do you hear your mom?" Sara heard Susan make a sound. She heard her! She heard the voice of her mother and she sounded happy. Oh, her good cute little daughter.

"She's looking for you."

"I want to be with her."

"She's fine, Sara."

"I know but...is she really fine?"

"Yes. Why would I lie to you?"

"To make me feel good?"

"Our daughter is fine, I...here she is, on my arm so Tanya can get the suitcases. As soon as we're with my parents I take a photo and send it to you."

"Okay."

"Did Sofia close the case?"

"Not yet."

"I want to know when they have him."

"You're on vacation."

"A cop is never completely on vacation when he has an open case home. You should know that, you dated one for a while."

"I'm going to marry half a cop, she'll always be a cop."

"I know. Okay, we've got our suitcases, time to get out of here. You see us in a few minutes, waving at you. Love you."

"Love you too. Give my baby girl a kiss."

"I will. And my girlfriend too so she doesn't get jealous."

Sara laughed. "I'm sure she's fine with you giving Susan a kiss." Sara ended the call. They were fine, arrived in New York and...everything was fine.

"What does your daughter say?"

"She laughed and looked for me when she heard my noise. Is it bad for her? Hear my voice and not see me? She doesn't know what cell phones are and..."

"Sara, relax, she's fine." Jules took the hand of her friend.

"Don't worry. Don's parents know what to do. And he does too."

"I know."

"She'll meet her aunt and her uncle in New York."

"I know all the good things about the trip, I know it's good for her to meet her grandparents and the rest of her family, but...I miss her anyway."

"Of course. Will Don's parents come over for your wedding?"

"Yes." Sara smiled. She liked the fact Susan's grandparents would be both there when Sofia and she got married. Two pair of grandparents, the way it was supposed to be. And yet, somehow she felt strange not telling her mother and brother...not that they mattered to her anymore...they weren't a part of her life...right?

She found two sets of prints in the apartment, ran them. Nothing else. No hairs, no food, no nothing. This apartment was clean, like nobody ever spent a night in it.

"Officer, would you care to join me on canvassing the area?" She asked Kyle. Being a CSI she wasn't supposed to walk around, talk to people.

"Sure. Where do we want to go first?"

"The house opposite this one, they have the best view and I noticed one of the neighbors is very interested in what's going on here. Maybe she's interested in what's going on all the time, on the whole street."

"One of these women, whose ass is heavier than her head so she doesn't fall out of the window."

"Yes, a pain in the ass for every neighbor, a dream for every cop."

"Only if she doesn't make up stories to impress us. Be charming, these women usually love charming, good looking cops."

"You just described me."

"Oh, I thought I described Don." Sofia blinked at her friend. They walked over to the house and Sofia rang the bell for the first floor.

"Who's there?" Female, mid fifties and by the sound of the voice Sofia knew exactly the woman was aware of who was in front of her door. She had watched them through her kitchen window.

"LAPD, we have a few questions." Kyle answered. The buzzer rang and Kyle pushed Sofia with a smirk aside to get into the house first. He was the cop, he had to clear the place before his CSI stepped inside. No matter if his CSI used to be his boss.

"Don't push your luck." The blonde grumbled.

"Just following protocol, my lieutenant likes it when I do what I'm supposed to do."

"I can still kick your ass."

"That's assaulting an officer."

The blonde gave him the evil eyes and stayed behind him. She had a gun and she had always been better when it came to

shooting than Kyle, if somebody had to protect somebody, it was her protecting him.

"How can I help you officer?" The name of the woman was Betty Watzlerwick, she looked very interested at Sofia and Kyle, her eyes focused on him. The man in a police uniform.

"My name is officer Kyle, I wonder if you could help the Los Angeles police."

"As a good citizen it's my job, right?"

"That's correct, ma'am. My colleagues and me are working on an important case and need to talk to the man, who lives in the apartment opposite the street. First level, this is his photo." He showed her a photo of Frasier.

"Oh, Mister Burgh."

"Yes, do you know where we can find him?"

"No, he comes here once a week, I figure he lives out of town."

"Does he live alone?"

"I never saw him in company. He is a good looking man, I wonder why he doesn't have a wife. Or his wife lives somewhere else, like I said, he comes here only once a week. What kind of job requires an apartment, you use only once a week for an hour or so?"

"According to our files he works as a security salesman."

"Oh, he travels a lot, so probably he comes here to pack his suitcase, take a shower and continues his work."

"Do you happen to know what kind of car he drives?"

"A green Ford."

"Does he have it for a long time?"

"I've never seen him in another car. No wait, he had once a black Denali. Must have been his company car, I remember I was surprised to see a car with a Utah license plate in our street. I saw him only this day with the Denali. Does he work for a company from Utah?"

"Yes." Kyle lied.

"That explains why he is away all the time, he travels between Utah and Los Angeles, sells security systems and his family must live in Utah too. He must be a pretty good salesman."

"Why do you think so?"

"This is an expensive area, he keeps the apartment only to change his clothes, he must be a rich man. What exactly is this about?"

"His employee can't reach Mister Burgh and worries about him. We try to locate him, make sure he's fine and well."

"Oh my god."

"When was the last time you saw him?"

"Four or five days ago...Tuesday, yes I saw him Tuesday when I cleaned my windows. I'm not spying on my neighbors, I only happen to see a lot when I'm around my place. You have to watch your neighborhood and make sure no criminals come in and rob people, right?"

"As long as you call the police when you see something suspicious and don't handle the robbers yourself." Kyle sent her a wide smile. "It's our job to make sure you're safe." He put more weight into the uniform, made himself bigger.

Sofia rolled with her eyes behind his back, he didn't have to impress the woman, she was already impressed. She helped the police with a missing person case.

"Could you do me a huge favor?" He asked Mrs. Watzlerwick.

"Of course."

"Could you call me when you see Mister Burgh? So we know he's here and can check in with him." He gave her his card.

"Of course, no problem." Proud she read the card.

"Thank you very much. The Los Angeles Police Department appreciates your help. Have a good afternoon."

Sofia smiled and left. Great, why did she come here? She didn't ask a question, didn't do anything, only was there and not seen.

"The next time I go alone."

"Mad she ignored you? She likes men in uniform."

"Yeah, she likes playing important."

"She gave us one important information. Frasier hasn't been here since Tuesday."

"Make that two, she also told us he drives a black Denali from Utah. Why don't you contact your friends at traffic and ask them to look for this car, if there are any tickets. And I check how many people in Utah drive a black Denali."

"A long list."

"Likely. At the end there should be only person on it, who isn't real." It was a long shot but it was something. As a former cop Frasier knew how to cover his tracks, they had to be smarter.

It was scary how incomplete her life felt without Susan by her side. Of course her daughter wasn't with her when she worked, but when she came home, was with her friends, her daughter was with her all the time. Now she wasn't here and Sara missed her. The photo Don sent with Susan in her little cot for the week, surrounded by her teddy bear and stuffed dog didn't change it. There was a whole continent between them, an over five hours flight, she could not change her mind and simply get Susan back.

"Mom, she's fine, stop worrying." Steve read her mind.

"Don't you miss her?"

"What? Her crying so loud it wakes me up? Her being the center of everything? Her stinky diapers? The smell of warm milk in the house? Or the baby powder?"

"Her laughter when she sees you, the joy in her eyes because you pick her up, the little hands holding on to you, her personal hero, the big brother, who knows everything and makes sure, she is safe and gets whatever she needs."

"It's my week off."

"Don't listen to him, Sara, he misses her." Lea rattled on her friend. "He complained about the fact we slept in and couldn't wave Susan goodbye. He likes being the superhero for her, gives his ego a boost all the time. Now he needs somebody else, who adores him, makes him feel like Mister Universe."

"You do that every day."

"Ha, in your dreams."

"In dreams a brunette adores him. The cute one, he'll see tomorrow."

"Who will tell me how great her weekend with her BF was. On the yacht." Steve made a grimace.

"You want a chick who has a man with a yacht?" Lou asked.

"His father has the yacht, they take it on the weekends."

"Pretty cool."

"Thanks, that's helpful. Not."

"Hey, if he has a yacht you have to come up with something better?"

"What? I don't even have a bike. I can offer her a ride on my skateboard."

"Interesting date and I'm sure some girls would like that. I thought more about...does she like horses?"

"I have no idea. Why? Shall I invite her to a horseback riding trip in Griffith Park?"

"How about the Santa Monica Mountains? You can take two of my horses, I tell Henry and Joan to take you guys to some nice places and with a couple as guides you have all her focus. Especially when you have a little picnic."

"You can do that?"

"As a movie star I can do everything. Tell me when you need the horses and I organize the rest. Get her, tiger."

"Tiger? The word you were after is kitten."

"Lea, you're not invited the next time." Steve grumbled.

"Sure I am, Lou likes me."

"I don't like you anymore."

"Of course you do, kitten."

"Teenager. Promise you will be a sunshine and don't fight, Eric." Sara kissed the hair of her godchild, who fell asleep in her arms.

"He already fights with his twin sister over toys. Siblings always fight, it's a part of their relationship." Jules said.

"Maybe." Sara never fought with her brother. Well, he was never there and most times she was too busy to hide from the fists of her father or later from Trevor. Why did she think about him? He was in jail. And her brother...was out of her life.

"It's okay to wonder, Sara."

"I don't wonder, I'm annoyed." She put Eric on the sun lounger, got up and walked to the flowers a few yards away. It was difficult to walk, even with her cast. Her foot hurt, she used it too much this morning at the airport and should go back to crutches. Otherwise it took even longer until she could walk normal again. A light sprained ankle was gone within a week or two, the thing was, she had less than two weeks before her wedding.

"Thinking of them is normal." Jules had followed her and took her arm around Sara.

"Don't play shrink, you gave this job up years ago."

"I'm still a therapist, not your therapist, but your friend. You think and wonder if you should tell your mother and brother about your wedding."

"They're not part of my life anymore."

"It's not always that easy."

"It is easy. I don't want them in my life, they hurt me enough, they let me down, they're not good for me."

"And yet you wonder how it would be when they were here. What they think about your wedding. One part of you want them to know, tell them how happy you are, that you don't need them, your life is perfect without them. The other part doesn't want them involved, scared they might try to interfere with your life again. You do talk about what happened and that's good."

"I told Steve about Trevor and my bouts."

"He's old enough to understand. Your daughter will ask you what happened to your parents, at one point she'll wonder why Sofia's and Don's parents are here, why they come over and visit her and not your parents. It's natural children wonder."

"My father died and my mother is sick, she can't go on travels."

"What if Susan wants to meet her?"

"She's sick, you can't visit her. Jules, I won't tell her what my mother did, not what she did to my father nor what she did to me. Not until Susan is old enough to understand. Yes, I know she'll ask about my parents and I will tell her what I think is right for her. Not the whole story as long as she's a child. And we don't need my mother or my brother here. Sofia's brother is not around neither."

"Because he and Sofia were never close, they live different lives. He never let her down, they never had a fight. It's not the same like with you and Sam."

"No, Sam made me point a gun at him."

"You would have never pulled the trigger."

"I killed before, Jules. As a CSI."

"Self-defense isn't killing and it wasn't a family member you shot at. No matter how mad you are, there's a difference. You're not a killer, you're a sensitive woman, a loving mother."

"Maybe I need my psychotherapy again."

"You can call Amanda whenever you need her."

"I'd rather call her cousin and meet her for muffins and coffee."

"Well, I'm always happy when you come along and bring coffee and muffins." Jules kissed Sara's hair. "Whenever you need me I'm there for you."

"I know." And it was very good to know she could always count on Jules.

All you need is love was what The Beatles said. They were right, love was very important, but what you also needed was luck. And finally they had some luck. A black Denali with a license plate from Utah got a parking ticket four weeks ago. Registered was the car to a Alfred Colombo from Utah, who looked like Frasier.

"Interesting choice of a name." Sofia said when she looked at the faked ID.

"Why?" Rock asked.

"Alfred Colombo. Colombo was a cop in the old TV show and Alfred as in Alfred Hitchcock."

"You think he made up his names by using famous people? Who is Vince Burgh?"

"Maybe he likes Chris de Burgh and another one called Vince. Or it is something else and I make theories up. Anyway, Alfred Colombo lives in NoHo, not too far away from the Santa Monica Mountains. A perfect place when I think of the two reservoirs. Almost in the middle."

"That's why we're on our way to meet him there."

Yes, this time Sofia was with the police in the cars on their way to their suspect. She shared the ride with Captain Rock, who asked her to drive with her. First Sofia wasn't sure if this was a kind of surveillance, then she decided Rock wanted her in the car to talk about the case, have a CSI and cop to run it through. Kyle, who drove the car, was quiet, listened to them.

"If he isn't done with killing this afternoon another woman has to die. His house is nestled between a park and a house with a

bug garden. And look at this." She held the table to the Captain. "He has a garage, that's connected to the house."

"He doesn't have to worry about how to get the woman from the car into the house."

"I bet his house has a cellar too." It was a house this time, not an apartment in a complex building. More privacy, more possibilities to torture victims without having people hear their screams.

"A high fence, he keeps people out."

"Keeps to himself, but friendly enough not to raise any suspicion. A little bit shy, a smile on the face, lifts up your groceries when they fall, apologizes twice for being in your way when you're on the sidewalk. The opposite of what people believe psycho killers are."

"With a sad story in case somebody asked. Wife died or left him for another man, took the children with her, lives somewhere far away. Albert Colombo works as a security salesman too, his premises will have a good surveillance system. We need to have all men ready in position when we approach the front gate, otherwise he might escape."

"We can't tell if he's at home, the garage will be closed, makes it impossible to see the car. How about we send somebody to ring his doorbell, ask for a glass of water. When he answers we know he's at home and get in."

"I doubt he opens the door, he doesn't want guests when he has his special guests. There's a post box registered to him, no mail man, no newspaper. How far are you with the telephone and internet?" She talked into her cell phone.

"Working on the telephone line. He has wireless internet, we're tracking his IP address." The answer came from the department. "Give us a few more minutes."

"You have less than five before we arrive. Check on the traffic cameras in the area, I don't want him to come home, see us and drive away. I want eyes on the area of a four blocks radius. No mistakes here."

"What did the FBI say?"

"They send a team to us as soon as we have another body. For now they're satisfied with looking at the reports and not getting in our way. We can consider this as our last chance."

"Cincinnati, Utah, Boston, Los Angeles, he was in at least four states, it's an FBI case when they want it."

"Oh, they want it as soon as they've familiarized themselves with the details and ten cases and then they step in. We have clues now, we have a name, something to work with. Before there was nothing and when you give them nothing they're not very interested. Everybody wants a good rate of solved case."

"We did all the work, they take the glory."

"Wouldn't be the first time."

"That doesn't make it better."

"I didn't say that, Sofia."

"You don't have to." She understood what the Captain said. Also what she didn't say. Their last chance. It wouldn't surprise Sofia when there were FBI agents at their crime scene, watching them.

The car stopped. They couldn't see the house, were two blocks away.

"We're in position, what about you guys? Team one?"

"We have access to his telephone. The line is free, no internet activities."

"Thanks. Team two?"

"We're one minute away from our destination."

"Let us know when you're in position." Rock put her cell phone away. "Okay, as soon as team two is in position we get to the house. Sofia, you stay inside the car until we cleared the house."

"Yes Ma'am. Captain." How she hated to stay outside, wait for her former colleagues to clear the scene and call her in. It was the rule, she told the CSI on scene the same when she was a cop. So she'd stay inside the car and wait - unless the suspect tried to escape and came her way. Then she'd stop him; one way or another.

Sara read the message Sofia sent her. She was on her way to another place the suspect used. Together with a police team.

"Another love messages?" Lou asked and sat next to Sara.

"More an update of her case."

"Did she catch the killer?"

"Not yet, she might be close to it. At the moment she's in NoHo with the police, they storm the house any minute."

"Real action, not a movie. You're engaged to a true hero."

"She is a heroine and sexy. A great combination."

"It is, it got me a couple of million dollars. A pretty face, a sexy ass and a smart head."

"You can't hold a candle to her. No matter how many Oscars you might win."

"Unfortunately I don't have an Oscar. Yet. Do you want to be there?"

"Where? At the Oscar ceremony?"

"No, or I mean, if you want to be there I can organize you tickets. I was talking about NoHo, close to Sofia. I can take you there, we can wait until she closed the case and take her here with us."

Sara loved the idea. Driving to North Hollywood, waiting for Sofia to catch the bad guy and then take her to here, have her in her arms and be with her. "No, we can't do it. Too dangerous for us. They're dealing with a serial killer. Being a movie action star doesn't help you. Plus we would be in their way."

"I do have guns, we can catch or shoot the bad guy. I bet you have a gun too."

"And I could shoot you from a distance you couldn't even see me. We're not cops, we let the cops do the work and wait for Sofia to call."

"Do you miss it? Being with the cops?"

"No, it was a part of my life, no there is a different part."

"What about working with Sofia? Don't you miss working with her?"

"It was a great time working with her, she's one of the smartest person I ever worked with, but when we worked together, we weren't a couple. I think it's great to spend time together, but you also need some time on your own. You can't miss each other when you're together all the time."

"Smart words. The last time I was in love...no, I can't remember when I was in love, only in lust."

"Let me guess: you're in lust all the time."

"At least whenever I see a hot woman...which reminds me, I should go out tonight."

"Last time you wanted to find a woman to marry, have a family."

"I decided I want a baby but not the marriage things, it's just not my cup of tea. A surrogate mother is cheaper than a wedding and the divorce. How much money do I have to pay you to have Sofia as the mother of my baby?"

"There isn't enough money in the world."

"I'm not talking about having sex with her...I'm not suicidal. She could be the mother of my child. IV again."

"Well, it's her body, her decision."

"You're her fiancé, soon her wife, it's your decision too."

"Sofia is mine, you won't get her. Not her heart and not her body."

"That was a clear decision."

"I don't share my sexy blonde."

"Neither would I. There are some things money can't buy."

"There are a lot of things money can't buy and these things are the most important in life. Like love." Sara pulled Jules in her arm, who sat next to her. "I love this woman, she's perfect and I'm so glad she'll marry my best friend, is the godmother of my child and I'm the godmother of her son. The happiness she gives me you can't buy with money. I love you, Jules."

"I love you too. How is Sofia?"

"The first place they went to was an apartment, the suspect owned but never had lived in. He rent another house, under a different name in North Hollywood, they're there and Sofia waits until the police cleared the scene. His third name, the second car, if they're unlucky he has another name, another place and another car."

"Sounds really professional. A cop? CSI?"

"Honey, even if I knew I couldn't tell you. Wife - wife confidential."

"Former cop, former CSI. Not from Los Angeles. Also not from Boston. But he has strings to these two cities, it's why he killed them here and in Boston. The woman, who triggered him killing is a bigger woman, his victims were all slim, model types. The red pants are too big for them, they connect him to whoever made him kill."

"You're a profiler now?"

"I'm a psychologist, I know people, what and why they do things."

"You should work as a profiler."

"No, profiling is a different area."

"Now, that would be a lovely picture: the three of you working together. Can you become a cop, Sara?" Lou clapped his hands.

"If I wanted, yes."

"Imagine this: Sofia as the CSI, Sara the cop and Jules the profiler. I tell you, ladies, with your looks and brains, you'd kick asses. Hollywood would make movies about you, and you're so sexy, you can play yourselves. Gosh, I'd have a huge poster of you in my living room. Do you need a good looking sidekick?"

"Sure, if Brad Pitt is available." Sara said dryly. Jules, Sofia and she as movie stars. Lou lived in a movie and not in reality. Before she became a movie star...maybe one day when hell freezes over.

Watching her former colleagues approaching the house and entering it made Sofia realize how much she missed being a cop. As a lieutenant she'd have been right in the middle of the operation, experienced first hand what happened, what the suspect was doing, if he was around. Now all she could do was sit, wait and watch. No shots were fired, her colleagues were in the house and around it.

"Where are you?" She called Greg.

"In a car on the other side of the block."

"Do you think he's in the house?"

"I'm not sure, our cops take their time, you were a cop, does that mean he's in the house or he's out?"

"Depends. Worst case he has bombs or other dangerous weapons in the house and they can't get to him or the weapons. He could be in there with a hostage. Or something simple like every door is locked and they have to open them. How good can you see the house?"

"Pretty good, I've got binoculars. No broken glass, no fleeing man, only a quiet and peaceful house."

"Did you see a car turn?"

"No, there are two bystanders, watching the cops. They're interested, nobody walked away when they saw the cops, no cars turned. I can't see any cameras on the house."

"I bet he has cameras in the house, hidden, so people don't know he's monitoring the house and the area. As a cop he knows the tricks. Cameras in decoration, nobody notices them, he can see from wherever he is, what the police is doing in the house. Motion sensors under the doormat. There are so many possibilities and now that I think of them, I realize how little security I have got at home."

"Your house is high end security."

"I don't have cameras around the house. In the house."

"Your housemates won't be happy about security cameras in the house, I'm sure they don't mind one at the front door or the garage...some people would love you to have a camera in your bedroom."

"That's sexual harassment, Mister Sanders."

"No, it's a matter of fact. Look, Rock comes out of the house. She waves over, I think that means we can come to the house."

"Finally." Sofia ended the call and got out of the car.

"Are you going to stay or come with me?" She looked at Kyle.

"My order is to stay here until I got told to move."

"Is Frasier in the house?"

"Suspect is secured."

"Perfect. And it's Frasier?" She didn't want to cheer and get disappointed afterwards.

"He is the suspect, right?"

"He is."

"So he is secured."

"Thank God." The blonde sighed relieved and walked over to the house. Frasier was secured, the house was open, meant, there were no bombs or other bad surprises; hopefully. When she searched the house she had to be careful, just in case he hid some surprises for them.

Frasier stood in the middle of the living room, hands cuffed behind his back, a smile on his face.

"We will find all the evidence we need." Rock finished her sentence. "Get him out of my eyes." An officer on each side

Frasier was led away. Sofia watched him until he was out of the house.

"What did he say?"

"Lawyer."

"Nothing else?"

"No, he offered us his hands with a smile and said lawyer. No matter what else we said or did, he stayed quiet. He knows the rules and the game."

"That won't help him when we find all the evidence we need."

"Your job. Get us what we need, we go back to the department, wait for the lawyer and prepare for the interrogation later. I want this guy, Sofia. Make it happen!"

"Of course, Captain." She took a look around. An ordinary living room, a sofa, TV, two shelves, a dining table, four chairs, a sound system, a few plants. No private photos, no sign of children. All was neat and tidy. Like he expected visitors anytime. Maybe he did. He knew the police was investigating, he knew eventually he was caught. How good was he prepared? How much did he leave for them?

"He lived here." Greg opened the fridge in the kitchen, that was attached to the living room. Fruits, vegetables, juice, milk, eggs, enough food for a couple of days. "They're all fresh."

"Where has he been when you came in?" Sofia looked at Lynn, who was one of the officers, who went in first.

"He sat on the sofa and watched TV. Stock report."

"Was he surprised?"

"First yes, then he smiled."

"And he never said a word?"

"Lawyer. Nothing else."

"Why was he so cool? He never tried to fight back?"

"No. By looking through the house, securing it, we didn't find a weapon."

"Is there a basement?"

"Yes and an attic. We didn't find any other person, no evidence of the women being here for a while. He must have another place."

"How many places can he afford?"

"We're about to check his bank accounts."

"He has at least two more identities." Greg held up two driver's licenses. "Both with L.A. addresses."

"Too easy. He doesn't make it this easy for us." Sofia said.

"Probably not. You have to be better than him."

"We. Greg, where do you want to start?"

"With a call, Brandon can come over and give us a hand."

"Okay, I go downstairs." Not that basements were her favorite spot of a house, but most times it was the place, where you could find most evidence.

"Want me to join you?" Lynn offered.

"I'm not afraid of the boogie man."

"I leave the door open."

"Okay." Sofia walked down narrow iron stairs after she switched on the lights. She found herself in a hallway with four wooden doors, two on each side. Was this the place where Frasier killed five women? Did he keep them here? For a moment she just stood there, quiet, listened to the basement, the house. There was no sound, she couldn't hear Greg, Lynn and the others upstairs. Soundproofed?

The first door she opened was on the left side. Stone floor, a naked light bulb on the ceiling and nothing else. A complete empty room. She walked out and opened the next door. Another room, the same size and empty again.

"Strange." Room number three and four were the same. Why did somebody have a basement and didn't use it? Not even to store food or drinks?

"What did you find?" Greg asked when she came back upstairs.

"Nothing. Four empty rooms. And by empty I mean empty like nothing inside. Not even dust."

"Do you want to go to the attic? Brandon is on his way."

"No, I want to find out why the basement is empty. There's a reason for it. I try luminol." She didn't believe he left nothing. Maybe nothing with a DNA, but at least a sign that there was something.

The house felt empty without Sofia and Susan, Sara had no idea whom she missed more. Her lover or her daughter. Don sent her another photo of Susan with his parents, her daughter sitting on a huge teddy bear. Her best new friend. Hugo.

"When will mom come home?" Steve asked.

"I have no idea. They arrested the suspect, she is or was at his house, they try to find out if he has more places because there were more driver's licenses with his photo."

"Are they waiting for his lawyer?"

"Apparently so. I hope it's not Mel."

"Do you think he can afford her?"

"We don't know how much money he has, he owns a house, an apartment in Bel Air. maybe there's a lot of money, however he made it. Mel is a good lawyer."

"He's a killer."

"Most of her clients aren't exactly innocent, when they pay she helps them anyway."

"In case I decide to become a lawyer, I won't help serial killer. I help...tax offender."

"Tax is what pays for your food. Without tax payer you can say goodbye to Triple Burger."

"Lucky me I have my own job, can buy myself a burger every now and then. It took me fifteen years to have my own money, now I have it and don't want to miss it."

"Do you miss your sister?"

"It's so nice and quiet here. Nobody starts crying for no reason, we don't have to be quiet because Susan is asleep and...yes, I miss her." He admitted. "How are they?"

"Fine. Don's parents pamper her, you saw the teddy bear, it's huge. I doubt they can take it over to here, it has to stay in New York."

"It's not like she has no stuffed animals here."

"No, she has a few. What can we do good for you? After you don't get a free trip to New York? I had plans to take you to Six Flags, but with my foot and shoulder I'm not exactly in a perfect condition for it."

"Not to mention your rips, which would really hate it when you get pressed into the seat or when you hang in the belt. We can do it later, after the wedding. If you want to make me happy take me to Triple Burger. Or order pizza. Or an afternoon at the beach."

"You're easy to please."

"No, I'm just happy when I'm with my moms and have a good time. Plus food makes me always happy. Junk food."

"Like most teenagers. Your grandparents are in Vegas, I forgot to tell you. They sent me a message around noon, they'll be there for two or three days, meet friends."

"Good for them, they deserve some time away, now that our stink bomb is away."

"Their grandson is here, needs supervision."

"No, he doesn't." Steve laughed. "His mom needs the supervision, that's why I decided to stay here and not with them." He helped Sara with opening a bottle. "She's disabled."

"Temporarily. Thanks." Sara's cell phone beeped. "Your mother."

"How is she? Shall we bring her dinner? I can drive."

"You don't have a driver's license and unless you have one, a real one, you won't drive. Besides, she said she comes home now."

"Did they close the case?"

"She didn't say, we'll hear it in a few minutes. Why don't we get her a pizza in the oven and make sure there's a very cold beer waiting for her?"

"You do the housewife duty, you marry her, I take the dogs out for a walk. Can I come home without worrying my moms are undressed?"

"If we are, we are in our room."

"Turn the music loud, will you?"

"Get lost, cheeky boy! From tomorrow on you're grounded!"

"Yeah, sure. I want to see you running after me when I leave the house, limp biscuit." He blew her a kiss and left the kitchen before she could respond to his assault. The dogs by his side as he had grabbed a banana on his way out and they hoped he'd share the fruit.

When Sofia came home she smelled the pizza. Coming home and the smell of food in the air was something, she always wanted for her life.

"Hey Darling." Sara didn't wait until her lover greeted her, she just pulled her into her arms and kissed her passionately. "I missed you."

"I missed you too."

"What do you think about dinner in bed?"

"Are you my dinner? I thought I can smell pizza."

"If you had to decide, which would you be your pick?" The brunette cocked her head.

"Pizza as main course, you as my dessert. The best is always kept as dessert, so you can enjoy it longer."

"I'm sure we can arrange your dinner in this way. Topped with ice cold beer, you're not a milk bar for a week, you can drink beer."

"The only bright side of Susan being away. I called Don on my way here, talked to Susan. She said the next time we have to come with her, she misses us like crazy."

"I like the idea. How about Christmas? If we get three or four days off, we can take her over, there might be snow and we can do the Christmas shopping in New York, go ice skating in front of the Rockefeller Center, see all the huge Christmas trees, have a hot chocolate to warm us."

"You're full of good ideas, Honey." Sofia kissed Sara. "I get the pizza, you go to bed."

"I love it when you send me to bed and follow me." The brunette smirked.

"Me too, me too." After Sofia got her pizza and placed it onto the nightstand, she took off her prosthesis. No more walks today, she noticed her dogs were gone, so she didn't have to walk them anymore. Being in Sara's left arm, having the pizza in her left hand and the beer in her right hand, the day began to look much better. A little bit late but better late than never. The kisses her lover placed on her cheek made it even better.

"Tell me about your day after we let our daughter fly away."

"Jules took the kids and me over to Lou, we had a lovely day in his garden, I swam in the pool and it felt good to be able to move around without pain. Marian spoilt us with amazing food. Jules played therapist on me because I had to think about my mom and Sam, which is a waste of time, but unfortunately I can't control my thoughts all the time. It's fine now, it helped to talk my thoughts through and now they're gone."

"I'm sorry I wasn't there to talk with you."

"You were at work and friends are there to listen when you have problems, let me use my friend."

"I like it much more when you use me." The blonde nibbled on the lips of her lover. "You could use me now."

"No, I let you finish your dinner now, dessert is always after dinner and you only get dessert when you finished dinner. Didn't your mom, who is in Vegas now, tell you?"

"Mom is in Vegas? She didn't tell me."

"Probably she didn't want to distract you. They come back in two or three days."

"Okay, they deserve a few days away."

"Like you deserve a shorter work day."

"Sorry, we...it was complicated today."

"Did the complicated day end in a good way?"

"No." Sofia finished her pizza. "We caught Frasier in his house in North Hollywood. I wasn't there when they got into the house, but according to Captain Rock, the only thing he said was: lawyer. And that was all for today. I searched his basement, there were four rooms, all empty and no trace of blood. I tried luminol, nothing, not even bleach. Tell me, why does a serial killer have a basement and doesn't use it? Not even to store beer."

"What about the rest of the house?"

"Nothing, no blood, no sign of the women. His house was clean, not as clean as his apartment, which he used for...I don't know. He was there once a week for an hour or so, didn't use any of the furniture. It looked like it was bought, built up and never used."

"Did he use it for all his official requirements? Bills, tax and these things?"

"It looks like it, we haven't had time to check everything, but the name he used for that place, Vince Bough, was his main personality in Los Angeles. Alfred Colombo, the name he used for the NoHo house, was an employee of Burgh, he has a social security number, driver's license, everything. And this spotless basement. The attic was empty too, only the living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom were lived in. No traces of sexual activities in the bed, no traces of bleach in any room."

He might have other places, we found two more driver's licenses, the addresses on them were faked ones."

"Where were them?"

"Also NoHo and Bel Air."

"Check the tires, he might have a cabin somewhere and keeps or kept women there. He must have a connection with the Angeles National Forest, contact our big boss, ask for a list of names of people, who own a cabin in the forest."

"I bet if he owns one he has another ID for it. One, he doesn't use for anything else."

"What about employees of his security company? You said, he is a salesman? His own boss."

"Alfred Colombo was the only employee. His company made good money, I only had a brief look at his finances, but he had no problems paying for the apartment and the house."

"Where is his business shop?"

"The listed address is bogus."

"Really?" Sara was surprised.

"Yes."

"If he doesn't want anybody to know where his shop is, but he does make good money with it, there's something wrong with it. He must have a place with all his equipment, you said his house and apartment were empty, there must be a third place."

"He might have used this place to kill the women too."

"Do you know which car he used to see his clients?"

"Not yet, we haven't talked to them."

"They must have seen the car, if he used a GPS you find out where he had been. Even when he deleted the trips, all the information get sent to the car companies and they won't make it easy for you, but they can tell you where he was. By agreeing on their conditions for the GPS, they agree on having them saved the information for "business research" by the car companies."

"You're right, we can contact them and...gosh, I adore your smart brain and it's so sexy, when you talk all CSI to me. How did I manage not to jump you in Vegas?" Sofia pushed Sara on the mattress and kissed passionately and started to unbutton her blouse. The case was out of her head, all she had on her mind

was undressing her lover and have sex with her. With this sexy and smart woman.

Monday, August 12th

"I have to love this woman." Sara smiled when she saw how Sofia carried a tray with their breakfast into the bedroom. What a way to start the day, with breakfast in bed.

"Oh yes, you have to love me, you have to marry me. Everything is arranged, there's no way back, my love."

"Honey, our love is a one-way street."

"Highway to heaven." The blonde sat down and kissed her lover, who sniffed at the fresh washed hair.

"Somebody showered in Calvin Klein."

"Can't be me, I showered in water."

"Really? Bugger, I want to meet this CK person, this smell makes me horny."

"I didn't hear that." Sofia closed her ears. "No time for hot sex, I have to be at work on time, a serial killer is waiting and we have a lot of work to do so he can be locked away by tonight. I can't get distracted."

"How about I promise you hot sex when you close the case tonight? Does that motivate you?"

"Absolutely. Not that I need to be motivated to lock away a serial killer...your promise makes it more desirable."

"Get them all, tiger." Sara chuckled.

"Meow." Sofia kissed her. "I love you."

"I love you too. And if my doctor thinks I need to stay at home a little bit longer, I try to prepare dinner for us. Would you like some lasagne?"

"Spinach lasagne?"

"Yes. I'd two thirds with salmon for you and Steve."

"Perfect idea. And Honey, the doctor won't send you back to work, you can't walk, you can't drive a car, only your shoulder is much better. In this condition you're no help for you boss."

"I could sit at the information center and give leaflets away. No, you're right, I can't do my job until I can at least drive a car again." The brunette sighed. She hated being on a sick leave when there was a lot to do.

"No, the parents of this boy will have to pay for it, the insurance company will not pay for everything without

complaining. They'll get their money back from them or their insurance."

"He only tried a science experiment."

"The next time he should try it somewhere without people around. Far, far away from my fiancé, I don't like phone calls telling me I can find you in hospital. No matter if you're serious injured or not, I want you happy and healthy."

"I thought these bruises make me look tough."

"Nobody messes with you because they know if they do, they get in trouble with me, your bad ass ex cop girlfriend."

"If they knew how gentle and sensitive you are."

"This side is only for my family. Talking about family, we should call New York, hear how our daughter is doing."

"It's nine in the morning over there, they'll be awake." Sara agreed and got her cell phone, dialed Don's number and got a slightly sleepy Tanya.

"Rise and shine."

"Leave me alone, your daughter played rise and shine the whole night."

"Is she all right?"

"She's fine."

"But?"

"But she woke us up quite often. Until Don took her with him in our bed and she could sleep in the middle. Do you have Susan in your bed all the time?"

"No, we try not to have her here with us, it can be dangerous. Maybe she missed something from home...like her mothers."

"Well, her daddy made sure she didn't feel lost or alone. Any idea how we make her sleep tonight in her own bed?"

"If she sleeps in your bed all three of you get some sleep." Sara grinned widely.

"I hate you."

"Mom has this magical sleep stuff, send her a text and ask for it." Sofia helped their friend. "When Susan is a little bit like me she doesn't sleep good at new places for the first two or three nights. I can't sleep unless I have got something with me, that reminds me of home. Sara is the best medication, with her I feel comfortable everywhere."

"We can't get Sara over to have Susan happy...or are you still on a sick leave?"

"I'll be when I saw my doctor, which doesn't mean I come over to New York, as much as I miss my daughter, my fiancé and son need me here."

"You only want to enjoy the baby free time."

"It has not only downsides, Sofia had time to get me my breakfast to bed."

"Great, my boyfriend got up early, fed his daughter and took her out for a little walk. I know why I don't want children, they're only fun when you can rent them for a few hours and not overnight."

"Oh, auntie Tanya is grumpy."

"Yes, I need my beauty sleep."

"I know how you look after a night out, celebrating, you still look beautiful."

"Sara, your girlfriend sits next to you."

"I know, I hold her hand. She thinks the same."

"At least I know women think I'm sexy, in case Don breaks up with me, I can try my luck with women. Thanks for that information. Shall I tell daddy D to call you when he's back? I think I have to grab a shower to wake up."

"Yes, tell him to call and send photos of Susan."

"Will do. Good night."

Sofia chuckled. Now Tanya knew how it was to have a baby around all the time, when she cried at night and how short a night can be while the day feels already like eternity when it was still morning.

"Captain, do you have a minute?" Sofia went to see Captain Rock as soon as she was back at work.

"Sure, did you find something?"

"No, unfortunately not, but I might have an idea how we can find something."

"How?"

"It might include calling the FBI."

"Well, I'm sure if you suggest this you have good reasons for it."

"It makes things easier. I talked to Sara last night...you know..."

"Yes, I remember Sara." Her former lieutenant interrupted her with a smile. "Could you convince her to join the Los Angeles crime lab?"

"No, she likes her new life. Which is a big loss for us, she has brilliant ideas. She suggested we should contact the automobile manufacturers. They save all the GPS information, so they can even see the information you delete from your GPS. When he used the address of the place, where he kept the woman, we can find it...did somebody call in a new body?"

"No, until now it looks like we have the real killer. I contact the FBI, they have more weight than we do, can make the manufacturers to give us the information. If you want this date, it's a fight, they're not easy to convince to cooperate."

"That's why I suggested the Feds."

"Really good thinking, Sofia."

"Sara's thinking."

"We need her here, Sofia. I can't give you orders anymore, but if I could I would order you to recruit your fiancé."

"There's only so much I can do, sorry."

"Whatever makes her happy."

Sofia was close to mention, she made Sara happy before she could stay quiet and only smile. "What is the status on Frasier?"

"His lawyer is there, we'll talk with them in one hour. As far as I know Sanders will be the CSI in the room, or take you over?"

"It's his case, I only assisted and will watch from the other side of the mirror." Which was a little bit sad, she wanted to kick the ass of this bastard, wanted him down. But unless Greg asked her to step in, she was a visitor behind the mirror.

"Don't tell me you're the lawyer of the serial killer." Sofia sighed when she saw Mel coming down the hallway.

"No, I don't help serial killer, my clients are innocent."

"Mel, please. Are you here for the man we keep for the killing of the women in Angeles National Forest?"

"No. I'm here to get a speeding ticket away from a client. Your traffic colleagues are very narrow-minded sometimes."

"The rules about speeding are clear."
"There are emergencies."
"Are there? Your client is a doctor?"
"He surely is."
"Even for them are rules to stick to."
"Of course. You have the serial killer? Who is his lawyer?"
"I don't know, I'm only glad it's not you."
"Because I could set him free?"
"No, because then Steve can't work for you."
"It's because I'm a tough cookie and you don't want to lose a case."
"Mel, we won't lose this case. You know what he did to ten women. Ten women we know of. Even as a lawyer, you don't want people like him walk around, kill again."
"Are you trying to reach my heart?"
"Can't reach what's not there."
"You're almost as charming as your fiancé. I've to go, get things sort out for my client, make some nice money to pay your son. See you around." Mel smirked and started walking.
"Oh, before I forget it: you're dealing with O'Hara. On your Reservoir Killer case. He's pretty good, very organized, a little bit cocky. Let Greg do the talk, O'Hara isn't good with women. Usually it helps you, but in his case, it doesn't. He gets nasty."
"Greg is the leading CSI, he will do the talk."
"Good. Stay behind the mirror, watch him closely, I'm sure you can grab him by his balls and tear them off...I mean, you can get your guy into jail."
"I know what you mean. Thanks Mel."
"Told you, one day you'll love me."
"The only one I love is Sara. Thanks anyway." Sofia smiled. Maybe Mel just helped them with their case.
She went back to the lab where Greg was organizing files for the meeting with the lawyer.
"I met Mel on my way to here, she says Frasier's lawyer is called O'Hara and he is good, organized and cocky."
"Yeah, I got his name, didn't have the time to check on him a lot."
"Let me do it while you continue with the case. You focus on Frasier, I get O'Hara."

"Thanks. You'll be there?"

"Behind the mirror."

"Are you okay with that?"

"Your case, you do the interview. Besides, Mel said it's better for us when I stay out, he's not good with women and with Rock in there, there's already one woman in the room."

"We can't get Don back."

"Not in time." Their friend would be very mad when he found out he was needed here to close the case. So they had to do it on their own, do it for Don. And for all the women, who got killed by Frasier.

"Curtis, you're out!"

"What?" Sofia looked up irritated. She was out? Out of what? The case? Rock couldn't do that.

"You're out. We get a couple of addresses from the GPS, I want you to take your two officer buddies and check them out. Your boss agrees. Meanwhile Sanders and I will work on Frasier. I want you to find something fast so we can use it and make his lawyer understand his client will stay in prison because it's where he belongs. Understood?"

"Yes, Captain."

Sofia took the folder Rock gave her, picked up her kit and called Lynn. "Where are you?"

"Getting the cave man and the wheels in front of your door. Meet you there in thirty seconds."

"Okay." Cave man? Did Lynn and Kyle have an argument? She didn't hear her call him a cave man in a long, long time...the last time when they were a couple. Did they...were they...? What was with Dirk and Mandy?

"Okay, tell me what's going on?" She asked as soon as she slipped onto the backseat.

"Rock gave us a list with addresses we have to check, they're from the GPS of the Denali." Lynn said.

"I know that. I mean the two of you. What's going on with you?"

"What do you mean?"

"You called him a cave man, the last time you did it was when you were a couple. Are you back together?"

"Did you put something in your coffee? Something that messed up your mind?" Kyle turned and looked irritated at Sofia.

"It was just...it triggered a memory."

"Darling, I'm having a wonderful boyfriend, who makes me more than happy, why should I go back to Kyle?"

"You were in love with him once."

"A long time ago. Get this crazy idea out of your head and concentrate on the list. We have ten addresses, which one should we go to first?"

Sofia got her attention on the list and read the addresses before she entered them all into her notebook. Wild tree Street in La Cañada Flintridge. It's close to the highway 210, a perfect place to go to Angeles National Park and it's almost in the middle between Bouquet Reservoir and San Gabriel Reservoir."

"There's one address, that's closer to Bouquet Reservoir."

"Yes, I can see that and on the first look it makes more sense, but I'm sure he knew his way to the place, where he kept the women after he went there once. The address of Wild Tree Street is the second he ever entered in his GPS, the first one was his place in North Hollywood. He settled down, looked for a place to continue his mission, started working...there was no GPS in the other car...I wonder if he knew the addresses of all his clients, the list is way too short for the amount of clients he has. Or he used his cell phone, it has a GPS too..."

"You think the right address could be on there?" Kyle asked.

"It's possible. If we don't find anything with these addresses we can check the others. I call Brandon to write them down, cross check them with addresses from clients Frasier had. We have all his work documents, Brandon can rule out client's addresses."

"Okay, you call your sidekick, I get us to the destination and Kyle...just sits here and tries not to look too stupid."

"Bitch."

Sofia rolled her eyes and dialed Brandon's number. Something was going on between Kyle and Lynn and as soon as they solved the case, she'd make them her personal new case. With VIP status.

Sara was for the rest of the week on a sick leave. Her doctor wasn't convinced she was fit enough to drive her car nor let her walk without crutches. Which brought the brunette to a problem: boredom. With her lover at work, her parents-in-law in Vegas, her son at work and her daughter in New York she was all alone. Calling Don every five minutes and ask him to give her Susan was ridiculous, ruined his day and his vacation.

"A hooray to modern day communication." She took her cell phone and send a text message to Jules. *Can you do me a huge favor when you have a minute?* There was one possibility for her to give her being a sense.

At five to ten her cell phone rang. "What do you want?"

Like every time she smiled when she heard Jules's voice. It still made her feel like curl up on a couch, her head on a comfortable pillow and spill all her guts to her friend and feel good about it.

"Only one phone call."

"Did the doctor put you on a sick leave?"

"Yes, for the rest of the week."

"I won't call my mother and ask her to write you happy and healthy."

"I wouldn't ask for something like this."

"So what do you want?"

"Your kids. Can I get them from daycare? Everybody is gone, I'm home alone and I feel lonely and bored and miss children around me. You can make fun of me for that, the woman, who was afraid she's bad with children, was afraid of having her own child, whines and asks for children now."

"Sara, I don't make fun of you for feeling the way you do. You should know me better."

"I do."

"You can't drive to the daycare center and you can't run after them when they run away. How about I call daycare and tell them you come around in a taxi and pick up Eric? One kid is enough in your condition and he'll love to have your full attention. Would that help?"

"You're an angel, did I ever mention this?"

"In fact you did. Okay, I call daycare and tell them you pick Eric up in one hour and then I have to go back to work."

"You're the best."

"And you're a perfect mom and the best godmother Eric could have asked for. See you tonight."

"Thanks doc." Sara smiled. One more hour and she had Eric with her, her little boy, her sunshine. Time to call the taxi company and order them here in forty-five minutes and have them take her to the daycare. A day with Eric, they could play, watch cartoons and eat ice cream.

The house on their list was set back from the street, tucked in between bushes and trees, shielding it from the other houses and the street.

"Welcome to the little version of Norman Bates' motel."

"The motel was in a rural area, this house looks like it's set in a little forest of its own." Kyle disagreed with Lynn. "It's not the Psycho motel."

"The Psycho motel is in the Universal Studios, you see it when you take the studio tour." Sofia got out of the car. "When you drive past in the little train Bates comes after you with a knife. Keep your guns in close range, you have to protect your CSI officers."

"Don't worry, I take care of both of you, ladies."

"We all know Sofia is the one, who is best with her weapon, let her protect us." Lynn tried to open the gate but it was locked with a chain. "Somebody doesn't want any visitor nor the mailman come to their door. Who owns the house?"

"Jeffrey Beauchamp. Which is a faked name." Sofia answered.

"How do you know?"

"Think of the other two names Frasier created. They all had something to do with crime, real or fiction. This one is another mix, he borrowed the names of Jeffrey Dahmer and Charles Beauchamp, a serial killer of 'Criminal Minds'. It belongs to Frasier."

"I'm impressed. You have the time to watch TV with two kids and a fiancé?"

"We watch TV when the kids are in bed. It's our private battle, we watch crime shows and compete who finds the killer first."

"Nuts, you can't get enough of work." Kyle opened the trunk, got pliers and cut the chain. "After you, ladies."

"I wonder if he's hiding or having our backs." Lynn mumbled and went onto the driveway, that lead to a garage. "The garage is connected to the house. Sure this is place belongs to Frasier, Sofia?"

"Yes."

"If not we need to split, somebody has to get the back."

"I do it, you ladies take the front."

They waited until he vanished around the corner of the house before they rang the doorbell. No response. The door was locked, so were the windows. Thick curtains made it impossible to look into the house.

"Feel like kicking in a door?" Sofia asked.

"No, I'm not a TV cop, I'm a real cop and you're a CSI, we have other ways. Open the door."

The blonde smiled and got a little case out of her kit. To her surprise she could unlock the lock but the door didn't open.

"That's odd."

"Got a problem here?" Kyle was back.

"I unlocked the door and it's still closed. Something must be behind it."

"I can kick it in." He stepped two steps back.

"No! Wait. Was there a backdoor?"

"Yes. Does it matter which one we kick in?"

"Lets try the backdoor." Sofia had a bad feeling about kicking in doors.

"Okay. Shall I stay here?"

"No, I think if somebody was in the house, this person left already when we cut the chain and like I said, it's Frasier's house, he isn't here." They walked to the backside of the house and Sofia tried her luck with the lock there. Again she unlocked the lock and this time they could open the door. That Kyle and Lynn pushed her aside to enter the house first wasn't something that made her happy, but it was protocol.

"Gosh, this is a stinky place." Lynn said.

"And the opposite to all the other places. They were so neat and tidy and this is a mess. All old, look at the fridge, it must be twenty years or so." Sofia opened it and closed the door immediately. "The food inside is from the time when this one was modern."

"The bathroom and bedroom are empty."

"Any signs of the women?"

"No. I have a look into the garage."

"Okay." Sofia walked into the bedroom. The bed looked used, there was dirty laundry all over the place. "How can he live in a mess like this when his other places look like they're a spot in a furniture store."

"Don't say split personality, his lawyer will jump at this chance to get him into a loony bin instead of prison." Lynn said.

"I'm sure he knew what he was doing, he was organized. This...maybe this his kind of man cave."

"It surely looks like a cave. No telephone line, the TV is old and not plugged in. How is your cell phone signal?"

"Perfect."

"So he used the internet via his cell phone. I didn't see a computer or laptop."

"No women clothes. I can go out and check the garbage."

"The garage is clean, no car, no signs of the victims. Maybe this is the wrong place."

"It feels so right. What about a basement?"

"There's no door and the floor doesn't sound hollow when I walk over it." Lynn stepped harder on the ground. "We can check, there's a carpet in the living room and bedroom." They went into the rooms, pulled curtains away. Nothing under it.

"Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!" The blonde got up, annoyed. She had been so sure this was the right place. It had to be. It was perfect it was...a trap door.

"Guys, look up, what do you see?"

Kyle and Lynn looked up. "This place has an attic." Kyle said surprised.

"Where's the hook to pull the ladder down?" Lynn took a look around.

"Forget the hook." He grabbed her hips and lifted her up, so could reach the little ring in the trap door.

"I can't grab it, it's too small, only my little finger fits in there."

"Take the nylon cord." Sofia got a nylon cord out of her kit, handed it up to Lynn, who got it through the ring and twisted the cord around her fist. When Kyle let her down the trap door

opened and Sofia caught the stairs before they could hit one of her friends. A perfect team effort.

"Okay, lets see what's waiting in the attic." Kyle took his gun and flashlight out. "I'm going to be the cave man and go up first, any complains, officer?"

"A lot, but they're not important now. Sofia, I have your back."

"All right." Sofia waited until Kyle was half up the ladder before she followed him. The steps shook a little bit, crunched under their weight. It was possible to carry up a woman to the attic and down. Frasier was well build, he had the strength to carry them.

"Holy shit." Kyle let out when he got a first look around. He stepped off the ladder to let Sofia have a look.

"Oh shit." Her gut told her she was right and now her eyes told her, she was more than right. There was blood. A lot of blood. Most of it under a stretcher in the left corner.

"We need an EMT." Kyle was next to a woman, who was tied to a ring in the wall. She was unconscious, naked but seemed to be unharmed on the first look.

"She's dehydrated, we need to get her to drink." Lynn was next to him, checking the pulse and vitals. "Miss? Miss? Can you hear us?"

"EMTs are on their way." Sofia put her cell phone away, opened her kit and cut off the plastic straps so Kyle could lift up the woman and carry her down the stairs, Lynn's jacket over her body.

The blonde stayed upstairs in the attic. His torture room. The place they have been looking for and yet were so scared of finding it. There were four rings in the wall and where the rings were, the wall was made of stone, not wood. Four rings. He kept four women at one time here. Or he could. There was evidence of body fluid under the rings, did he keep the women here all the time? Tied like animals. No blankets, no glasses, no plates. He must have fed them because their bodies weren't dehydrated, there were so signs that told the blonde, the women were left alone for a long time. He must have come here twice a day at least, maybe more often. It was summer, it was war hot in Los Angeles, here, under the roof, it was even worse.

"She's still unconscious, he must have given her something. I can't remember the tox reports came back with anything." Lynn came back.

"There are some things he could have slipped them for the time he left them alone, like at night, to make sure they didn't scream and out of the system within a few hours. The day he killed them, he spent a lot of time with them, no need to drug them. Maybe the others. No, I hope he drugged them so they didn't have to see what he did to the other woman." She put on her gloves. "I need you to step away, you're containing the crime scene."

"Okay. Did you call for help?"

"Not yet."

"I tell them to send somebody when I call Rock. She might be in interrogation now."

"Hopefully she nails him and his lawyer. Tell Brandon to come over." She would need help. Especially when they wanted to use some of the evidence today.

When Eric came out of the daycare house and jumped into her arms, she felt like the day finally started because the sun rose. Her little sunshine. The taxi took them back home and Sara took her godchild into the garden, where they were greeted by two happy dogs.

"Doo Doo!" Eric hugged Scooby. "Doo Doo!"

"Scooby-Dooby-Doo!" Sara smiled. "And Rantanplan, who isn't more stupid than his shadow. At least not most times."

"Feed?"

"No, we don't have to feed them, they're not hungry, they only pretend to be hungry. It's like with you and chocolate, you can eat and want it even when you're not hungry."

"Choc!"

"No way, it's almost lunch time, we will order some food and don't have chocolate for lunch. If we do that your mother will never allow me to get you out of daycare."

"Mom work."

"Yes, your mommy and daddy are at work. What do you want for lunch?"

"Choc."

"No, chocolate is not an option. How about salad?"

"No."

"Okay. You like French fries?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, so we will have French fries and...you like carrots and peas."

"Yes."

"We have them with the French fries and if you eat them all, you get chocolate ice cream as dessert. Sounds that good?"

"Yeah."

She smiled and hoped he remembered their deal when they had their lunch. "Okay, then lets start with lunch. I prepare the carrots and you...do you want to draw me a new picture? You haven't draw one for me for a while. Can you draw me you and me in the forest? With animals?"

"Yeah."

"Good, then lets go into the kitchen." With her crutches she followed Eric into the kitchen, gave him paper and colored pencils while she started on the carrots.

"Oh, what's this little boy doing here? Shouldn't he be in daycare?" Tony came into the kitchen.

"He was until I asked his mother to call them and give him over to me. I was lonely."

"Why did you not take Louise?"

"It's her first day back at day care after her infection and I can play with Eric, or let him draw pictures for me."

"Yes, he draws..." Tony cocked his head. "Trees?"

"Forrest. Sara. Me."

"You and Sara in a forest? Angeles National Forest?"

"Yeah."

"Pretty good." Tony pulled a sandwich out of the fridge. "He calls you Sara and not Sasa anymore. Which was much cutter."

"Sasa!" Eric smiled. "Sasa love."

"I love you too."

"What is your other love doing? The blonde one."

"Working."

"They have the killer, right?"

"Yes and they need more evidence."

"So she's out?"

"The last thing I heard was she, Kyle and Lynn are off to La Cañada Flintridge, checking on an address." Which was two hours ago and since then Sara haven't heard from Sofia. Not that it was unusual, when her lover was at a crime scene, she had work to do and no time to text her. As soon as she took a break, she would call Sara. She always did.

"Back on the roads with her two favorites officers. I'm sure they can solve the case."

"Don called already and asked about the case, he won't be able to fully enjoy his vacation until the case is closed. And Susan decides to sleep the whole night."

"She didn't?"

"No, she kept crying and ended up between Tanya and Don, which wasn't what they'd planned."

"They always say, children ruin your sexy life. Looks like it's true."

"Can't say that about my sex life."

"Want to give me details? Involve me in it?"

"What is it with men and their desire to watch women sleeping together?"

"I could tell you if your godchild wasn't sitting here. We continue our conversation when we're all over twenty-one. Until then, I'm off to work again. We shoot not too far away from here, if you and the pretty boy get bored, you can come alone and watch us."

"I can't think of anything more boring than watching you guys shoot a series or a movie. You do the same thing over and over again, five minutes of screen life takes you like five hours of real life. Sorry, no fascinating here."

"You have no idea what you're missing. I see you later. Take good care of Sara, Eric."

"Sara forest." He showed them his picture of him and Sara in Angeles National Forest. For other people it was nothing more than a few lines, uneven, that could mean a lot or nothing, to her it was clearly exactly what she asked him to draw.

"Hi." Wow, his heart was beating like a bass on a rave. Could people see it? Did it come out of his chest like in a cartoon?

And what about his smile? Was it really as wide as it felt? Did he look like the Cheshire Cat from Alice in Wonderland?

"Hey, did you forget Tanya is in New York?"

"How could I? She took my baby sister with her and since yesterday it's lovely quiet in the house." Gosh, she looked gorgeous. Her hair tied up in a ponytail. Steve knew he acted like a fool, but this girl was...she really got him. And she smiled at him. He had Marlene's full attention and she didn't look annoyed or unhappy to see him. Now it was up to him to make something out of this.

"These are the words of a brother, who misses his sister and is too macho to admit it. What is it with men and being unable to stick to their feelings? What's wrong in your brains? Nobody believes something is wrong with you when you say, you miss your sister."

"That makes me look so not cool...not that I care."

"No, of course not."

"No, really. You can ask Lea."

"She's your girlfriend."

"No!" He told her they were only friends. Was she testing him? Trying to find out if he was available? "We're friends, that's it. She's more like a sister. Anyway." He shook his head. "Tanya asked me to come over and give you this." From out of his pocket appeared the key. "She took it with her."

"Creature of habit. Lucky for her she has you."

"Yes. I'm a really nice boy."

"Of course you are. Thanks, really nice boy."

"You're making fun of me."

"Never." Marlene laughed.

"There are so many nice people in this surgery, why did they choose the only mean one to be the reception bitch?" Maybe he should have not said these words, he wasn't sure if she understood he was only joking. A compliment would be better to get a girl to go out with you.

"You have to work on your charm, no girl will go out with you when you call her a bitch. Unless she is one and you don't want a bitch as your girlfriend, do you?"

"No, not really."

"See, be nice."

"How about: are you interested in going for a ride with a picnic afterwards? In the Santa Monica Mountains."

"You can charm a girl with this offer unless she's allergic to horses."

"Are you?"

"I have a boyfriend."

Push Steve, keep pushing, gentle. Don't give up. He made a plan himself, now he had to keep to the script in his head. "So? You mentioned last week he's away next weekend for college and a friend of mine offered me the horses yesterday."

"You have a friend with horses? And you're not talking about one of the rides you book like a tourist?"

"No, I'm talking about a private tour guide and a picnic at a nice spot."

"Can you ride?"

"I tried it twice, didn't fall and can keep myself on a horse if the horse is well behaved. Plus there is a guide, so no reason to worry."

"How much do you pay for that? For that not date."

"Nothing, it's an offer of a friend."

"Your friend must be rich."

"I doubt he worries about money. So? Are you coming with me?"

"Depends on what my BF says to this idea. How many people will there be on this ride?"

"He mentioned something about four."

"You, me, the guide and?"

"Another guide. We get one each, in case you want to canter and I get left behind, taking photos, talking to my horse, let it graze and enjoy the mountains."

"You are a nutcase."

"Yeah, I am, a nice one." He sent her his best smile. She didn't say yes yet, but she also didn't say no. Maybe he was lucky and got her for a day.

Sofia tried to call Greg, but his cell phone was switched off. Was he still in interrogation? Frasier was a cop, he wouldn't be easy to crack and his lawyer was, according to Mel, good too, so it wasn't an easy walk in the park.

"Nothing?" Brandon asked.

"No response."

"When I left they had just started the interview. Two hours."

"A long time. When the suspect doesn't talk."

"The evidence does talk."

"A lot of stories, sad stories." Sofia took various blood samples and was quite sure, her colleagues at DNA would confirm it was the blood of their victims.

"I searched the living room, no signs of the fingers."

"What about the red pants?"

"There are half a dozen red pants in a suitcase in the living room. The suitcase was locked. A lot of knives in the kitchen, I checked them for blood, none showed any evidence of it."

"I found the rope he used on the victims up here. No knife but I'm not done searching. He did work on the attic. Look at the wall." She pointed to a part of the wall she had ripped down.

"This place is soundproofed. They could have screamed, nobody had heard them. The walls, the windows, even the trap door. It's possible there's a secret hideout in the wall where he keeps the knife and the fingers."

"Or another place?"

"No. This is his place, his killing place, his real home in Los Angeles. We'll find everything we need here."

"You might be right. I go on with the kitchen." He stopped before he climbed down the stairs. "Any idea why he did it? The killing? Mother issue? A girlfriend, who pissed him off? Childhood trauma?"

"That's a question for the department shrink."

"My money is on childhood trauma and I'm sure his lawyer will come up with a mental disorder too. To get him a nice room in a loony bin and not an ugly cell in prison."

"It's our job to show he's not crazy, he's pure evil."

"Lets do that." He went downstairs.

"Yeah, lets nail the bastard." She wasn't sure what pissed her off more: the fact he could kill five women in Los Angeles without them stopping him or that he was a former cop. They took an oath to protect and he did the opposite.

"Can I come up or am I disturbing anything?" Kyle called from downstairs.

"Come up."

"Thanks. I talked to...what happened to the wall?"

"I wanted to know if the women had a chance to call for help, they didn't."

"None of the neighbors heard or saw anything. I talked to the couples right and left of this place, as well as to the woman living across the street. They barely saw anything of Frasier, only when he unlocked the gate and drove onto his premises. He wasn't much of a talker, greeted when he was greeted, not more. Never let any of his neighbors onto his premises, never close to the house. In fact, they never saw anybody here besides him. I asked if he came out of the garage after the car was in there and they couldn't recall he did."

"He locked the gate straight after he drove in?"

"Yes."

"Did they ever notice anything going on in the house?"

"No. In fact, they were happy about the quiet neighbor. The house isn't in a good condition, the garden is a mess, they feared a young party loving teenager would move in and turn the quiet neighborhood into a new Sunset Strip."

"The house is in a bad condition from the outside, from the inside it's quite modern. At least up here. The windows are dirty, which is a good cover so nobody sees they're new and soundproof. Plus it makes it impossible to look inside."

"Did you find any documents about companies, that might have done the work?"

"No. He might have done it himself. It's the best way to make sure nobody knows about your secret place."

"Is there a do it yourself book about how to turn your attic into a soundproof torture cell?"

"I'm sure you can find one on the internet, everything is on the internet." She looked around. "Put yourself in his position. Where would you hide the knife? And the fingers? They're a trophy, you want to get them and see them whenever you feel like getting an ego boost but then again they have to be hidden."

"Not close to the rings on the wall, too close to the women. But he did want them to see the finger, wanted them to know what would happen to them. Their fear was a turn-on for him. So it

must be somewhere on this side of the wall. Or next to the window, naturally they'd look at the window, a possible escape route."

"The window sill." The blonde walked to the window, knocked on the window sill. Hollow. Carefully she let her finger ran over the surface, trying to feel the right spot to put her knife and use it to open the window sill.

"Here we go." She found something, got his knife in and pulled on it until the window sill jumped open. It was like a hidden display cabinet, opening smoothly. Like an open wooden box, placed to have people look at it. The ground was a red silk pillow. On it were ten fingers, all cut nicely, cleaned, there was no blood on it and the fingernails painted in the same red of the pillow.

"Two sets of each finger." Kyle said.

"Yes, the fingers of our victims. Look at this, it's like he played museum. They could see them and if the window was clean, people outside could have seen them too. What a great thrill. The whole world was so close to see what he did, only a little bit of dirt made them unaware of his work." She took various photos of the finger, sent two of them to Greg's cell phone.

"We need Greg and Rock to see this."

"Lynn is on her way to the department, send her the photos too."

"Okay."

"Where's the knife?"

"I'm not sure, maybe there's another hideout. I'll keep looking." The fingers were perfect evidence, but a knife with blood of the victims and Frasier's fingerprints would be best. He could claim he had no idea about the hideout, about the fingers, not that Sofia believed any jury would fall for this, but with a knife and his prints, he couldn't argue anymore. The thing was, even when she found the knife, somehow she was sure Frasier wore gloves when he killed the woman...so there had to be gloves and bloody clothes! Yes, there was a lot of digging necessary until they could close the case.

"I need your help!" Steve was relieved when he heard the voice of his best friend on the phone.

"In which kind of trouble did you get yourself now? I thought you are at work, doesn't Mel look after you?" Lea answered.

"I'm on my way back to the office from the lunch break."

"Oh, your reception angel."

"Yes."

"Don't tell me you were unable to talk to her."

"No, we talked and...I invited her to the ride on the weekend, her BF is away, the perfect chance for her to...get to know me better."

"Lucky girl."

"You would think, but her stupid BF doesn't want her out with me. Not unless there's somebody else. A friend of her and a friend of me. I have no idea how to explain this to Lou and I don't know how to make it up to you."

"Honey, I haven't agreed yet."

"What do I have to do? What do you want?"

"You invite me to Triple Burger next week after we spend a day in Malibu."

"Deal." That was a good deal, one he would enjoy as much as Lea would.

"What does Lou say about you needing more horses."

"I haven't asked him yet. Why does her BF make such a fuss?"

"One possibility is she isn't the kind of woman, who resists other men. Or she does the same when he goes out without him. Or number three, which is the best one for you: he's a control freak and absolutely jealous, something that will drive her nuts sooner or later. Probably sooner, no woman likes it when her BF calls all the time, accuses her of cheating when she talks to a man or worse, get pushed and smacked for ideas, that only happened in her boyfriend's head."

"I like version three, gets her straight into my arms."

"So call your famous movie friend and ask for two more horses. And tell Marlene to ask a nice friend to join us, I somehow have the feeling I have to take care of this friend while your affection will be her."

"There's always love and affection left for you, Honey-Pie."

"Suck it up, I agreed to the trip, you can continue with your plans."

"Cross your fingers Lou can help me out. I call you later...or shall I come around and pick you up for dinner?"

"I finish around three, I come and pick you up, Baby-Boy."

"The man picks the woman up."

"Get out of the middle age and come back to the present. Men and women are equal, we can pick you up when we want, like we can pay for dinner - but you can stay old-fashioned in this area."

"No, all or nothing."

"Next week you're going to pay, like it or not. See you later."

"Later sexy chick." When she called him Baby-Boy, he could call her sexy chick, knowing Lea wouldn't like it. Teasing each other was one part of their relationship, one they both enjoyed. He watched his mothers do the same thing, it worked perfectly of them, kept their relationship fresh and interesting. And the relationship of his mothers looked pretty perfect to him, one he wanted to have with his girlfriend/wife later too. He had one like this with Lea, the best way to practice.

"Sara boom!" Eric threw a Playmobil figure into the air, that was supposed to be Sara. Since Sara told him how she got injured, he played it all the time and all the time he came along to catch and save her. Her godson was a hero.

"Ouch, ouch, where's Eric?" Sara dropped onto the floor, closed her eyes.

"Here." He came to her and kissed her cheek. "Sara wake up."

"I'm awake my prince, my hero." She cuddled him. "I love you, Eric."

"Love you too."

"You know what a woman wants to hear, you'll break so many hearts, my boy...well, as soon as you discovered using a toilette is the right way to deal with everything you don't want inside you anymore. Come on, time for a new diaper."

"No!"

"Oh yes."

"No!" He got up and ran away.

"All right, stay in your wet and stinky diapers and you won't get a slice of the great chocolate cake." Sara pushed herself up and walked, after she found her balance, to the kitchen. "So

nice chocolate cake, really delicious." She opened the fridge and got a chocolate cake out, knowing Eric was at the door frame, watching her, weighing what was more important to him: keeping his diaper or the cake. "Oh, I even found some chocolate milk. Wow, I'll have a real huge chocolate meal."

"Too."

"Nope, sorry, these meals are only for people who don't stink and don't have wet diapers. As you want to keep yours, I have to keep the cake to myself. Or I save a slice for Jorja, I'm sure she has a clean diaper when she comes over soon."

"Too."

"Shall we go and change your diaper?"

He thought about it for a few seconds, his eyes on the case before he nodded. How was he supposed to resist chocolate cake? His little hand in Sara's they walked up the stairs, taking breaks Sara couldn't walk fast with her cast and she knew, after this trip she had to keep her feet up for a while.

"Now lets have some cake and chocolate milk." Carefully she walked back downstairs when Eric was changed.

"Choc! Choc! Doo! Plan!"

"No, they can't have chocolate, it's not good for them. You can give them a dog treat."

"Treat for Eric."

"Your treat is the cake. Don't jump down the stairs, please walk them carefully." Gosh, she sounded like somebody, who had no idea about fun. Horrible. Like one of her foster care mothers, who told her off all the time.

"Can fly."

"No, you can't. Only birds can fly. And planes."

"Superman."

"Yes, you're right, Superman can fly too."

"Flies."

"Yes, they can fly too. All right, lets get the cake out of the fridge, do you want your chocolate milk or cold?"

"Cold."

"Cold choc milk it is. Here." She gave him the plastic plates they bought for him and Jorja and plastic cups. "Bring them into the living room. We have our cake and milk there and watch some Disney. Do you want to watch 'Finding Nemo'?"

"Yes." He smiled. Having cake and watch a movie was perfect.

It was after six when Sofia came back to the department. Although she took a few breaks, she worked overtime. But it was worth it, she found the knife, she found photos of the women in the attic and fingerprints of Frasier on all four rings. They had more than enough evidence to put him away for life.

"How did it go?" She asked Greg. All the time she sent him her news and never got any reply. Her friend had been busy with Frasier, O'Hara, Rock and the FBI.

"If we weren't at work I'd kiss you. You're the best." He hugged her. "You did an amazing job today, Sofia."

"Wow, thanks. Sounds like it went good."

"First it looked like Frasier and his lawyer had the better cards, O'Hara is really a sleazy bastard, he twists your words as soon as you said them, but then you found the house, the attic and all the evidence. Frasier will stay for a long, long time here. I'm not sure if he goes to trial in Los Angeles or Boston. That's for the cops to decide."

"As long as he stays in jail for the rest of his life I don't care."

"Curtis, Sanders, in my office." Their boss ordered.

"When we get called like this it feels a little bit like back in high school, when I got called to see the principal."

"Once a week?"

"I wasn't that bad." The blonde grinned and closed the door after Greg and herself.

"Your mother says different."

"My mom lies."

"We better don't tell her you said this." William said. "I want to congratulate you for your work today. Greg, you did great in interrogation, Sofia you did a very good job at the house. Especially that you picked the right one immediately."

"It made sense it was his hideout, the perfect place."

"Captain Rock is very taken with you, she asked me if I'd let you come back to LAPD."

"Really? What did you say?"

"It's your decision but I don't want to let you go."

"Good, because I don't want to leave. All she can offer me is an office job, even as a captain an office job is boring. I need to be

outside, do the real work. And it's not like I can't make a career here. One day you retire and we need a new supervisor."

"That would be me." Greg smiled.

"In your dreams."

"Actually his dreams might become a little bit more real."

William cleared his throat. "You impressed some people today, Greg. A lot. Therefore I'm glad to offer you a new position."

"A new position?" Greg's jaw almost fell on his chest.

Sofia looked to her friend her boss. A new position? Did that mean Greg was supposed to leave? Change shifts? Go to another lab? She wanted him to have a career, but she didn't like the idea they couldn't work together anymore.

"Yes."

"Where and what?"

"Here, as the assistant supervisor."

"Me? Second in command?"

"Yes. If you want."

"Wow, that's...wow...I mean...wow..."

"Take it as a yes." Sofia finished the sentence for him and jumped into his arms. "From a lab rat with crazy hair to assistant supervisor, congratulation Gregory Hojem Sanders. You deserve the promotion, I'm so proud of you." She kissed his cheek.

"Thanks. And thanks William."

"You're welcome Greg, you worked for it. Hard."

"I'm still...I can't believe, it feels like I'm dreaming."

"You're wide awake. Now, give me details on the case, assistant supervisor Sanders. I worked my ass off the whole day and got no information from your side. Tell me what happened, tell me every detail."

"Before you start." William interrupted Greg before he could say a word. "There's an order from your boss: go home! You worked long enough, it's time for you to take a rest. Greg, all you do tomorrow is finishing up on the paper work and after that you have two days off. Sofia, you finish your paper work and when Greg is back on Friday, you can stay at home for two days. I'm sure there are a few things you have to do before you can take off to Hawaii."

"Absolutely."

"Okay, get out of here and go home!"

"Thanks boss. See you tomorrow." Greg took Sofia's hand and pulled her out of the room.

"Bye William."

"You heard the boss, lets go home. My fiancé and my kids are with your fiancé at my place."

"Perfect, we take the kids to bed, have a bottle of wine and you tell me about the case. What happened. I have a lot of questions, assistant supervisor Sanders."

"If our women don't mind I might answer a few." He got his arm around her waist and walked with her in his arm out of the lab. Time to go home, time to see his girlfriend and his children.

"My heroine." Sara kissed Sofia softly and pulled her closer into her arms. It felt so good to have her close, to snuggle with her on the big sofa in Greg's living room.

"Actually I didn't do any heroic. I only did my job, looked for evidence."

"You found it, you helped to put a serial killer away, you're a heroine. My personal She-Ra."

"That makes my brother He-Man and that's too much praise for him."

"One day you have to see a therapist to work out the relationship of you and your brother." Jules laughed. She was in Greg's arms, a glass of wine in her hands. After the children were taken to bed, they made themselves comfortable in the living room with a bottle of wine and some cracker.

"No, thanks, I'm fine with it and don't need to work on it."

"I can see issues."

"You see problems all the time, it's your job. If there weren't any problems you were out of work."

"The world will never be out of problems, like it will never be a crime free place."

"No, unfortunately not. Which reminds me: assistant supervisor Sanders wants to tell us what happened in interrogation today. How did you crack Frasier and his lawyer? How did they try to get him free? And most important, why did he do it? Did he give you a reason?"

"He did and I don't believe it."

"Why?"

"Because it sounds too crazy, like he made it up so the judge will send him to a loony bin and not to the big boys."

"What was it?"

"He saw the women scratching their throats. It was their way to tell him, they wanted him to cut their throat."

"Seriously?" Sofia expected a lot of stupid reasons, a lot of cruel reasons, this was a crazy reason. He killed them because they wanted him to do it? They asked him to end their life? By scratching their throat?

"Deadly serious."

"How did he find them? Did they come to him and tell him to kill them?"

"No, he saw them on various spots all over the city, when he was wandering around or at work. They stood a few yards away from him, their head back like they were watching the sky, but in reality they were showing him where to put his knife, where to cut them."

"I don't think I have heard a bigger bullshit in a long, long time."

"Me neither."

"Nobody will buy this shit."

"It's his story."

"Why did he leave Boston?"

"Because Boston PD was after him and he had the vision, there were more women, who needed his help."

"A vision? Yes, he plays nuts. Please let there be a jury and a judge, who think the same and aren't impressed by him. And we need a doctor, who understands he's playing. Are you available, Jules?"

"I don't work for the police department, you want one of your doctors." The brunette sipped on her wine.

"Although I don't believe it and it's absolutely bullshit, I will go on a loony trip, buy his story only for fun and ask you, is it possible to have a disorder like the one he describes?"

"Seeing things in actions others take? having visions? Yes. Hallucinations are not that uncommon."

"Great, he might get away with it."

"No, just because it's possible to have these symptoms it doesn't make his story real. A person, who suffers from severe hallucinations can't act as organized as he did. You will talk to his customers, they'll tell you he acted normal, his neighbors will say the same. None of them will have caught him mumbling to himself, screaming to somebody, who wasn't there. It had drawn too much attention to him, he didn't want attention."

"No, he lived a quiet life, his neighbors barely noticed him."

"See, a doctor will know when he makes up a story and when it's real. Don't worry."

"Okay. So he kills random women, who scratch their throat."

"Scary." Jules shuddered. "Imagine, you're in a park, lost in your thoughts, do something you can't recall yourself, like scratching your throat because it itches, and somebody understands it as a request to kill you. We all do little things we don't notice every day, we don't think they might kill us."

"No. I do buy the story he saw the women when he wandered around the city or when he worked somewhere, but then he started following them, spying on them. He was way too organized to abduct them while he had a hallucination. Plus he was fine when we arrested him, he never mentioned the woman, we found in the attic."

"What did he plan with her? He had his ten fingers." Sara asked.

"Continue with the toes." Greg answered. "His first mission was completed, he wanted to continue."

"Why Angeles National Forest?"

"It's the perfect place to dump bodies."

"He came back to Bouquet Reservoir, why? Why not use another one?"

"I can't tell you. There might be a connection, he didn't tell us about and we haven't found out yet."

"The red pants?"

"No explanation for this."

"The rape?"

"They needed to be punished. It's not your decision when your life is over, it's only God's decision and these women took the

decision in their own hands. He, as a helper of God, which all cops are by the way, had to punish them for it."

"Do not judge other and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will come back against you." Jules quoted. "If I remember correctly these are God's words.

"He never said he judged them, he only did what God told him to do. The way I remember it, God forgives you if you're sorry. I bet he forgot this part. Playing the religious lunatic is part of his plan to get away with murder. How is the woman you found, Sofia?"

"The last time I checked she was unconscious but stable. Hopefully she can verify Frasier isn't crazy. Her name is Gabrielle Presley, twenty-four, from Bel Air. According to her housemate she went missing two days ago."

"If you haven't found Frasier today, she'd be dead by now." Sara reasoned. "Or as good as dead. It was the evening when he killed them."

"Yes, she didn't have much time left. She was dehydrated, I wonder since when she was without water. We arrested him yesterday, it was hot today and the attic was hotter than the rest of the house. Can it be this worse with only one day?"

"I know from personal experience when you're in a hot environment, under a lot of pressure and have no water, it doesn't take long to lose conscious." Sara tried to push away the pictures of herself in the desert after Natalie left her there to die.

"You got saved like her." Sofia pulled her lover closer, kissed her. She didn't want Sara to go back to this place in her mind.

"By you. Saving women, who are dehydrated, is something you're very good at."

"It's my job in her case and in your case it was very personal. We weren't a couple, but I liked you. We were not only colleagues, we were friends...well, kind of. It got better between us with every day."

"These hours of searching for you were the worst of my life. I'd rather have meet the fancy smacking mob again than having you lost in the desert, in the hands a of crazy serial killer." Greg said. "I blamed Grissom for what happened to you."

"Why?"

"Because she abducted you because of your relationship. She knew before we knew, which made me even madder."

"Sorry, but we couldn't tell you guys. You know what happened after everybody knew."

"You had to change shifts. Another reason to be mad at Grissom."

"I missed working with you too." Sara smiled.

"Then you left...and that's not the topic. We're here, together, you won't run anymore and if you do, Sofia and me will find you, there'll be traces you left behind, we read them and take you back home."

"How complicated, read traces, follow her. Why not read her mind, go where she wants to go and pick her up there?" Jules chuckled. "Ask me and I tell you where to find her. Sara is my favorite mind to read."

"Funny doc, really funny." Sara threw a pillow at Jules. "You can't read my mind. Or anybody else's mind. If you could, you had told us right from the beginning where Frasier was."

"I know where he is now. In jail, where he belongs."

"That's right." Sofia agreed. Over one week, five dead women later, Frasier was where he belonged and hopefully stayed there for the rest of his life. She knew the next days his case would be part of her job, no matter if she ended her paperwork tomorrow or not. It was a huge case, Boston PD would reach out to them, the FBI was still involved and there was a lot of work left before the case could go to trial. And then Sofia was most likely a witness, had to testify against Frasier.

"Now it's later." Don said as soon as Sofia picked up her cell phone.

"What?" The blonde was a little bit irritated. She was ready for bed, just chose a book she wanted to read for the next quarter of an hour before it was time to see which dreams her subconscious had prepared for her today.

"You sent me a text, telling me you closed the case but can't give me more details until later. It's past one in the morning in New York, it's later."

"Why are you awake and not sound asleep?"

"I took Tanya out for a romantic dinner at the HEARTS, you know, the restaurant with the view over the Brooklyn Bridge. My parents took care of their granddaughter, so we used the evening for a Broadway show and came back after midnight. Now I want to know what happened, what did I miss?"

"Frasier is caught, we found the evidence we need to send him to trial and get him convicted for murder, there was another victim in his house, alive. I couldn't talk to her yet, will try it tomorrow. Greg and Rock had Frasier and his lawyer for four hours in interrogation. He tries to make us believe he's nuts. According to Jules he won't get away with it, because he was too organized with his killings and he is not crazy."

"What about the Feds?"

"They were there, but we did all the work. You can come back on Sunday and work new cases, this one is closed."

"Perfect. How is Sara?"

"On a sick leave for the whole week and not happy about it. She's lonely, talked Jules into letting Eric leave daycare so she had a child around. We miss our daughter, if you decide to come home earlier we'd over the moon."

"Sorry, we enjoy your vacation and Susan likes playing with her grandparents. They won't let us go sooner. Sara can come over to New York if she's bored."

"And leave me here alone? No fucking way! You have my daughter, you won't get my fiancé as well."

"It seems like your women like me a lot."

"They might like you but they love me and I end this conversation now. Go to your girlfriend, make sure our daughter is fine and have a nice time in New York."

"She's snappy, means she's jealous."

"Good night, Donald."

"Sleep tight Sofia. Give Sara a kiss."

"Idiot." She ended the call.

Sara looked amused at her lover. "What did Don do to make you call him an idiot?"

"He wants me to give you a kiss from him. You're mine, I'm the only one who kisses you. You don't get kisses from other people."

"Our daughter kisses me."

"That's different. He can kiss Tanya, that's why she is with him...which reminds me." Sofia decided she could read tomorrow, switched off the light and snuggled into Sara's arms.

"Lynn called Kyle a cave man."

"So?"

"The last time she did that they were a couple and sometimes they acted like a couple, who has a fight today. Do you think they're back together?"

"Did you ask them if they are?"

"I did and they denied."

"Then they aren't. Lynn has Dirk, Kyle has Mandy."

"Maybe they found out their love isn't over and are back together. Secretly so their partners don't find out."

"You watch too many soap operas."

"It's possible, it happens all the time." Sofia defended her idea. Why should it be impossible? Kyle and Lynn were a couple, after they split they stayed friends, maybe they realized there's more than friendship between them.

"If they were back together they had told you. And broke up with their partners. Neither Lynn nor Kyle are the kind of people, who play games with their partners."

"No, they're not."

"See."

"It's just...it's possible."

"But not likely. We don't have to rearrange our invitations, which is good, we sent them all."

"Is it strange I'm a little bit disappointed they're not back together?"

"You knew them when they were a couple, no it's not strange."

"It's just..."

"Honey, shut up, forget Kyle and Lynn and kiss me. Do you think you can do that?"

"I can do more than that!" Sofia pulled Sara's head closer and kissed her passionately.

Friday, August 24th

The alarm woke Sara and Sofia up at seven in the morning. Both stayed in bed, not moving, listen to the news on the radio and to the breathing of their partner.

"It's the day." Sara stopped the silence. Her voice was a little bit husky.

"It is." Sofia's voice sounded like she was very excited. It wasn't a normal day. Something lay ahead of them, something, that would change their lives forever. Something, they had been waiting for a long time. In fact, all their lives.

"How nervous are you on a scale from one for not at all and ten for absolutely nervous?"

"Twenty. You?"

"Ninety-nine." The brunette found the hand of her lover under the blanket. "I dreamed last night of your wedding, we were all in the garden, you promised to love me forever and when it was my turn to do the same, I ran away because I was so scared." And nobody stopped her. They all stepped aside so she could run because it was the best for Sofia when she didn't marry Sara. Her friend thought she would be a bad wife, so they were happy when Sara became the runaway bride.

"What scared you? Us together for the rest of our lives? You know a wedding isn't a death sentence."

"No, it was the other way around. I was so scared I can't make you happy for the rest of our lives so I decided to run in order not to disappoint you. And nobody stopped me because our friends thought the same."

"You could never disappoint me and our friends wouldn't let you run, they know you're the best thing ever happened to me." Sofia turned to look into the eyes of her lover. These wonderful brown eyes she fell in love with. "Do you want to run?"

"I want to run with you to the altar. Honey, if one of us tries to run before we're married, your mother will shoot and she won't miss." Sara laughed, slipped onto her fiancé and kissed her. The dream didn't feel that bad anymore after she told Sofia about it. Like always, things were less frightening after talking to her lover. "I want to marry you today, go on honeymoon tomorrow and have a big wedding party when we're back."

"Lucky for you I want the same. Do you think you will regret what we're about to do today?"

"No, but I know I'd regret if I don't marry you. You're the best thing ever happened to me."

"Ditto. But just in case I tell my mom to have her stun ready so if you run, she can stop you before you left the garden."

"Granted." Sara pulled Sofia closer and closed her eyes. Her lover, her best friend, her fiancé and soon her wife. Only a few more hours and they'd be married. No more thoughts about people not letting them being together in case something happens, they'd be married, had all rights and nobody could decide what happens with the other. And their kids would be official their kids.

"Do you want to marry me? Are you second guessing your decision?" The brunette asked quietly. Who said she was the only one, who was scared? Wondered.

"There's nothing I want more. I am even willing to chain you to me for the rest of the day, to make sure, you'll be there this afternoon when the Justice of Peace arrive."

"You only want to use your fluffy handcuffs on me to play cop and show everybody what you like in bed."

"I like you in bed. In every way."

"We should get up, shouldn't we?" Before they proved each other how much they were in love and be very, very late. After all, there were a few things they had to take care of.

"I'm not sure. There are a few things to do...like a shower, breakfast, lunch, lots of kisses."

"I like the last part most." Sara said.

"Me too. I can hear somebody walking around and from the sound of the steps it's my mom. What is she doing here at seven in the morning? Doesn't she have her own home?"

"She's more nervous than we are, she'll be preparing everything. Gives us the chance to stay in bed a little bit longer."

"Only if we want to risk her coming in and chasing us out of bed." Both knew Marie would do that without hesitation.

"Okay, lets get up. When your mom is here, your dad shouldn't be far and the thought of him preparing breakfast downstairs makes me hungry."

"Same here." Sofia kicked the blanket away and pulled Sara in her arms before the brunette could get up. "We get married, Sara."

"We will. Last test: I do."

"I do. We're fine." They knew their words and they knew it was exactly what they wanted. There was no doubt about it. They were about to do the right thing.

"Mom, what's wrong with grandma?" Steve asked in a quiet minute Sara. He had been sent from one point to another by Marie, who changed her orders and requests whenever she saw him.

"She's nervous."

"You should be nervous, you should run around, talk in riddles, make strange demands. Or mom. Instead both of you are relax, have a coffee and grandma goes nuts. She's scary like this, she'll drop at one point because her blood pressure is somewhere above the Mount Everest."

"I'm afraid we can't stop her today, we can only try to get out of her way."

"How? We can't run."

"You can, Sofia and me shouldn't or we'll get shot."

"My moms get married, I can't leave. What is she doing now?" They watched Marie rearranging the decoration in the garden.

"It has to be perfect, her baby girl is getting married."

"It is perfect because she marries you."

"Oh, you're so sweet." She kissed his cheek. "Where is your monkey suit?"

"Ready to be thrown away. Or put on. I really look like a monkey in it."

"No, you look like a young gentleman."

"I'd rather look like a skater."

"Think about what your grandmother will do when you show up in baggy and long shirt."

"Shoot me?"

"Most likely."

"The beach wedding will be less formal, won't it?"

"You can wear Hawaiian shorts and shirts."

"And you wear your wedding gown."

"We want photos of us in it on the beach, yes."

"How about some photos in Australia, Europe?"

"Is a plan too. One day when our kids have left the house and we can afford to go overseas for a long vacation."

"Your kids want to join you, mom."

"I was afraid something like this would come. We're saving money."

"Lucky for you I'm a hard working man. Well, not the next few days because my boss decided I've to enjoy my holidays and learn for school. How can you put these two things in one sentence? How am I supposed to enjoy my holidays when I have to learn?"

"Tanya makes sure you have plenty of fun. And that you see Marlene."

Steve grinned. He had his horse riding tour with Marlene and her friend as well as with Lea and the two guides. Lou made it possible, it was a great day, they all had a lot of fun, but it didn't change anything about Marlene having a boyfriend. Her friend got along wonderful with Lea and so they met two more times to go to the movies and have burgers. One more weekend and the boyfriend was away, something Steve waited for. His chances could only get better when he was gone.

"You could have invited her."

"Lea is my escort girl."

"You make her sound like she's a prostitute. Don't talk like this about our second daughter. We would have invited her anyway, no matter what."

"I know and she knows it too. But it's your wedding, it's a family thing, Lea is family, Marlene isn't."

"She might be one day."

"I got very, very lucky when you adopted me, I doubt I get so lucky again. Although, nothing can hold a candle to the adoption. That was the best thing that ever happened to me."

"You were the best thing that happened to us. We couldn't have asked for a better son. And we're very happy you like your sister so much. First we worried, you might not like her, might feel like she's more important to us than you are."

"You have to spend more time with her, she's a baby and she's great. She said my name today. Well, okay, she said 'e' but she

looked at me, like she was calling Steve and all she could manage to say was 'e'. Mom was for a while 'Ia.' for the twins." "Yes." Sara laughed. Her lover complained a few times about the fact her name sounded like the donkey in 'Winnie the Pooh'. To Sara it sounded simply cute and adorable.

The wedding ceremony was supposed to start at half past two. An hours before Sara and Sofia met in their bedroom after they escaped the trouble outside. Family and friends were already around, talking, suggesting, ordering and making a fuss about everything. At least it felt like that for the two women.

"I tell you." Sara locked the door and stepped onto the balcony. "For a small and quiet wedding it's quite a mess. What went wrong in our plans?"

"We invited people. The next time we won't tell anybody, get married and let them know when we're in our honeymoon."

"The next time?"

"You know, the next time we get married."

"Which will be quite soon."

"Yes. In peace. Did mom annoy you as much as she annoyed me? She told me at least half a dozen times to get dressed, do something with my hair and not forget the make-up. I am supposed to look perfect."

"You're looking perfect, you always do." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her. "Your mom wants everything perfect for us."

"I know. Sometimes things can be too perfect."

"You can never be too perfect, Sofia."

"Neither can you, Sara. I love you."

"I love you too. And I'm supposed to get my wedding gown and go downstairs into Sally's room to get ready for the wedding while you have to stay here and get ready. Away from me so I can't see you and you can't see me. When I'm honest, I don't like this tradition."

"You locked the door, we can both get dressed up here. What are they supposed to do? Kick in the doors?"

"One never knows." The brunette chuckled. When Marie found out about this, she might kick in the door.

"Will you do me the honor of helping me with my wedding gown? It's the best way to make sure I'll look exactly the way you want me to look for our wedding."

"You appear in shorts and a t-shirt and you look perfect."

"It would be a shame to waste the wedding gown and leave it in the wardrobe. We do have to be careful with it anyway, there's no time to wash it for our Hawaii trip."

"No, we wear it for the ceremony, take some photos and we undress...do you think they mind if that takes a little bit longer?" Sara kissed the throat of her lover. "When I take off your wedding gown I don't want to stop and continue with what I'm supposed to do."

"The guests should be fine for an hour without us. They've got music, drinks and snacks."

"Then we have a plan."

"We won't make ourselves very popular with this plan."

"No, but it's our wedding, we have it our way. Why don't you continue with what you're doing? I like your lips where they were."

"Because when I continue we'll be late for our wedding and as much as I want to continue kissing you, I want to marry you. Not even sex will get into my way."

"On one side it's a pity it doesn't get in the way, on the other side I'm glad our wedding is this important to you." With a sigh Sofia pushed away from her lover. "All right, lets get dressed. I have high heels, can you give me a hand later when we walk? Since I have the prosthesis high heels can be dangerous on not solid ground."

"I can give you a way."

"That's Don's job. We can't get him and Greg out of work. Do you think my dad is disappointed it's not him, who gives me the way?"

"It's usually the father, yes, but usually you marry a man when you're a woman."

"We're unusual." Plus Sofia didn't like the idea her father gave her the way while Sara had not the chance of having her father giving her the way. Not that she had wanted it, but when they both were with their best friends, it was better.

"Okay, lets see what we've got here." Sara opened the wardrobe and got her wedding gown out. "Classical white."

"What a surprise, mine is white too." The blonde laid her wedding gown next to Sara's. "We are both so old-fashioned. Innocent white, not the color we deserve."

"Says who?"

"The old rules."

"Lucky for us, we make our own rules." Sara got out of her shorts. "Lets get started, I call out for help when I need your hands."

"Where would you like to have my hands?"

"All over me, but for the dress on the dress."

"I like all over you better." Sofia started to undress. It was only a matter of minutes before her mother came knocking on the door, demanding Sara to leave so they could dressed. And when they would call out they were about to get dressed, they better pushed the desk in front of the door before her mother kicked it in.

"Sofia, where the hell are you?"

The blonde looked at her lover, lifted her left hand and counted with her fingers backwards from three to one. When the last finger was down, her mother tried to open the door. Their time of hiding was over, it was time for war.

"Why is the door locked? Open up, it's me, I want to help you."

"No need, I've got help already. Thanks."

"Who? And where is Sara? Sally can't find her, she needs to dress."

"She's halfway through dressing and looks breathtaking."

"Don't tell me you're both in there."

"Okay, I won't tell you."

"Sofia! That's bad luck!"

"Sara can never be bad luck, she's the luck of my life." She turned her back to her fiancé. "Can you close the zip?"

"This time, the next time I want to unzip it and kiss every inch of your skin."

"Promise." Sofia turned and kissed Sara. Oh, this was fun, getting dressed and watching her girlfriend getting dressed too.

How could people leave out this great part of their wedding?
Watching how their lover changed into their wife?

"Do I have to kick in the door?"

"Mom, it's too late. I know how Sara looks in her wedding gown, she knows how I look. Go back downstairs, have a drink, we'll get ready for the ceremony and if you continue to threaten us or tell us what to do, we won't be ready on time."

"It's not right."

"It's perfect." Sara said. "This gives me the chance to help Sofia with everything, just what I'm going to promise later. You and Sally can relax, play with the kids, we'll be with you soon. A few more minutes."

"It's not right." Her mother-in-law repeated.

"These myths are only hocus-hocus and the only hocus-pocus I believe in, is what Jules does. She's the only magician who can do real magic." Sara opened the jewelry box and got the necklace out, she bought a while ago for the wedding. A golden necklace with green stones, jade. "Honey, do you want to practice for the ring and put on my necklace?"

"Of course."

Sara lifted her hair up so Sofia could reach her neck better. Being nobody, who likes to let a good opportunity slip, the blonde kissed softly the neck of the brunette before she put on the necklace and sealed it with another kiss.

"I love you." She pulled her arms around her lover and kissed her neck again. "You're so beautiful and I can't believe you'll really be mine in a few minutes."

"I'm already yours. The wedding won't change it, it makes it official, but it doesn't change the fact I'm yours for a long, long time." Sara turned and kissed Sofia softly. "I love you and I'm so glad we're here together."

"We'll be together forever, I will never let you go, Sara. Consider yourself as a prisoner of my love."

"I take the life sentence. Do you want to tie me up to you so I'm under your full control?"

"Mentally I chained you to me already. Physically I'll do the same by putting a ring on your finger. The universal sign for everybody you're mine."

"All right, so don't be surprised when you wake up one day and find yourself having a tattoo on your arm, saying you're mine." Sara grinned and kissed her lover again. "Lets continue, with the preparation."

"I can see your shoulders."

"Is that a problem?"

"Only when I can't concentrate on anything else than your skin, imagining how I get my mouth on it, kiss it, suck it..."

"Honey, stop! We're running out of time!"

"I doubt my mother will let the Justice of Peace go anywhere before he wed us."

"You're right on that."

"Nevertheless, we continue because I want to see you all dressed up and ready to marry me. The first picture will be us, here in our bedroom, all alone, kissing."

"Nice idea."

Marie's face was everything but happy when Sara and Sofia finally came out of their room, all dressed up and ready to get married.

"What did you think when you did that?"

"All I can think of today is Sofia and how amazing she looks." Sara took the hand of her lover.

"You locked yourself in the room, you didn't wait to see each other until the ceremony starts. You broke a very important tradition."

"Mom, seeing Sara can never be bad luck. Why do you worry? We're ready in time, we look gorgeous, we will say the right things. Time to get married."

"Even on your wedding day you're a nightmare for every mother."

"Which doesn't change the fact you love me endlessly. Is everything ready?"

"Yes, we are only waiting for you."

"Wow, you look...there are no words to describe how amazing you look." Greg starred at Sara and Sofia when he jogged up the stairs and stopped right in front of her. "Right now I regret I never tried to get Sara back and make her marry me. Or tried my luck on you Sofia. You are wow!"

"Get me back? You never had me." Sara corrected amused.

"Don't ruin my fantasy. I have to admit, I forgot my fiancé for a second."

"Greggo, we better don't tell her." Sara and Sofia took Greg in their middle and kissed him.

"Do I get a kiss too?" Don asked when he saw the kiss.

"Only when you help me downstairs." Sofia hugged her friend and kissed her. "I'm ready to get married."

"Do you want to marry me? I'm wearing the perfect suit."

"No, I want to marry this perfect woman. Be the perfect best man and make it possible."

"I will."

"Beautiful lady." Greg offered his arm to Sara. "Time to get serious."

Sara took a deep breath. Yes, time to get serious. Time to get married. No way back now. Not that she wanted to get out, she wanted to get married to Sofia. A few more steps before she'd be a married woman.

"Moms, you're looking amazing!" Steve said when his mothers came into the garden. "Look at our mothers, Susan, aren't they beautiful? One day you'll look like them when you get married and me, your favorite brother, will give you the way. Of course first I'll make sure the guy you want to marry is worth being with you. I'll chase all the jerks away." Susan didn't look all too impressed by the promises of her brother nor by the look of her mothers.

"Thanks son." Sara squeezed the hand of her son before her eyes fell on the Justice of Peace, who waited for them in the middle of the garden, under a tree. A few flowers were placed around the area and her friends were there too.

"Your last chance to escape." Sofia whispered into the ear of her lover.

"Never and don't you ever think of running away, all doors are locked." She took Greg's arm and let him guide her to the Justice of Peace.

"Hi, thanks for coming." Sofia smiled nervously.

"It's my honor. Are you ready?"

"Absolutely."

"More than ready." Sara agreed. "We can start right away, I don't want to waste another second being not married to this woman."

The Justice of Peace smiled and nodded. He took his book and turned to the couple.

"Dear family and friends of Sara Sidle and Sofia Curtis, welcome to the wedding ceremony of two very special women. This is the day they have waited for a long time. So do you, as their friends and their family. Finally your dream can come true, you be legally married.

You know each other for a long time, but since three years you are in love, fall every day more and more in love with each other. It's what happens when you experience real love. You are a family, not only to each other, within these three years you became the mothers of a son and a daughter, your children, another sign of your love and a gift you received.

Marriage is more than a document that says by law you belong together, have to take care of each other, be there for each other. Marriage is a personal promise, a promise you make each other that your spouse will always be the most important person in your life, that you love her, want to spend the rest of your life with her because you can't imagine a life without her. To you, she is as important as is the air you need to breathe.

You showed each other that you want to keep this promise. Sofia, you supported Sara when she had her personal problems with her past, when she had ugly nightmares and helped her overcome the demons of her childhood. You were there, you offered your help before you were a couple. You showed you're a true friend, somebody Sara can lean on, always rely on without the fear of being judged.

Sara you were there for Sofia in her hardest days. When she lost half of her left leg, you never thought she is incomplete or ugly, to you she was still the most beautiful woman in the world. The woman, you fell in love with, wanted to be with more than anything else. When the life of your lover changed, you walked the new path with her, supported her without pitying her. To you your perfect partner is more than just a complete body, it is the perfect personality you love.

You started a new life together, gave each other strength and when you were ready to increase your family, share the great love you feel for each other, you met Stephen, your son. He didn't have an easy life, he didn't know love, so you made him understand he was worth to be loved and loved him like mothers love their son. The adoption only made official which was obvious already: you found your son.

Then Sofia became pregnant with Sara's baby. There is no greater sign of love than having the baby of the person you love more than your own life in you. Carry it for nine months, feel how it grows. A part of Sara was inside you, you helped to make it come to life. Susan, your daughter, is the proof of your love, a proof your love grows with every day and in her you can really watch your love growing.

Nobody can guarantee your life will always be peaches and cream, no life is, but as long as you have each other, have your family and friends, who all love and support you, your life is blessed. You're blessed by the power of love and today you are ready to display this love to the world."

The judge looked at Steve and nodded. A little bit nervous he handed Susan over to Don and got the rings out of his pocket. He had no idea how often he had checked today if the rings were really there. Two rings. The right rings. In his right pocket.

"These two rings belong together, just like the two of you belong together. They are one, like you are one. They are a symbol of your love, that has no end, just like the rings. You wear the rings to remember every time there is somebody, who loves you more than her life, who will always be there for you. They will give you strength like you give each other strength, will remind you of all the wonderful days and nights you spent together and will spend together. It's a constant reminder of your past and the future you will have together. Like your partner, the rings will always be there, will go with you wherever you will go."

The Justice of Peace took one ring and turned to Sara.

"Sara, do you take Sofia to be your wife, do you promise to love her, be faithful, loyal, honest and trustworthy? For better

or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, for as long as you both shall live?"

This was the moment Sara had feared most. The moment she had experienced so many times in her dreams, when she ran, didn't say a word. The moment she was supposed to promise all these things to Sofia, make the blonde hers. Become hers. The moment she could mess up everything. Ruin their future, their life. By saying or doing the wrong thing. She felt how everybody stared at her, wanted her to say a word, waited for her. It was now or never.

"I do. There's nothing I want more." The brunette smiled. She said even more than she was supposed to.

"Now place the ring on Sofia's finger and repeat after me."

With trembling fingers the brunette took the ring, fearing for a second she might miss the finger of her lover, and put it half way on Sofia's finger.

"I, Sara, take you, Sofia, to be my wife. I will love you and honor you, respect and cherish you. For all the days of my life until death do us apart."

"I, Sara, take you, Sofia, to be my wife. I will love you and honor you, respect and cherish you. For all the days of my life until death do us apart." Sara placed the ring the rest of the way on to Sofia's finger. The blonde couldn't take her eyes off the ring. Sara had put the ring on her finger, she was Sara's wife now. It felt so good, nothing in her life had ever felt so great.

"Sofia, do you take Sara to be your wife, do you promise to love her, be faithful, loyal, honest and trustworthy? For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, for as long as you both shall live?"

"I do, I absolutely do." The blonde smiled at her lover.

"Will you place the ring on Sara's finger and repeat after me?"

Nervously the blonde took the ring and put it halfway over Sara's finger. The hands of her lover felt as cold as her own.

"I, Sofia, take you, Sara, to be my wife. I will love you and honor you, respect and cherish you. For all the days of my life until death do us apart."

"I, Sofia, take you, Sara, to be my wife. I will love you and honor you, respect and cherish you. For all the days of my life

until death due us apart." The blonde places the ring the rest of the way down onto Sara's finger. She did it! She made Sara her wife. It was clear to all now.

"The two of you chose this garden to be married, the place you spent so much time together, share so many nice memories. You invited your close friends and family to witness your marriage, to witness the promise how much you love each other.

It was my honor to be here with you, in the most important moment of your life, with the most important people of your life. I now pronounce you legally married partner in life, love and all the things you will share.

You may seal your promises with a kiss."

"This is the best part of the wedding." Sara said quietly.

"It's the part I've been waiting for all the years."

"Shut up and kiss me!" Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her passionately. The first kiss as a married couple. The first kiss as wife and wife. Now it was officially, they were married, they belonged together, even the law knew it now and accepted it. They had each other, had what they always wanted.

"I love you." Sofia gasped after they broke the long kiss.

"Love you too, Mrs. Sidle."

"Curtis Sidle."

"Sofia Curtis Sidle, I love you."

"I love you, Sara Curtis Sidle."

"And we love you, give us a kiss too." Steve said and pulled his mothers into his arms. "You are the greatest."

"Thanks sweetheart." Sofia kissed her son. "Thanks for being a part of our wedding."

"It was my pleasure."

"No, it's our pleasure. And you need to be here too." Sara took Susan in her arms. "Your moms are married now. Thanks for being such a great daughter, you didn't cry and let all of us talk."

"How could she cry when something magical like this happens." Don wiped away a tear, that escaped his eye. "I don't think I've ever seen anything more amazing." He kissed Sara and Sofia. "You're married. I'm so happy for you and all of us."

"You just broke my heart." Greg continued and pulled Sara in his arms. "You married somebody else, my poor, poor heart. How could you that to me, Sofia? How could you steal her away from me?"

"Sorry Greggo, I love her and she loves me. Jules will mend your broken heart."

"I will." Jules pushed Greg aside and kissed Sara. "I kissed the new bride first. You did it, Honey. You said: I do. I knew you wouldn't run."

"How could I? Didn't you see Sofia? How am I supposed to run when I can marry a woman like her?"

"You can't."

"The mother of the bride should be the first, who kisses her." Marie kissed Sofia. "I'm so proud, Darling. You're married, you gave me the perfect daughter-in-law after you gave me two perfect grandchildren."

"Thanks mom and the first one, who is supposed to kiss me, is Sara."

"She did that, she must have tickled your tonsils with her tongue."

"It was our wedding kiss, we waited three years for it, we're in love and we're not royals, who barely touch each others lips."

"To me, you're a queen." Sara smiled at her wife. Wife! Yes, not fiancé anymore. Wife. Wife sounded much better.

"You're the queen of my hearts too. Another kiss, wife?"

"Always, wife." They kissed again.

"So awfully in love, it makes me feel...romantic." Kyle said.

"We should get to the cake before Sara and Sofia eat each other."

"What a nice idea." Sara grinned. "After the cake." It wasn't like they didn't have this on their minds already.

"It took you three quarters of an hour to get changed." Don looked at his watch when Sofia came back into the garden and took Susan out of his arms. "Were there so many zips on your dresses?"

"I took off the wedding gown of my wife, what do you think took so long?"

"First wedding sex."

The blonde smirked. "We want a full wedding, the sex is an important part of a wedding. By taking not longer than forty-five minutes we were nice to you guys, didn't let you wait too long."

"You were only afraid we'd eat all the delicious food."

"That too. The best muffins in the world, you know Sara ordered a wedding muffin, she kept in our room. Triple chocolate with two brides on top of it. The cutest and sweetest thing ever."

"Love goes through the stomach."

"Sometimes. What about your stomach, baby Susan? Are you hungry?"

"No, Steve gave her a bottle half an hour ago and took this as the best reason to redress too. Apparently Susan spilled some milk on his suit, I think it was an excuse."

"Of course it was, but I can't see a reason why he should be wearing a monkey suit when his mother and me redressed too."

"True. He looked very proud during the ceremony."

"He had an important part of it, the rings." Sofia turned the ring on her finger. Her wedding ring. Golden with three little spikes, looking like triangles, one cutting inside the ring, two pointing outwards. Sara had the same, only her had two cutting in and one pointing out, so when they put their rings together, it was one big ring, connected. Like their lives, they were one and connected. Belonged together like their rings. The engraving in her ring said: Sara & Sofia, August 24th 2013 till eternity. Her wife had the same, just with Sofia's name first.

"Does it feel different to be married? Did anything change?"

"I'm happier. The state finally recognizes my love to Sara, accepts that it's right and gives us the same rights other couples have. My feelings towards Sara haven't changed, she's the one, I love her more than my own life. I can call her my wife now, if ever anything happens to her, nobody can keep me away from her, nobody can make decisions about her without asking me. Or the other way around. I know, no matter what happens to me, Sara will make the right decision."

"Yes, that's a good point. When something happens to Tanya, I'm only her boyfriend, not family."

"When you pop the question now, you can marry her right away. The Justice of Peace is still here." The blonde laughed. Wouldn't that be fun? Don and Tanya get married the same day they did. Like a double wedding.

"We need a license first and it would be too soon. Don't get ideas in her head."

"My dear brother by heart, I'm afraid your girlfriend would tell you you're nuts when you go on your knees and ask her to marry you today. She's glad she's divorced and doesn't want to get straight into the next marriage."

"No second fast wedding, when we get married, we want to be sure it's the right thing to do and that we don't regret this decision in twenty years."

"A wise decision. Make sure you tell mom as soon as you know about your wedding. You'll be her next project."

"What about Susan? Doesn't she have enough to do with her?"

"There'll always be a few hours for your wedding, Donald."

"She can talk about this with Tanya, I have other things to do. Convince my girlfriend she wants a baby one day."

"Okay." Sofia wasn't sure this was a good idea. Every time this topic came up, Tanya made it obvious she didn't want to be a mother. She loved children, enjoyed her time with her goddaughter, but being pregnant herself was something, she didn't want.

"Did you feel like running away at one point?" Jules asked and gave Sara a beer.

"No, I felt like rushing the Justice of Peace. He had a wonderful speech, I felt like crying because it touched me so much, but I wanted to marry Sofia, wanted to put a ring on her finger before anybody or anything could get in our way. You never know what can happen. Somebody might come up and tries to stop the ceremony."

"Your mom-in-law had shoot him or her. I'm sure she read the minds of everybody around and if she had found a thought, she didn't like, she had removed this person."

"Yeah. I'm married, Jules."

"You are. We can't flirt anymore." Jules took Sara's hand and looked at the ring. "Who would have thought this three years ago?"

"Certainly I didn't. These last three years changed my life completely, changed it in a direction, I never thought I'd go to. Married to a woman, two children, working as a ranger. It's absolutely not how my life was planned when I was in university. Law enforcement was my life, I never wasted a thought of anything else, there were a few men in my life, for a long time Grissom was the only one, I was interested in. I was sure he's the one I share my life with." Sara stopped when a thought hit her. "Jules, for eight years I was sure Grissom is the one for me, it didn't work out, I was wrong. What if the same happens to Sofia and me? What if we rushed into something, that has no future."

"Here she is, the old Sara." Jules pulled Sara in her arms. "Honey, you love Sofia. There is no guarantee a love relationship is forever. You can only decide from how you feel now. You love her, you told me, you love her with every day a little bit more. If it's ever going to change, you have to deal with it. If Greg and me ever break up, we have to find a way to handle the new situation how it's best for our children."

"Why do I always doubt myself? My luck?"

"Because it scares you to be happy. You know sadness better, it was with you all your childhood and when you were a teenager. To be happy, have everything work out the way you wish it is, is new. Scary. You get used to it."

"It hits me out of the blue, first everything is fine and suddenly there's a doubt."

"And then you acknowledge the doubt and check if it holds up to reality. Is there a sign you and Sofia don't love each other? Is there a reason to believe your love ends? Now, at this very moment. Not in the past, not when you were in another relationship. Every relationship is unique, you can't compare them one hundred percent. What worked good for you and Grissom might not work for you and Sofia, what happened to you and Grissom might not happen to you and Sofia. You're not hiding your love, you're involved with somebody, who is very sensitive when it comes to your feelings, who puts you

above everything else. If you decide you have to leave Los Angeles because too many demons torture you here, Sofia won't waste a heartbeat and come with you. And when you try to leave without her, she'll find you within a heartbeat and stays with you."

"You're right." It would be impossible to hide these kind of thoughts from the blonde. She felt when Sara was sad, when something was on her chest. She left Grissom and Vegas because she couldn't take it anymore, couldn't handle her life anymore. Before this happens again, Sofia had made her talk, made sure she got some help.

"I'm always right. Now, did you pack everything for tomorrow?"

"Yes, the wedding gown is in the suitcase, the other clothes were packed a few days ago. Steve packed his suitcase a week ago, only to repack it every day, Susan's stuff is also packed. We can take off to Hawaii."

"My fiancé will join you and the next time, I want to be there too. I have never been to Hawaii."

"Tell him you want your honeymoon there."

"No, I want my honeymoon in Europe, he knows that and better makes it happen." Jules laughed. "Plus we have to see his relatives in Norway."

"Hojem Sanderson hasn't been in Norway for a long, long time." Sara chuckled when she used Greg's second name and turned his English name into Norwegian.

"No, he hasn't."

"I'm sure not many people go to Norway for their honeymoon. Paris should be the number one destination in Europe, the city of love."

"We'll be in Paris too. Without it a honeymoon isn't complete, like you said, it's the capitol of love. You and Sofia should go there too one day."

"I'm sure we will." In a few years, when Susan was older, Steve at university and they had more money to spend for vacation trips. Until then they could dream and from today on, they could dream together as a married couple.

Tuesday, August 27th

White sandy beach, the sound of waves crushing gently on the shore, the salty smell of the ocean. No responsibilities, no pressure, no noise. The perfect start in the perfect day. A day, you wish you could have every day.

"Didn't they say the sex is getting worse and boring after you're married?" Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her. Feeling the skin of her wife on her own naked skin was incredible. It made her feel like a feather stroke softly over her, teased her, aroused her.

"This might be the truth for other people, for us, it's untrue. The sex every night - and sometimes day - is mind-blowing. No wonder I wake up every morning recovered like I slept for eight hours. I did after we slept together, powered each other out and collapsed on each other's hot and wet bodies."

"Lucky for us Steve took Susan into his room, gives us all the freedom we need to make the most out of our honeymoon."

"We come to a new peak every night."

"The climax is getting better and better." The brunette bit softly into the soft skin of her lover's throat. "I'd like to eat you."

"You eat me and I'm gone."

"Just a tiny little bite. Like a kiss, only slightly harder. A little bit of pain adds to the joy and excitement."

"You only want to make me come again."

"No, I want you to make me come with you."

"You're insatiable."

"Marriage makes me horny because every time I see you I'm reminded of the fact you're my wife and that's so sexy."

"We have a daughter next door, who might need her mothers."

"She's with her brother, who knows what she needs, who has her breakfast and makes sure she's a happy girl on Hawaii. Probably they're already at the pool area. Another thing Susan inherited from you, the love of water." From the first moment Sara and Sofia took Susan in the pool for baby swimming their daughter delighted by the idea and laughed the whole time. She loved water and it made her smile and laugh all the time they were in or even close to the pool.

"You're right, we might have another five minutes."

"Add a zero to your five and we're closer to what I have on my mind." And with this Sara slipped her finger into her lover and made her cry out of lust. Five minutes. They didn't need five minutes, they needed much more to satisfy each other at least once. Twice was better and the third time was a charm, right?

An hour and a half later they were on their way downstairs to the pool area. Steve left a message on Sara's cell phone a while ago, he and Susan were downstairs, enjoying their time of their mother's honeymoon outside the hotel room.

"Good morning, or good almost noon, mothers. Did you watch TV the whole night and slept in?" Steve mocked them. He had Susan in his arms, both were in the water, in the shade of a palm tree.

"Kind of." Sofia bent down and took Susan in her arms, who didn't look as happy as her mother about the good morning kiss. In fact, she looked at Steve and the water and started crying. "Okay, okay, you go back to your brother."

"Are you surprised? She barely sees you, of course she's attached more to me." He took his sister in his arms. "You don't like your mommies anymore, right? They don't care about us, we only have each other."

"Oh, suck it up." Sara rolled her eyes, sat on the edge of the pool and let her feet dip into the water. "You're having the time of your life."

"I do. They refill my bar every night, unfortunately they forget the beer and no matter what I tell them, they don't believe I'm twenty-one. Although I do have the feeling the Hawaiian guy with the tooth gap hits on me. Maybe, if I'm pretty nice to him, he gives me a beer and a cocktail. You need to have a cocktail when you're on Hawaii."

"You don't play with the heart of a poor bartender, son. How would you feel when Marlene uses you to get to Lou Lee?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. She's history anyway."

Sara looked at Sofia. They both knew it was a lie her son told them.

"Do you want...something to eat from the bar?" Sofia asked.

"No, I had breakfast after Susan had hers. We do five more minutes of swimming and then we join you for breakfast."

"Okay. We order you an alcohol free cocktail."

"Mom, that doesn't make me happy."

"We might make your Hawaii dream come true tonight, after the wedding. They offer Blue Hawaiian and Island Murder Cocktail with the ceremony. One after the ceremony, when we're having dinner on the balcony, might be okay."

"Seriously?"

"Yes." Sara blinked at her son. They had allowed him to have a beer when they got married a few days ago, he was fifteen and although it was illegal, they were sure it didn't harm him. They'd rather have him drink a beer in the garden with them around than having him getting alcohol on his own, drink on the streets.

"You are the best. Most times."

"Always was the word you were after." Sara took Sofia's hand and went with her to the bar to get their breakfast.

"Our daughter cried when I took her in my arms. As a mother I'm horrified."

"You took her away from her brother and the water, it had nothing to do with you. Aloha." Sara smiled at the bartender.

"Can we have the lover's hearty and healthy?"

"Of course. It's your big day today, isn't it?" Barry, the bartender was almost seven foot tall, build like a football quarterback and a smile that could knock you out.

"It is. We need to be prepared for it."

"From the smile on your faces I can see you prepared yourselves already pretty good. All you need now is food to get your energy back, you used so wisely on very satisfying activities."

"You know your people, don't you?"

"Honey, I work here for over ten years, people come here to get married, all they want is a ceremony on the beach and a lot of sex, wherever they have the chance to be alone. You give me a good tip and I give you an even better tip."

"Blackmailing is illegal, you're talking to a former cop." Sofia grinned and pushed a ten dollar bill over to the man. "You get a better tip when you have something good for us. Except for the breakfast."

"How about sex on the beach?"

"It's too early for a cocktail."

"I'm not talking about a cocktail, blondie."

"Oh, now it's getting interesting."

"You have the possibility to take a boat trip to the little island half a mile away. It's reserved for the freshly married couples, offers them three hours on a lonely island to do whatever they feel like doing. All you have to do is sign up for it and you get dropped off there, with a lover's picnic basket and later you get picked up and taken back to your suite.

How do you like this?"

"I think you will get a wonderful present tonight."

"Make it tomorrow night, you'll have other things on your mind tonight. Your big wedding night."

"Second wedding night. The first one was pretty short because we had to leave to the airport in the morning."

"Lucky ladies." By the ring of a bell he turned and got their breakfast. Scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, strawberries, pineapples, apples, bananas, pancake, cheese, jam, honey, chocolate spread, bagels. Add to it a bottle of orange juice, water and two cups of coffee. "Enjoy your breakfast."

"Thanks." Sara took a slice of pineapple, added some chocolate spread on it and offered it to her wife. She knew Sofia loved pineapples with chocolate spread and she loved making Sofia happy.

"Greg!" Sara jumped into the arms of her best friend and kissed him happily. "You're here, I'm so glad you could make it. Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!"

"Hey, you asked me to come to Hawaii, how could I not do what you asked me to do?" He pulled Sara in his arms and kissed her. "You look gorgeous, the marriage suits you and this island seems to be the perfect place for two newly married love birds. I think Jules and me need a second wedding too."

"I don't want to go home anymore, this is the place I want to grow old."

"Until you're old it will take a long, long time."

"Oh, cutie."

"Your wife looks happy too. Hey Sofia."

"Hello Greg, I'm not sure I'm glad you're here. You kissed my wife and worse, she kissed you back."

"And this surprised you? We love each other, she's my sister. Come into my arm, sister-in-law with the deep blue eyes."

"Charmer." Sofia hugged Greg and kissed his cheek. "Thanks for coming here."

"Hey, my sister gets married, I've to be there. Especially here on Hawaii, I always wanted to be on Hawaii. How do you like it here, Steve?"

"Hawaii is cool, Susan and me have a lot of fun while our mothers are in bed the whole day."

"He overplays it. We're on our honeymoon and act like any other couple would."

"You have a lot of sex and barely see other people?" Greg asked with a grin. "It's how I dream of my perfect honeymoon. You will be the same when you're married, Steve."

"It's what they keep telling me but it doesn't help me now. I can't go surfing because somebody has to stay with Sue and I can't let her stay with her mothers, my poor sister will starve." He kissed Susan.

"Oh come on." Sofia bopped her son. "We're not that bad."

"Let him complain, now he has a man, who understands him more than women do. Don't worry Steve, we can go surfing."

"You're only here for one day, you fly back to Los Angeles tomorrow."

"No, I stay two more days, my boss permitted two more days, said it makes no sense to fly to Hawaii only to fly back the next day."

"Really? Cool!"

"What did your fiancé say about this?" Sara asked. Greg was not only away from work for two more days, he also left Jules and the three children alone.

"I better get her a really nice souvenir or I'm on trouble. Maybe you can help me with this."

"We can. Oh, these are great news, you stay another two days." Sara hugged her friend again.

"Yeah, I hope we won't get any problems with the hotel."

"You stay in Susan's and my room, they should be fine."

"That's what I hope." Greg grabbed his bag. "Show me where you live. Tell me when you get married again and what we have to do until then."

"We get married in four hours, you can have a rest before the ceremony starts and afterwards we have dinner on the balcony. Watch the sunset, have a few drinks, good food and listen to the sound of the ocean."

"Do they offer a honeymoon package for straight couples too? Maybe I want this place for Jules and me."

"Jules want to go to Europe, I'm afraid you won't change her mind on that. But there's no reason not to go to Hawaii for a vacation. Leave the kids with your parents and you can play honeymoon."

"Yeah, leave your kids with your parents, they're better off with their grandparents, who care for them, than their own parents, who have only eyes and thoughts for themselves." Steve agreed.

"One more comment like that and you'll stay the rest of the day in our arms, without a single minute for yourself." Sofia warned.

"The golden middle would be nice."

"Are they really that bad?" Greg wanted to know.

"No, I only try to make them feel guilty so they buy me nice things. People try to make up with money and presents when you whine a little bit."

"In this case he wants alcohol. We must have done something wrong with him. Fifteen years and want a beer." Sofia shook her head.

"Yeah, like you were any different when you were his age." Sara chuckled.

"I never said to my mother I want a beer."

"No, you got it behind her back. And the cigarettes. Not to mention the trip on the motorbike with this guy, your mother didn't approved with."

"I was safe with him, he punched the crap out of everybody, who got too close to me. And I was sixteen, not fifteen."

"Still too young to drink and smoke."

"On whose side are you? And why are we discussing this in front of our children?"

"Because I know these stories anyway. Grandma told me."
"I tell you, my mother isn't a good influence on our children."
"Grandma is the best, isn't she Susan?" His sister giggled, which Steve understood as an agreement.

"Now I start to realize why you took me with you." Steve said when Sara got off the phone in their room. "You need a babysitter so you can have fun the whole time while I take care of Susan."

"Yes, you use you, that's why we adopted you. As our personal slave."

"I'm used to that."

"Poor little boy." Sofia took Steve in her arms. "You should wake up Greg and complain or call Lea."

"I talked to her last night, she's fine, misses me and wants postcards and souvenirs. What am I supposed to get her?"

"Usually I'd suggested a hula outfit, but I'm not sure Lea like this stuff."

"I don't think so. A lei? A Hawaiian shirt?"

"They have carved little surfboards downstairs. They're all handmade and unique. Get her one of them, when you and her move in together in your first apartment at college, you have your first part of decoration." Sara said.

"Good idea. I can get one for you too, it's your birthday soon."

"You don't have to buy anything for me, I'm happy."

"It's your birthday, you get a present, like it or not. So, when we do have to be ready?"

"Wedding ceremony is at five, takes half an hour and after that we'll have dinner together."

"Then I take my sister and Greg with me and you and mom have more and more sex. It was very wise from the guys, who built the hotel, make the rooms soundproof. And to give every room a Playstation and a free games collection at reception."

"Together with free coke, chips, chocolate it's heaven for every teenager." Sofia completed amused.

"I tell you, the guys in school will be horrified. Not that I really talk with them."

"You will tell Lea every detail. Can't you play online together?"

"We do. She beat me last night. Cheater."

"Typical male problem: he can't lose."

"I'm too good to lose like that."

"Maybe she's better than good."

"Impossible. Video games is guys stuff."

"Macho. Hold your sister." Sofia gave Susan to Steve and got up. "We need t get dressed. What do you wear today?"

"The monkey suit is in Los Angeles, don't get any ideas. Shorts and my new Hawaiian shirt. I also bought a very colorful hat for Susan. We'll be wearing rainbow colors today, it's the best color for the wedding. In this case. How will you do the ring part? Take off your rings and put them on again?"

"Yes, Sofia takes off my ring and puts it back on then. I'm not supposed to take off my ring."

"Uhm, mom, you and mom have to take off your rings at work. At least she does."

"Unfortunately, yes. I'll wear it on my necklace at work, so I can make sure it's still there. You can also buy a ring for Lea. A friendship ring."

"I think you spent way too much time with wedding thoughts. A friendship ring is ridiculous. Nobody does that. Unless they're a couple." His cell phone beeped.

"Somebody gets a message, that's a sign, my son. A woman thinks of you, get her a ring."

"I'd love to, the woman won't like it. It's Marlene."

"Wow, she sends you text messages. A good sign."

"Didn't you want to get dressed?"

"He shuts us out, there's something going on."

Steve rolled with his eyes, put the cell phone away and got up.

"You get ready for the ceremony and I take Susan with me to wake Greg up. You have one hour, try to be on time and not jump each other and arrive late at your own wedding."

"He starts to sound a lot like my mother." Sofia realized. "They spent too much time together. Not good."

"I liked this wedding more than the last one." Sara said and kissed Sofia. "It was more intimate." They sat on their balcony, the wedding dinner on the table, which was arranged by the hotel.

"It was quieter and absolutely different from the other one. Instead of our garden we were on a beach, the waves hit the shore only a few yards away from us. Very romantic."

"So many great photos of you, the rest of your family will be delighted to see them." Greg agreed. "I'm glad I was allowed to witness it, be a part of it."

"Thanks for being here, Greg. And thanks for your support, Steve."

"No worries, moms. It was fun, although Susan didn't like the ceremony first." His sister started crying right at the moment when the priest started the ceremony and they needed five minutes to calm her down. Why she cried was a mystery, everything was fine, Susan wasn't hungry, didn't need a new diaper, there was nothing disturbing, she just cried and cried for no reason.

"She tried to crash the wedding. I wonder why." Sara took her daughter in her arms. "What was wrong, baby?" Like she had never cried her daughter smiled and laughed at her mother. "Do you not want your mommies to get married again?"

"Are you jealous? Want the attention on you?" Sofia teased her daughter. "Want to be the center of attention? Not your old mothers?"

"Maybe she was sick of kissing people everywhere." Steve suggested. "This place is full of lips attached to each other."

"We hadn't kissed yet."

"She knew it would happen."

"Your sister like kisses, don't you?" Sara kissed Susan. "A lot of kisses for Susan, my cuddle kissing daughter. I love you, even when you try to crash the wedding."

"She wanted you to skip over to the great part. the party." Greg opened a box with the cocktail ingredients. "So, which cocktail do you want?"

"Something blue wine cocktail, the perfect wedding cocktail."

"I don't know this cocktail. Try something more commonly known."

"White Russian."

"I can do that. Sara?"

"Swimming pool."

"Good choice."

"I take a rusty nail." Steve grinned.

"What do your mothers say about it?"

"He can have a cocktail, but make it not too strong." Sara allowed.

"Your mothers are very generous."

"Yes. do they have pizza on their wedding menu?" Steve checked the food. Vegetables, fruits, fish, meat. "No pizza, no burger, only fries. Better than nothing." He dug the fries into a white sauce. "Wham, garlic and onion, great."

"Why am I not surprised you chose the fries?" Sara took some fruits.

"I'm a teenager."

"A White Russian for the bride." Greg gave the ordered cocktail to Sofia. "Now we continue with the Swimming Pool and go on to a Rusty Nail. One with less alcohol for the greasy taste boy and one for me. I can get drunk today, no flight tomorrow and it's a wedding. You skipped the hen's night, we need to party now."

"A hen's night is for women, if they had one, you weren't invited." Steve said.

"Right. You know, we should have had a bachelor party, kidnap one of them and have the other pay us off with beer. I have to talk to Don, what he thinks about this plan."

"You're too late for that, we're married. Twice. No more bachelor or hen's night party." Sara took her cocktail. "And if you take Sofia away from me, you're no longer my brother. Am I clear?"

"Absolutely clear."

"Good. Nothing and nobody comes between my wife and me."

"Bitchy attitude, just the way I got to know your mother, Steve." Greg gave Steve his cocktail. "It's the way I like her most. Very sexy."

"My wife is always very sexy, it's a reason why I married her."

"Funny, it's the same reason why I married you." Sara smiled at Sofia. "And a million other reasons."

"I know a million more to love you." Sofia kissed her wife.

"These are the words we want to hear after a wedding." Greg finished his own cocktail and raised his glass. "Let me say a toast. To love. To marriage. To find the one, who were always

looking for. The one and only true love. To you, Sara and Sofia."

Sara took Sofia's hand. Yes, to them and their love. Everlasting love.