

## Friday, December 6th

"Where's Lea?" It was Friday and Lea was always with Steve on a Friday night. It was their video game night. And pizza night. And coke all nite night. And...it was their evening. So Sofia was surprised when her son came home alone. Without her unofficial adopted daughter.

"She's out."

"Out? Like out on a date? Out with somebody else? Out with her parents?"

"Out like out."

"She's having a date." Why didn't she know about this date? As her second mother, Sofia wanted to be informed.

"Don't be so nosy, Sofia." Sara laughed and got the dip for their nachos out of the fridge. They prepared themselves for a movie night, Susan was asleep on her favorite thick blanket, Scooby and Rantanplan next to her, even the cats were in the room. A big family meeting in the living room on a cold December night.

"I'm not nosy, I'm wondering where our second daughter is. As her almost parents we have some responsibilities."

"She's with Zoe and some other girls."

"Zoe is a friend of Marlene, right?"

"Yes."

"Why is she with her?"

"Because they're friends. They share a lot of interests and Zoe invited Lea to join her practice time. She plays in a band."

"Why are you not there? Did she not invite you?"

"We have a movie night appointment, did you forget? The Fast & Furious part five and six. Who wants to listen to girls playing instruments when there are cool stunts and even cooler cars? Not to mention there are a lot of half naked women in the movie and we have to honor Paul Walker. I still can't believe he's dead."

"Oh, he prefers to be with his mothers, isn't that cute? Come here, baby, come in your mom's arms. I can cuddle you all night if you want."

"Don't be ridiculous." Steve sat in the armchair. He wasn't a baby, didn't want to be in his mother's arms. "Take your wife in your arms, I take the nachos."

"Bad, bad son."

"Oh come on, he's a teenager, they don't want to be pampered." Sara smiled, gave Steve the nachos, messed up his hair and snuggled into Sofia's arms. "I like being in your arms, you can hold on to me. Would you like a kiss?"

"Absolutely."

"Here you are." Sara kissed her wife. "I love you."

"Love you too."

"So much love, it's time for some cool car action before I throw up." Steve started the DVD player. "You're not in your honeymoon anymore, you can behave like adults and not like teenagers in love."

"I feel like a teenager in love, all these butterflies when I see Sofia. When she smiles at me the world turns into a wonderland. Everything seems to make sense when she's around and she makes me happy."

"Oh Honey, you're so cute." Sofia kissed Sara.

"I think I throw up now." Steve rolled his eyes. It was an action movie night and not a love and romance movie night. Couldn't his mothers behave? This was worse than going to the movies on a Saturday when they played a sappy chick flick.

"Why didn't you invite Marlene over? Or is she with her boyfriend?" Sofia asked. She hadn't heard anything of her son's crush for a while, but was quite sure, he wasn't over her. What did or did not happen the last weeks?

"She doesn't have a boyfriend anymore. The distance wasn't good for their relationship."

"Oh, she's available? Invite her." Sofia pressed. Marlene was single? These were good news, her son had to use the new opportunity.

"Mom, stay out of my love life."

"You..."

"Honey, respect the wish of our son." Sara interrupted her lover. She knew Sofia was about to say, he didn't have a love life. Not the best comment for a loving and caring mother. "Besides, he can have a girl in his arms tonight. Very good looking, very sexy and exactly his type."

"Who?"

"The one, who comes up the stairs, I invited her." Steps were heard and five seconds later Tanya appeared.

"Am I late?" She tied her hair back while she walked into the living room.

"No, just in time to get into Steve's arms and watch the movie with us. He feels lonely all by himself."

"Oh, he takes care of me? Thanks my hero." Tanya squeezed into the armchair on Steve's lap and kissed his cheek. "My boyfriend is at work, catching bad guys, I need a man, who takes care of me. I heard we're watching adult themed movies."

"With hot cars."

"And hot guys, Vin and Paul are yummy. Oh, nachos, they are yummy too. In a different way. I'd never eat nachos again if that would get Paul back."

"Same here." Steve agreed. "He was a cool actor." Steve fed Tanya with some nachos.

"Do you want to stay on his lap?" Sara asked amused.

"Why not? Are you comfortably, Stephen?"

"With a good looking woman on my lap? How could I not be comfortable? Stay as long as you want." Steve pulled Tanya closer in his arms. "My chick is out with other women, I've got both arms for you, Querida."

"Lucky me."

"Looks like our son doesn't need Marlene, he has a doctor now." Sara chuckled. Why go for the assistant when you can have the doctor herself?

"Well, well, that was great entertainment, thanks for inviting me." Tanya rose. "Time for me to go to bed, I have to be at the surgery tomorrow morning, we have a couple of people coming in. Care to pick me up at noon? We can have Spanish lunch together. Your last test was only a B, we need to practice more."

"Only a B. Getting a B is pretty good." Steve complained. It wasn't such a long time ago when a B was the best he got. If he got it. There were a lot of things he was more interested in than school.

"An A is better and you can do an A. You're way too smart to be wasted on a B and you have the best teacher. We want an A, so we learn. Besides, Marlene is working tomorrow, you can have a chat with her, invite her over for dinner."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because she's single and you like her. It would be dumb to waste a chance like this and you're not dumb. Or do you have other plans?"

"Lea and I have a video game night after I made dinner for everybody, a new recipe granddad taught me...I could offer her to join us, bring Zoe too. She's more likely to agree when she can bring a friend, which I understand, she barely knows us." He looked at his mothers. It was their house, they had to agree.

"A full house, I love a full house." Sofia smiled. "Invite them."

"Okay, I come around and ask her if she wants to come over. And then we have lunch. En espanol. Whatever it takes to get an A."

"Good boy. I see you tomorrow, sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite."

"I go to bed too. Good night, moms."

"What happened to our kisses?"

"Sorry, I only kiss men." Tanya grinned.

"Oh, you can kiss mom for me and mom can kiss you for me."

Steve blinked at his mothers and went into his room.

"Cheeky."

"He's a teenager, not too far away from turning sixteen, he doesn't kiss his mothers good night anymore."

"They grow up too fast. Yesterday they need you to check if there's a monster under their bed, the next day they barely know you anymore."

Sara started laughing. Her wife was funny. She never experienced how one of their children asked her to check under the bed for monsters nor did Steve or Susan act like they don't know their mothers.

"What?"

"I'm sure Susan will let you check her bed when she's old enough, at the moment she has no idea about monsters. Don't worry, you can be her favorite cop."

"I'm a CSI now."

"In your heart you're always a cop and our daughter will make you feel like you're the one and only cop in the world. Don't worry, Honey, you have a daughter to pamper, to spoil. Our son will live his own life soon."

"Don't say mean things like that. He'll always be in our life."

"Of course and he'll have his own life too. Like every teenager. When you were fifteen, you didn't want to be with your mother all the time, you wanted your own life."

"I like them more when they're babies, small, depending on me. When they run to me instead of away from me. Or crawl. Susan is so fast when she crawls, it's amazing."

"Nobody runs away from you. I'm in your arms and I will stay in your arms the rest of the night. Nobody can make me go away from you, I love you."

"I love you too." Sofia kissed Sara softly.

"So, what is really on your mind?" The brunette could feel there was more to Sofia's mood than thinking about how their children will have their own life one day and she might not be the most important person in their lives anymore.

"Nothing."

Oh, this was such an obvious lie. "Since when do you lie to me?" Sara studied the blonde.

"It's nothing, it's only...a stupid idea."

"Since when is this stupid idea in your head?"

"A couple of days."

"Then it can't be so stupid, you don't carry stupid thoughts around for a few days. What is it, Sofia? Does anything bother you? Did something happen?" Sara didn't have the feeling it was something bad, she only felt like there was something, the blonde wanted to tell her, but hadn't found quite the right words.

"No...this will sound ridiculous."

"Why don't you let me judge myself how your thought sounds to me?"

"Okay...but...can you think first about what I said? Take all the time you need to answer? Because it's a kind of very egocentric thought. Or wish. Fantasy."

"Don't we always treat each other with respect?"

"Yes." Sofia smiled. Sara was right, she always considered her wife's wishes and dreams and never judged her. Why worry about it now? She could tell Sara everything, they loved each other. "I thought about how great it is to have Susan, a little Sara. Watching her grow and develop is like I have the chance to see you grow up when you were a baby. It's amazing and I'm so glad we have her, that she has your DNA and your looks." The blonde paused for a few seconds. "A thought that comes to my mind all the time the last days is, how would a baby mSofialook? I mean, I have photos of myself when I was young, no need to wonder, I can just look and see..."

"Honey, why don't you just say what you have to say without putting a story around it?" Sara had a very good idea where Sofia's speech was heading to.

"Okay...you know already what I want to say?"

"Honey..."

"Of course you do, you always do."

"Say it, I won't do it for you."

"Okay, okay...I'd like to get pregnant again. Another baby. With my DNA, which is very selfish because the DNA shouldn't be important, we have some eggs left and..."

"Sofia?"

"Yes?"

"Do me a favor and shut up." Sara pulled her lover closer. "You want us to have another child. We do have another free room, the question is, are you really willing to get through everything again? You know getting pregnant won't likely work out the first time we try it. It's hard work for your body and your mind. You can't work for three months around the time of labor. It's nothing we can decide all by ourselves, your parents are looking after Susan, they have to look after the other baby too, because we can't afford that one of us stays at home. Another baby means also more responsibilities, more work and less money for vacation and dreams. It means taking away attention from Steve and Susan. There are so many things that we have to consider when we want another baby."

"I know." Sofia's voice was sad. Her lover didn't seem to like her idea, she found only downsides. The problem was, she was right with everything she mentioned. Sofia wasn't at an age, when she got pregnant easily, she wasn't twenty anymore. It could take them a while before the treatment worked, meant, it would cost a lot of money. Money, they couldn't spend on their other two children or a vacation trip. Or even the debts on the house.

"Did you talk about it with your mother?"

"No. You're my wife, it's something we have to sort out first. I know we need my parents on board otherwise we can forget the idea, but if you don't like it at all, there's no need to talk to my parents...you don't like the idea, do you?"

"I like the idea of a baby Sofia, I like the idea of seeing you pregnant again. You have no idea how beautiful you are, that you're even more beautiful when you're pregnant. At the same time I worry about you, about what the pregnancy and the attempts of getting pregnant will do to you. It can take a while before you're pregnant, are you willing to get through all the pain again?"

"Yes. Susan was worth every second of pain. All the fears. Look at her, she's our daughter, how could she not be worth going through all of it?" Sofia looked at Susan asleep on the blanket, snuggled up with Scooby, her personal bodyguard. A lot of parents wouldn't let their baby daughter sleep next to two big dogs, would consider it as too dangerous, to Sara and Sofia it wasn't. The dogs never did anything to make them fear their daughter was at risk. Quite contrary. And they were around, they were in the same room, if something happened, they could interfere.

"She is worth it, I love her more than my life, don't want to imagine how life without her would be. But I love you too and I worry about you. Another pregnancy, you, my dear, get older too, no matter if nobody sees it because you still look as stunning as you did when we met the first time, but your body aged. Invisible. Which means, the risk of a miscarriage is bigger, the risk of you getting injured during the pregnancy or delivery, is bigger. It's a risk and I have a problem with things, that endanger the life and health of the woman, I love more than anybody else in the world." Sara kissed the hair of her lover. "You're the one I care for most, my everything."

"I'll be fine. I promise."

"Don't promise things that aren't in your hands."

"I can do a lot to make sure baby Sofia and I are fine."

"Yes you can."

"But you don't like the idea at all?"

"I love the idea of a second baby, I'm already in love with our unborn child, that will look like you. But we have to talk to your parents first. And Steve. It should be a family decision."

"We can do that tomorrow, when the whole family is over for dinner. If you really want this too. I don't want to talk you into it."

"Let us check how we can afford it. A decision for or against a baby should never be made because of money, but we both want to buy our children certain things. We want to be able to afford taking them to the movie, go on vacations with them, buy them at least a few gadgets. For that we need money."

"When we continue to rent out the rooms - and it doesn't look like Sally or Tony want to leave us any time soon - we have some extra money. It pays for the debts. Plus there's the third room downstairs we can rent out too. Like on a regular base."

"That might be necessary. We have a son, who goes to college in two and a half years. Well, I hope he does."

"I'm sure he will." Sofia snuggled into Sara's arms. "Are you really fine with another baby?"

"When your doctor says it's not dangerous for you, yes. I don't want you at any risk, no matter how small it might be."

"I have an appointment with doctor Blumfield on Monday." Maybe this appointment was the reason why she thought about another baby all the time. It was a regular check-up, had nothing to do with her baby wish, but it was the first step to become a mother again. "Do you want to join?"

"When is the appointment?"

"At seven, first thing in the morning."

"I talk to William tomorrow, when he says I can come in a little bit later, I join you. One more question, Sofia."

"Which one?"

"Who do you want as the father? Is it Don again?"

"He's the first one I'd ask or do you have any other idea? Greg?"

"I'm sure Greg is fine with three kids, even when he doesn't have to pay for number four when you're the mother." Their child, their responsibilities. It was the same with Don and Susan.

"Yeah, but I'm sure he'd rather have you as the mother. His and your baby, I'm sure it's a secret dream and he was disappointed we asked Don to be the father."

"I think he's over me, he has Jules. Do you think Don wants to have another child?"

"He loves children and Tanya made it clear, she doesn't want children. We're his best chance to become a dad again and he's a great dad."

"The baby surely will have deep blue eyes, a big ego and turn a lot of heads later. A potential movie star, in a city like this."

"A movie star? We can ask Lou if he wants to be the father. In that case we don't have to worry about any money."

"And then he gets a lawyer and takes away the baby? With his money he can get the best lawyers, who will do everything to get him the baby. No way."

"Oh come on, he's not a monster. When he signs the same contract Don did, the baby is ours and nobody can change it."

"Don is a great father and Lou isn't an option."

"All right, Don it is. His parents will be over the moon, another grandchild."

"So will your parents. Hopefully."

"I'm sure they are." Sofia kissed her lover. "Shall we go to bed? We both have to work tomorrow and talking about having another baby makes me want to practice. And there's this sex-free time, we have to consider. We need to have a lot of sex in advance so we can get over this...celibacy."

"Those will be hard days again." Sara chuckled and pulled the blonde. "You have to make it up to me. Two weeks without sex...that costs you."

"How do you want to get paid?"

"By getting laid."

"I love it when you talk dirty." Sofia kissed the hand of her lover. There were a lot of things they had to work out first, but if they did, there was no reason not to have another baby.

## Saturday, December 7th

Christmas was getting closer, the city prepared for it, there were Christmas trees all over the streets, in every shopping mall, in front yards. Decorated, not decorated, real or made of plastic. More Christmas decoration on windows, roofs, in gardens and on cars. Not to mention Christmas music coming out of every speaker in the shopping malls, sticking in your ear like a gum under your shoe, so you take it with you everywhere you go. Right in the middle of it was Sofia, the shades on, feeling the sunshine on her black CSI jacket. In front of her was her new crime scene.

"Is that how they came up with the phrase "your life is in the gutter"?" Don stepped next to her and watched the body, that lay in the sewage canal, exactly under a manhole cover.

"I don't know. His life seemed to end in the gutter. Do we have an idea who is he?"

"We didn't touch him, still waiting for the ME."

"Who found him?"

"The woman over there, a tourist. She was reading her map, when she ran into somebody else, dropped it and it fell into the manhole cover. She tried to get it out and saw the body of our victim."

"Not a nice surprise."

"No, not what you want on your vacation trip."

"Or is she one of these tourists, who takes photos of everything, including dead bodies?"

"We secured her camera and cell phone in case she did."

"Good." They looked at the body for another moment. "I start with the manhole cover until Cherry appears. We have to get him out there anyhow." This had to be one of the few manhole covers you could lift up when you were strong enough and look through. Sofia ordered two officers to lift it up and put it on a plastic cover. She had to take it with her to the lab, there could be finger prints or fibers on it. Which meant, she had to inform the city, they had to organize a new cover.

"Sorry I got stuck in traffic." Cherry arrived out of breath. "The closed street makes it difficult to come here, all other streets are packed with traffic too."

"We had no other choice, the crime scene is kind of right on the streets." Sofia stepped aside so Cherry could see the body.

"Okay, this was done by one very strong dude or at least two. And giving the location, it happened at night. You can't lift up a manhole cover here during daytime and nobody sees it."

"Yeah, I think the same."

"Now lets get to the complicated part of the story: getting closer to our victim." She lay down on her belly and crawled forward. "I can't see any wounds, a few scratches on his hand, his arm. They can be postmortem, the hole is narrow, he's a big fellow."

"How do you plan to get him out?"

"We can't cut out the whole hole, even when that would be best for evidence. I think I need two ropes, get them around his armpits and have him lift up this way. Did you take your photos?"

"Yes. I plan to film you lifting this guy up."

"Not me, my men." Cherry waved her colleagues over. "We need to get him out with ropes, get me two, then lift him up and put him on the stretcher."

Sofia backed off a little bit to give Cherry's helper some space. She met up with Don, who watched the whole thing from a few yards away.

"Did you check the surveillance cameras? There is one on the corner over there."

"You get it, it's the only one we have in this area. The next one two blocks away. If the body had been found on Hollywood Boulevard, our chances to have the killer on video were bigger."

"We're two blocks away from Hollywood Boulevard, get the videos of the closest cameras too, please."

"Honey, I know how this works, I'm not a rookie nor did I never work with you before." He smiled.

"Sorry. I guess the lieutenant in me took over. I can't kill it."

"Which is good, I like the lieutenant in you, it's a part of you, never try to get rid of a part of yourself, you worked very hard for."

"Thanks."

"I get you all the evidence we can get our hands on, get you me enough information so I can arrest the killer. Or killers. As a team we are unstoppable."

"We're such a great team because we're friends and damn good at what we do."

\*\*\*

Two hours later Sofia was in the morgue, watched Cherry doing the y-incision.

"What did you find out so far?"

"Our John Doe was killed by a single GSW to the chest. There are various bruises on his body, he has defensive wounds on the hands and lower arms, suggesting he fought with his killer. Or killers. There are some very distinctive bruises on his shoulders, looks like he was grabbed there. If we are very lucky, we'll get the size of the hand."

"Any trace?"

"I collected some trace, send it up to Brandon. Mostly it looks like what he picked up in the hole."

"Any idea where he was killed?"

"No, too early to tell you anything else." Cherry got the saw to open the rip cage.

When trace didn't find anything, her best evidence was about to get taken out: the bullet. There was no cartridge around the crime scene, like she didn't find any blood. Their John Doe had been killed somewhere else. But why did you kill a man and bring him to Hollywood, only two blocks away from Hollywood Boulevard? There were too many surveillance cameras around. Their original crime scene had to be somewhere close. Or was he taken to where they found him because of the manhole cover? Sofia couldn't think of any other like this. Easy to access, big enough to dumb a body.

"Looks like the bullet got stuck in his heart."

"Get it out, clean it, present it to me like a gift."

"Sure, any other wishes? Want a piece of chocolate with it?"

"Usually I'd love to have chocolate, but your place is too odd to eat anything. I don't want to know what lies next to your chocolate. Hearts, liver, body fluids."

"It keeps the chocolate fresh. All right, let's hold the heart of this man in my hands." Cherry cut out the heart and placed it on a tray. With long tweezers she pulled out the bullet and lay it next to the heart. "A forty-five."

"Our best evidence so far." Sofia opened the plastic bag for the bullet. "You call me when you find more?"

"As always. Enjoy the bullet and let me know when I cracked the case."

"Is there a battle going on? Again?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about." Cherry grinned.

"Oh no, you guys bet again. Well, if that makes you all work harder and faster I'm fine with it. How comes I get never invited to this game?"

"You're too good. Plus you work the evidence first, the chances you crack the case are higher, nobody wants to lose. Sorry, but you have to play with Greg or any other CSI."

"I take that as a compliment. You win your game and I get my killer. A fair deal for me."

"A good one for me too. So please come to me with all the new evidence you have."

"Honey, you're the ME, I can't bring you trace evidence."

"You could tell me about it."

"That depends on how fast you get me the results I need. See you later, player." With a smile Sofia left the morgue. Time to get the bullet to ballistics. If the ballistics guys were on in this bet too? That reminded her of the circle bet in Las Vegas. She hadn't been a part of it, it was before she joined the night shift, but when she remembered correctly, there were bets on who would finish the circle first. And it was David, so Cherry had good chances to win. It wasn't always the CSI, who won.

"Hello stranger, I haven't seen you here in a while." Steve greeted Marlene when he walked into the dental surgery.

"I have to go to high school and it's not like I want to spend my Saturday mornings here and work."

"Why are you here then?"

"My dad pays me. What are you doing here? Taking Tanya out for lunch?"

"Yes, she thinks I've to improve my Spanish, a B isn't good enough, so we'll have a Spanish lunch. Whatever makes her happy."

"It's not like it's a punishment for you."

"No, not at all. I like Tanya, I like food and I kind of like Spanish. At least it's useful. Something I can't say about all subjects."

"That's right." Marlene turned to a patient and gave her a new appointment. Time for Steve to think about his next step. Should he just ask her if she wanted to come over for dinner? Or did he have to come up with a reason why he invited her? Like an excuse.

"Lea and I are having a video game battle night, including a lot of chips, coke and a great Italian dinner before. Do you and Zoe want to join us?"

"Does great Italian dinner mean pizza?" Marlene laughed.

"No, it means I'll prepare something good. Self-made and not bought."

"You?"

"Yes, I can cook. Remember? I brought Tanya all the delicious food."

"Right, you're a little chef. Can I call you Ratatouille?"

"No! For that I should make you bring dessert, but I made a wonderful pana cotta already. Okay, if you don't want it, it leaves more for us. Your loss."

"What is her loss?" Tanya asked when she came to reception.

"Hola Steve, qué tal?"

"Muy bien, gracias. Marlene es una canalla."

"You're not supposed to use these words, who taught you them anyway?"

"These are important words and I learnt them myself. And she is mean, she wants to call me Ratatouille because I cook."

"Really? It was a cute rat, a really good chef and when she's mean, she doesn't get any of the amazing food you prepare tonight. You miss out something big, Marlene. What plans can be better than having amazing food and good company?"

"I wanted to go to the movies with Zoe."

"Oh come on, movies and fast food? I mean, it has it's charm, but Steve's food and after that a video games battle is much better. Give it a try, you won't regret it. If Don hadn't bought this new camera we'd join you for the battle. Now we'll drive around the scenic lookouts and take photos of the city by night. His parents asked for them. What time does dinner start, Steve?"

"Seven."

"See, take Zoe and come over, I'm sure she likes good food and a video games night too. We have 'Fight or die V' at home."

"That won't be released until next week."

"True, for public. For a friend of Lou Lee it's available earlier."

"Right, you and Lou Lee are buddies."

"Not buddies, he's...he invites me over sometimes. I think he still has a weak spot for my mom."

"Poor man, he doesn't have a chance. There's only one person for Sofia and that's Sara. No movie star can change that. Not

even a hot one, who is the godfather of my niece. Makes me related to him somehow."

"No, it doesn't." Steve laughed. "He is your patient."

"Yes, I like it when he is here."

"When is the next time he comes in? I have to make sure I'm here. For him I don't mind working on a Saturday. Or late in the evening." Marlene checked the computer. "I can't find him."

"Because his appointment isn't in there. He gets special appointment, I have written down in my little notebook. The only one who knows when he comes in the next time, is me. And your father, who will never let you know when the appointment is."

"When does he come in?"

"I won't tell you." Tanya checked her watch. "Time to leave, tengo hambre. Vamos mi querido?"

"Sí, vamos. Tengo hambre también. Adios Marlene."

"Your last chance for dinner, Honey, take it or you'll regret it."

Tanya smiled. "You never know, Lou Lee might pop in."

"Okay, if Zoe agrees we come over. Seven?"

"Seven it is. See you around." Tanya got her arm around Steve and pulled him out of the surgery. "We got her."

"Why can't women just take an invitation? Why do you have to make a battle out of everything?"

"Because when we see a man fights for us, we know he really wants us."

"I wouldn't ask her to come over if I didn't want her there."

"Your intentions are good, often they're not. So we have to check, don't worry, it will happen a few more times, it has been like this all the years. Men work their asses off to impress us and we may or may not want you around."

"Why can't it be the other way around?"

"Because we're the beautiful and adorable sex. You work for us, that's how it works."

"We make fools out of ourselves."

"You do and we like it." She blinked at him. "You're a cute fool. Not foolish at all."

Steve mumbled something like he didn't want to be a fool and hated ending up like one all the time he was around Marlene. That was embarrassing. What happened to dignity?

\*\*\*

"I've got an ID on our victim." Greg came into the lab. "One step closer to solving the case."

"Are you part of the betting competition?"

"Nope, no CSI involved. They're afraid we win."

"Because we're so good."

"Probably. So, our victim's name is Jorje Manzaric. He's from Westwood, has a criminal record, petty theft, speeding tickets, assault. He has a restraining order, is not allowed to get closer to his ex girlfriend than two hundred yards."

"How comes?"

"He slapped her around, she called the police. Some women don't appreciate a man's attention."

"You're lucky that I like you, otherwise you'd get in trouble for such a sentence."

"Sorry. So yes, he was supposed to stay away from her."

"And he didn't?"

"No, or yes. He stayed away far enough, but he followed her, watched her from a distance. Her brother was really annoyed about him. Threatened him."

"Does the brother have a name?"

"He does, he also has an address. I sent Don over to pick him up."

"Oh, maybe you closed the case. What a pity you don't get any money for it."

"The last time I checked I get paid for my work and we haven't got a confession, so the case isn't closed yet."

"The next time we have our own competition. You against me, the better one wins, the loser buys dinner for the winner."

"Okay, sounds like a fair deal."

"I checked the manhole cover for prints, there were none. I did get a toe print."

"A toe print?"

"Yes, people walk around barefoot, I don't think our killer dumped the body barefoot."

"No. So nothing that helps us. I check on the brother, talk to the girlfriend too. She won't be strong enough to lift the manhole cover, but maybe she asked somebody to do it."

"You work with the people, I work the evidence and let you know as soon as I found something."

\*\*\*

"Did you think about what we talked about yesterday?" Sofia took Susan in her arms and watched Sara take off her shoes. Both came home a few minutes ago.

"I haven't changed my mind, if you are worry about that."

"No, I'm not worried, I only wonder if you might have changed your mind after thinking about it. You had a few concerns and I understand them and also understand when you have changed your mind."

"Honey, I love you and I love Susan, she's wonderful. The idea of having another baby, another amazing little person here, maybe one who looks like you, makes me smile the whole time. The only downside are the possible risks. And the fact we can't do it on our own. I didn't change my mind, when your doctor says there are no health risks and your parents are fine with looking after a second child, I can't see any reason why we shouldn't have another baby."

"I haven't lost all the pounds I put on when I was pregnant with you, baby girl." Sofia dropped on her back and lifted Susan up.

"You made me fat and when I'm pregnant again, we can blame the new baby for it. You'll be out of trouble, how does this sound to you?"

"If you stop eating sweets you lose the pounds within weeks."

"Your mommy thinks I'm fat and want me to lose weight. You have got a fat mother, Susan. And a mean one."

"Nobody said you're fat, you're the most beautiful woman in the world and the only one, who complains about your weight, are you yourself. For me you don't have to lose weight."

"Not? Are you sure?"

"As sure as gravity makes a book fall down on the floor." Sara took Susan out of Sofia's arms, lay next to her lover with their daughter on her belly. "No more beer again."

"I know. No beer, a lot of healthy food. Our baby is worth it. For Susan I'd never ever touch beer again."

"And for me?"

"For you I do whatever you ask me to do. I'm your wife."

"Which doesn't mean you don't have your own opinion anymore. I like my wife independent." Sara kissed her lover.

"Come on, we go and talk to your parents. Lets see what they think about having another grandchild around."

"They have the twins and Louise around all the time, they love children and will be over the moon when we tell them, we think about another baby." The blonde smiled. She knew her

parents well enough to be sure, their reaction would be more than positive.

Sara hoped her wife was right. Without the support of her parents-in-law they didn't have to think about another baby at all. Okay, there was the possibility to send Susan and the baby to daycare, Greg and Jules did the same with their children, but the idea of giving their children away to strangers every day didn't appeal to neither one of them. Sofia's parents were the best babysitter you could ask for, why take the second best option?

"Did Susan tell you about her day?" Marie asked when they came into the living room downstairs, where Sofia's parents sat, rewinding the day.

"Yes, she told us how much fun she had with her grandmother." Sara smiled. "She can't get enough of being with her."

"We'll go to the beach tomorrow. The perfect place when you learn to walk. You drop and land in soft sand. Give her a few more weeks and she walks around, runs through the house and garden."

"She tried to pull herself up yesterday. It's amazing how fast she develops, it feels like yesterday when she was tiny and could do nothing else than look cute. No crawling, no turning, nothing."

"I always told you, they grow up way too fast."

"They do." Sofia looked at Sara. Who should start the topic? And how? Straight forward or was it better to test the water first?

"I know this look, spill it, Sofia." Marie took away their decision. "What is it?"

"It's...hopefully something you like."

"Spill it out, I hate it when you make a fuss about whatever you have to say. But if you tell me you and Sara get divorced I shoot you both!"

"Mom!"

"What? Some stupid mistakes deserve a bullet. So, what is it?"

"Uhm...you tell her!" Sofia gave her lover a soft push. "She reacts better to you."

"Coward. She's your mother."

"So? She's likely to...she will like our idea anyway."

"It was your idea, you started the topic."

"But you are..."

"If you don't tell me right away what this is about, I shoot you both. Sara, what is it?"

"Uhm...Sofia and I...we talked about...she approached me yesterday..."

"You have one sentence, less than ten words. Now."

The brunette starred at her lover for help, who only looked helpless. "We were thinking about having another baby. If you and Marc would support us." Sara stopped. "Oh, that were two sentences and more than ten words. Sorry."

"It was but it made sense. You want another baby?"

"Yes. A little Sofia."

"So you want a baby with your DNA, Sofia?"

The blonde nodded. "I thought about it for a while, I'd like to have a baby with my DNA, even when it's selfish. I kind of surprised Sara with the idea, she worries about my health. On Monday I've got an appointment with doctor Blumfield, when she says there is no reason for me not to get pregnant, I'd like to give it a try. Or three, not more."

"Who is supposed to be the father?"

"We want to ask Don again, he's the perfect dad to Susan and...we can't think of any better man."

"You haven't asked him yet?"

"No, we wanted to talk to you and dad first. Without your help we can't have another child, we need you to look after it, like you look after Susan. When you say two little children are too much, we have to forget it."

"Honey, your father and I are the last people, who will stand in your way to another child. We are happy you and Sara let us look after Susan and when you want another child, we'll welcome it. We barely see out other grandchildren, to have a second one here with us, is lovely. So, don't worry about us."

"Thanks." Sofia hugged her mother and kissed her. "Thanks. Thanks. Thanks."

"Did you really think I'd say anything else?"

"I wasn't sure..."

"You should know me better. Same for you, Sara."

"Sorry."

"So am I the first one, who hears about this?"

"Yes. Of course."

"I'm glad you don't hide things from me anymore, Sofia. It makes things easier for both of us. Shall we go and tell your father? Not that he will say anything different than I did. And

not that we give him a choice really. We only let him think he can decide too." Marie grinned and got her arm around Sara and Sofia. Her daughters. They wanted another baby. That was the best Christmas surprise she could get.

"Where's my little sunshine? Where is she? There she is!" Don picked Susan up and kissed her. "Hello Beauty, how are you? Did you miss your daddy? He missed you a lot. Come on, give me a kiss." He kissed Susan. "I love you. You are so adorable. What did you learn today? Can you walk? Sing a song? Invented the cure for a disease?"

"She flew around the house like a bee." Marie said dryly. "I was about to take her to LAX for a huge take-off."

Sara laughed. Don had high expectations, she wondered how Susan was supposed to live up to them.

"I can hear the mock, Captain. Just because I believe my daughter is talented it doesn't mean I'm crazy."

"You are crazy, crazy for her. Oh well, a crazy man is exactly what these two ladies need." Marie looked at Sofia and Sara.

"What are you talking about?"

"They'll explain it to you. I prepare the table downstairs. How many people are we expecting, Sofia?"

"You, dad, Don, Tanya, Sara, Steve, Lea, two of their friends and me."

"Ten. A big family. What about Jules and Greg?"

"They come after dinner."

"Well then, you have ten minutes."

"Mom, could you leave this to us?"

"That's why I leave. See you later." She patted Don's shoulder and left Susan's room.

"What is this all about? Is somebody in trouble?"

"No, but you might want to sit."

"Why?"

"We...Sara and me talked about something yesterday. A big thing. A plan for our future and it effects you."

"You are not going to move away, are you? Back to Las Vegas or somewhere new? Don't tell me you think about selling the house and start new in another city."

"What? No! We love it here, we have no intentions to move away." Sofia was confused. Why would they leave Los Angeles? This was their home, they loved the city, they loved the house. They had their jobs and friends here.

"Good. So, what is it?"

"I think the easiest way is to say it in one sentence." Sara said.

"We want another baby if Sofia's doctor agrees with it. When she doesn't have a reason why Sofia can't get pregnant anymore or if it's not dangerous, Susan and Steve are supposed to get a baby brother or sister."

"Wow. That is great. Am I involved in this plan?"

"If you want, yes. You are our first choice to be the daddy, you're perfect with Susan and you're the perfect man in our opinion. However, when you say, you don't want another baby, we accept your decision. It doesn't change anything between us. If you decide to be the dad again, and you should discuss it with Tanya too, it will be the same like it is with Susan. You have no responsibilities."

"Susan is my daughter, that gives me all the responsibilities a father has. Maybe not in front of the law because of the paper I signed, but in my heart I'm fully responsible for her. She is my daughter."

"She is."

"Do you want a baby sister or brother, Honey?" He looked at his daughter, who was untouched by the topic. "What did Marie and Mark say about your plan?"

"They're delighted. Of course. Another grandchild." Sofia smiled. "You know them."

"Yeah, another baby to pamper. And you want to get through all the stress and pain again? The treatments and contractions?"

"Yes. It got us Susan."

"That's true. Are you planning to use another egg? They froze some, didn't they?"

"They did, yes, but no, we don't want to use them. We want to use one of my eggs."

"A Sofia baby? Well, it will have mind-blowing blue eyes in this case."

"Does that mean you..."

"Of course! You know how much I love Susan, how much I love to be a daddy and this is the chance to have another child. Tanya doesn't want children, I want to be with her, it's the perfect compromise."

"Thanks." Sara and Sofia hugged Don and covered his face with kisses. He was with them, he'd be the father of their next child.

"How can I say no when I get kissed from beautiful women?"

"You should talk to Tanya about it." Sara mentioned happily.

"I will and I'm sure she will support us. It's unlikely she changes her mind about children. So with your help I will be a dad again and she doesn't have to get pregnant. You know, now that it will have your DNA Sofia, we don't have to use IV, there are more fun ways to make a baby." He smirked.

"I'm sure your girlfriend and my wife will not like your idea and if I read Sara's look right, she's already thinking about how to kill you."

"Oh come on, Sara, it saves your lover a lot of pain and money. You can watch if you like. Or play with us."

"Will you invite Tanya too?"

"A foursome? With three women? Dreams start to become true."

"You might never wake up because I'll strangle you with my bare hands. You touch my wife, I first cut off your dick and then your hands. You'll bleed out and I watch you die." Sara grumbled.

"Guess that means we go back to hospital and not to my dream. Bugger." Don sighed.

"Boy or girl?" Sofia asked, taking the hand of her lover.

"A Don Junior of course."

"You realize if we have a boy it will have a name that starts with a "S"?" Sara grinned. "He can't be Don Junior."

"Not a nice rule." He pulled them in his arms again. "So, on Monday we know more about our child?"

"Yes."

"This time it will be a mini-me."

"We see about that." Sofia chuckled. It wasn't in their hands to decide how their baby looked, what sex it had. It wasn't even in their hands if there was a new baby for them. They could try their best, but nature had the last word. On everything.

"You really cooked all these stuff alone?" Lea asked Steve when they were all seated at the big table.

"Most of it, with granddad supervising so you can be sure it's not poisoned. Nobody will suffer from dinner."

"What did you prepare for dessert?"

"Salty tears for the gambling loser chick."

"So you're a chick now? Interesting."

"Don't fight at the dinner table or you go to bed without dinner." Marie said firmly. "Behave. Thanks for cooking us dinner, Steve."

"You're welcome Captain."

"Why do you call your grandmother captain?" Zoe asked.

"Because if I call her grandmother I get in trouble. She's the Captain, she rules the family."

"At least she thinks she does." Sofia told the blonde girl. It was the first time she met Zoe. The sixteen year old girl was Marlene's best friend and seemed to be a little bit shy. Or she needed a few moments to feel comfortable in a room with a lot of strangers, who were all older than she was.

"Careful Sofia."

"Always mom, always. Steve, we need to talk to you later for a moment."

"Oh, oh, somebody is in trouble."

"I'm not, shut up." He kicked Lea under the table.

"No, he isn't. It's something good. I hope."

"Good news? Spill it. But not in a way Susan spilled her tea." He took the little bottle his sister knocked over. "Careful, baby sis."

"Actually...it has something to do with Susan. Or both of you but she's too young to decide."

"You want another baby?"

"How do you...is it this obvious?" Sara looked surprised at her wife. How could Steve know what they were about to ask him?

"Mom, you're crazy for the little stink bomb, the way you look at her, I sometimes wonder if you want to eat her. She looks like mom, she has her DNA, it's no surprise you want a baby, that looks like you, has your DNA."

"It's amazing how good you know us."

"I might not have your DNA, but I'm not stupid."

"You're a bright kid and you don't need to have our DNA to be our son."

"So, we'll have the pregnancy problems again? Mom eating all the candies, having mood swings, a conehead crying all night and the double amount of stinky diapers?"

"He is such a loving big brother, isn't he?" Sara asked Marlene.

"Yeah." The girl laughed. "He is. And he's good with babies. Whoever marries him later gets a husband, who knows everything about babies and can change diapers. And cook dinner. The perfect househusband."

"I'm a man, I don't stay at home and do the laundry. I go out and earn the money. Unless my wife earns enough to pay for a housekeeper. Than I stay at home and watch TV the whole day."

"Every real woman will kick your ass when you do this."

"Not if she understands who rules the place."

"In a marriage both should rule the place. It's not a battle. Am I not right, Darling?" Marc asked Marie.

"Of course, it's all about respecting the other one - and the fact the woman is always right and a man is supposed to do what he has been told."

"She makes it sound like I'm henpecked, which is not the case." He patted her wife. "We always decided everything together, it were the men at work she told what to do."

"So you are okay with another brother or sister?" Sofia wanted to make sure Steve was fine with their plan.

"Sure. I mean, I'm out here in two years."

"Don't. Say. Things. Like. That." The blonde held her heart.

"You'll stay with us forever."

"In your dreams. We have college plans. And university plans"

He looked at Lea. "Don't we?"

"Sure."

"UCLA is not that far away. You can take the car every day."

"I could, but we want our own place. A baby free zone, no diapers, no crying all night, no milk spilled over the table."

"Go for it, campus life is something you have to experience. You can come home to your moms when you're hungry and need clean laundry." Tanya grinned. "That's what I did. You see them this way, they can ask you question and by doing your laundry, they're still involved in your life. I hope I get invited every once in a while for a movie and games night. If wanted, I bring a pizza along."

"Of course."

"Will it be a shared apartment for just the two of you?"

"That is something we know when it's time for it. Fact is, we'll go to college and university together and share an apartment."

"You sound like an old married couple." Marlene teased.

"What if your girlfriend doesn't like the idea of you sharing an apartment with another woman?"

"Well, that's her problem. Lea and I are friends, when my girlfriend has a problem with this, she has to look for another boyfriend. You don't send your best friend away for a love

relationship. the chances a love relationship survives longer than a friendship is small. And how can you say you love somebody, when you want him to give up his best friend?"

"Your point."

"My moms are huge fans of Lea, if I mess our friendship up, they'll kick my ass."

"That's right, we love our blonde daughter." Sara blinked at Lea. "How do you like the idea of a new sibling?"

"I like it. Will Don be the father?"

"Can you think of somebody better?"

"No, he's perfect."

"Thanks, I should adopt you." Don said. "Although for a second I thought you might suggest a movie star as the father."

"Lou Lee? Oh, he'd love the idea. He still has a crush on Sofia. But he didn't take me with him to the premiere of his new movie, I don't like him anymore. A real disappointment. We could have been so good together."

"And your parents would have so not agree with this." Steve pointed out.

"They never agree with things I like. Spoilsports."

"A movie premier and it's party is not a place for a fifteen year old girl." Marie said. "It's illegal for you to be there without a legal guardian."

"I'm sixteen."

"Doesn't change the fact it's illegal."

"See." Steve looked at Marlene. "This is why she's The Captain. And not grandmother." To Marie the law was still highest priority.

"Okay, I understand."

"Captain, do you want to play grandmother tomorrow? By driving Lea, the stink bomb and me to the beach?"

"You don't want to go for a swim, do you? In December?"

"No, it's the best place for stinky to learn how to walk."

"Your sister's name is Susan and not stinky, nasty boy. Yes, I can take you to the beach, if you look after your sister."

"I always do. Next summer, we'll go swimming together, right Susi?" He tousled his sister's hair. "You on my arms, I make sure you won't end up as a shark bite."

"And who makes sure you don't drown?" Lea asked sweetly.

"You of course, my personal Baywatch chick, my personal Pam. Just that you look much better and are not full of Botox and other unnatural extras."

"Women do these things to impress men."

"I think, if a woman needs to have faked boobs, color her hair and face and add all other strange things women do, she can't be happy with herself, must think she's ugly. So why would a man think she's beautiful?"

"Because of all the things she does to look beautiful."

"If you ever look like one of these ugly dolls I don't talk to you anymore. You're beautiful just the way you are."

"Thanks." Lea bent over and kissed his cheek. "I love you too."

"They're so cute together." Sofia sighed. "Such a shame it's all strictly friendly."

"Mom, it's better, because it will last forever."

"Besides, did you forget, he's my brother." Lea grinned. "My baby brother."

"I'm taller than you are."

"Doesn't make you older."

"Makes you get wrinkles first. And gray hair."

"While you lose your hair."

"They really fight like siblings. Horrible, Be nice to each other or you're banned from the table. Sofia, can't you teach your children how to behave?"

"Sorry, my mother never taught me so I can't teach them." The blonde grinned and was happy, she sat far away from her own mother, so didn't get a slap for her comment.

"Hey Beauty." Greg kissed Sara's cheek. "How are you?"

"Greggo, my favorite lab rat." Sara jumped into his arms. "I missed you."

"Wow, what did I do to deserve this greeting? Tell me and I'll do it more often. Sofia doesn't have to know about it."

"What about Jules? She stands right behind you. She knows about it."

"Right, that was bad timing. Sorry." He let her back down and kissed her cheek again.

"It was, we try it later again. I send you a text message, hide your cell phone."

"Okay." He chuckled.

"You are both lucky I am such a patient person." Jules said and pulled Sara in her arms. "You are the only one, who is allowed to say these things to my fiancé without getting in trouble. How are you? Why haven't I seen you lately at my office? Don't you like the muffins and coffee anymore?"

"I was busy with work and family. I'm a married woman now, I can't just hang around with another woman, have coffee and muffins with her."

"But you can jump into the arms of another woman's fiancé and tell him, you'll send him messages later?"

"I did that, so yes, I can do that."

"Stop doing that, he's mine, you had your chance."

"Oh, don't worry, I'm happy with my wife. In fact, we have great news for you."

"Great news? We love great news." Jules let go of Sara. "Hi Sofia."

"Hi doc, hi colleague, long time not seen you." Sofia blinked at Greg. "You forgot to bring my godchild."

"She's with her grandmother. Where are your children?"

"My daughter is in bed, my son is in his room with three girls. I'm not sure if we did something extremely right or wrong."

"Extremely right. Which fifteen year old boy can say he spent the night with three girls? How did he manage to get all these girls into his bed?"

"First he cooked for them, then he invited them to video games. And as much as I want to correct you, I assume they're in bed, they don't want to sit on the floor. Sara, our son is in bed with three girls! We should check on them; like every five minutes."

"Yeah, make your son feel embarrassed for his mothers. Perfect."

"All you have to do is cook and put on a video game? I had no idea it was so easy to get women into your bed." Greg smirked. "Why did nobody tell him when he was young?"

"Honey, you can have three women in your bed if you want. Your two daughters and me, all you have to do is collect them at your parents-in-law and take them and me home."

"Not exactly what I had in mind...but much better."

"He'll be fine, Lea takes care of him."

"Oh, his shadow or better half. Who else is in there? The chick he's after?"

"Marlene? Yes. And a friend of hers, who is also a friend of Lea, if I understood at correctly." Sofia opened a bottle of juice. "Who wants juice, who wants beer?"

"I take a juice." Sara said.

"We walk home, we can have a beer." Greg said. "Why do you drink juice?"

"I don't feel like beer."

"She's lying!" Jules stabbed Sara with her finger. "You are such a bad liar! There's just one reason for you not to drink beer and that's when Sofia can't drink. She's not on new heavy medication, so there's another reason. I can think of only one, in a combination with the good news you want to tell us. A baby."

"Why do they all figure this out so fast?" Sara wondered.

"It's my job to figure out people. Are you pregnant already? I assume it's Sofia again, who will be the pregnant one. And Don as the father? Or is he happy with one child?"

"Yes, it will be me and the baby will have my DNA. And Don's, he's the perfect daddy and he loves children. Your cousin doesn't want children, he wants to be with her, so he has his children without her; and without cheating on Tanya. And no, I'm not already pregnant. First I have to talk to my doctor ...comes to my mind, maybe we should have told everybody after we knew I'm pregnant. What, if it doesn't work out? You'll be disappointed."

"No, we'll feel with you." Jules took Sofia's hand. "Don't put too much pressure on yourself. I know it's easy to say, you decided to have another baby for a good reason. Don't be too disappointed when it doesn't work out the first time."

"I did work out the first time when we tried to have Susan. Three times is what I give us, if I'm not pregnant then, I accept that we're blessed with two and not three children and my wonderful, exclusive DNA won't be passed on."

"Not to mention of your huge ego." Sara kissed her lover.

"You'll be fine."

"We'll be fine."

"And we'll be there for both of you, no matter if it works out or not." Greg promised.

Don watched Tanya sitting in front of the TV, not really following the movie, that was on. His girlfriend was more concentrated on the magazine in her hands. Dentist magazine. He had no idea how somebody wanted to spend their pastime with articles about drills. Then again, she spend her days with drills and other tools, that reminded him more of torture than health.

"Why are you staring holes in my back?"

"I don't."

"You're such a bad liar, detective. I hope you're better when you play your suspects, otherwise they know exactly what you're up to." Tanya put the magazine away. "Sit down, tell me what's going on."

"Can't I look at my beautiful girlfriend?"

"Stop sucking up."

"I don't."

"You want something, have something to tell to me. Do it. Tell me what's going on."

"Okay." He sat down next to her, took her hand, his look all serious.

"This bad? Are you going to dump me before Christmas?"

"What? No! Why would I do that?"

"I don't know. A sexy new colleague."

"Don't be silly. There is no other woman."

"Actually, there are three other women in your life, one is your daughter and two are the mothers of your daughter."

"They have nothing to do with you and me." Don paused. "But they have something to do with what I want to tell you."

"Go ahead."

"Sara and Sofia want another baby and asked me to be the father."

"You accepted."

"I did. Which was...stupid because I should have talked to you first."

"You don't sleep with them, you don't betray me."

"No, I don't. But I'll have another child and I want to be with you, so you should be fine with it too."

She nodded silently.

"I'm sorry I didn't talk to you first. The idea of having another baby ...I love children and I want more than one kid."

"And I don't want to be pregnant. So when we want to be together and happy, we have to figure out a way to make our wishes come true. I don't mind you having a child or children with another woman as long as you don't sleep with her."

"I won't."

"I know."

"So it's okay for you?"

"Yes. Of course." She kissed him. "Will there be another Don and Sara baby?"

"No, this time it will be a Don and Sofia baby."

"A baby with wonderful blue eyes. If this baby will be a boy, he will be the crush of all teenage girls. Like his father was when he was young. And I'm sure his mother was also somebody, who had a lot of admirer. A future movie star."

"Movie star? My son will be a cop."

"Your son will become whatever he wants to be because his mothers won't push him in a job, he doesn't want to do. You might have more luck with his grandmother."

"Yes, the Captain knows what's important."

"He could be a dentist."

"No way!"

"You don't want to be scared of your own son? If it will be a son. Maybe I can get Susan to become a dentist. Your daughter workign with me."

"My babies don't want to be tortures."

"A brave detective and scared of the dentist. How comes you date me?"

"You're way too sexy to be ignored. I can't stay away from such a sexy chick." He pulled her on his lap. "Sexy Latina, loves beer, pizza and video games. The perfect woman. You could be whatever you want, I'd fall for you."

"A criminal."

"I had to arrest you and then sex would be very difficult. Or I had to put you under house arrest. Tie you to my bed....I like the idea."

"Do you?"

"Yes. Why don't we switch off the TV, forget the magazines and change rooms. I'd highly suggest the bedroom."

"Don't you have to save yourself for the baby?"

"You're a doctor, you know that's bullshit."

"I do. Do you want me there? Do you need a hand when it you're in hospital?" Tanya let her hand ran down Don's pants.

"I think I do."

"We can practice for this event."

"We should." He got up, lifted her up and carried her into the bedroom. Time to practice.

It was around two in the morning when Steve opened the fridge to get some more cold coke.

"The man, who spends the night with three women in his room."

He almost dropped the bottle when Sara talked to him. Where did she come from? He thought she was asleep in bed and not walking around.

"Mom, you scared me!"

"Sorry."

"Why are you awake?"

"Susan cried, I looked after her. How is it the night going?"

"Great, they're all naked and we plan to lick the coke off from our bodies. I just put on some clothes in case I ran into somebody."

"My son, the Don Juan." Sara chuckled.

"Yes, are you proud of me? The womanizer."

"I'm proud of you because you're a great boy. Do Marlene and Zoe stay and need the room? Or do you guys plan to play all night they go home in the morning?"

"The room is prepared, if they're tired they can crash there. Lea stays with me."

"Who is winning?"

"I hate to say it, not me."

"What are you playing at the moment? Beside the naked lick coke off each other game."

"The goal of the game is to shoot the other one."

"Just what I want to hear. I like the naked thing more." She pulled him in her arms and kissed his hair. "Have fun, don't let them beat you too often. I catch some more sleep as long as your sister decides to sleep too."

"You want another baby, you can't really like your night sleep."

"Maybe your new sibling likes to sleep at night." She studied him. "Are you really fine with another baby?"

"Mom, you and mom love children and every child can be happy to be here."

"Can he? Or she? How about school?"

"There are idiots everywhere and they always find something to pick on when they want. It has nothing to do with having two mothers. Only with too many idiots living on this planet."

"You tell me when there's something Sofia and me can do?"

"Sure. So far I fight my own battles and I'm doing quite good."

"The day you come home with a black eye or scratch I send your grandma to high school and she'll handle it."

"Makes me the grandma-boy. Interesting nickname."

"Yeah, but nobody will mess with you when Marie is done."

"Nope, they won't. Hey mom, what would you say when we have alcohol in the room?" He smirked.

"Depends. If we were talking about a bottle of beer for each of you? I'd pretend I don't know about it. If we were talking about a bottle of vodka I'd let your grandmother know. There's no reason for me to come up with a punishment for you when she can do it much better."

"Luckily we're happy with coke. Sleep tight, mom." He kissed her cheek. "Love you."

"Love you too. Be nice to your women."

"Of course, I'm a gentleman." Steve gave her his best macho smile, which made Sara laugh. Her son was so cute.

## Sunday, December 10th

Days were slow in December, Sara could finish early. She knew Susan was with her grandparents, Steve and Lea away, they took her to the beach, the sun was shining, it was the perfect winter afternoon for a walk from Santa Monica to Venice. The temperature reached almost seventy degrees, a warm December day and perfect for their plans. Although Sara wondered how Marie managed to walk the Venice Board Walk without arresting half of the people. Smoking, selling and handling with marijuana was nothing the Captain approved of. No matter if it was legal or not.

With Sofia still at work she could choose between going home, being a good housewife and do the laundry, clean the house, do some paperwork or enjoy her Sunday afternoon. Not surprisingly she chose the second one, sent a text to Jules and when her friend answered, she was at home with the children, Sara knew where her next destination was.

"Sara! Sara!"

She dropped on her knees and pulled Eric in her arms. Yes, he could say her name correctly now and she missed already the times, when he called her 'Sasa', it was so cute. His personal kind of nickname for her.

"Hi my big boy, how are you? Wow, you grew again, soon you will be as tall as a giant. Did you miss me?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

He got out of her arms and opened his arms as wide as he could. "Thiiii much."

"Really? Wow, I missed you thiiii much." She did the same with her arms and then pulled him back in her arms. "I love you, my big boy. How was your day?"

"Good."

"Yes? I'm glad to hear that. Did you play with your sisters?"

"Yes. And mom."

"Of course, after you were with your grandparents yesterday, mommy wanted to spend some time with you. Where is she?"

"Couch." He took her hand and pulled her into the living room, where Jules, Louise and Jorja were.

"Wow, you couldn't wait to come here." Jules smiled and got up.

"Sara!" Jorja dropped her toy and ran to Sara.

"Hey big girl, how are you?" She picked the girl up and kissed her. Wasn't it great that she could make children happy only by appearing at their home. "I heard you had a great day playing with your siblings."

"Yes. Play too?"

"I play with you, of course. Let me say hello to your mommy first and I'll be with you." She set Jorja back on the floor and hugged Jules. "I thought I come along today so you don't complain, I stay away from you all the time. And I missed you."

"It's this easy to get more time with you? Only mention one time you haven't been around very much and you come over the next day? I keep that in mind. What happened to married woman and mother? Did you dump your wife and child?"

"My wife works with your fiancé, my daughter is with her grandparents, her brother and Lea. Amazingly my in-laws don't want days off from taking care of her. Apparently they had enough time for themselves in October." Due to the disagreement of the political parties, or their stupidity on finding a compromise, Angeles National Forest had been closed for a while, just like any other National Park, museum or other thing, that was ran by the government. Unpaid holidays, that gave Sara time with her daughter and the opportunity for her parents-in-law to go away for a week.

"They did take Susan with them last month for the long weekend in Vegas."

"A horrible time; for Susan and us. They should have taken Stephen with them, he would have enjoyed his time."

"Oh, he misses you too when he's away, but he doesn't cry. Give him five years and he can enjoy Vegas the way it's supposed to be enjoyed. Casinos, parties, girls, weddings."

"My son doesn't get married in Vegas without his parents around."

"He can have fun with women without a wedding. Like last night."

"They did have fun, yes,"

"Did it get him any closer to Marlene?"

"I have no idea, they weren't awake when I left work."

"All three stayed over?"

"Yes, Marlene and Zoe in the guest room, Lea with Steve."

"They often share a bed?"

"Sometimes, when they're too lazy to prepare the other one. I don't worry about them in one bed. If they were more than friends, hey, they're together long enough to sleep with each other. If they have sex to find out how it is, it's their decision, as long as they use protection and I'm sure they would, they're not stupid."

"Maybe not stupid but unprepared?"

"No, he's not unprepared. Your cousin got him a very special gummy bear from her trip to San Francisco with Don."

"You're kidding!" Jules shook her head in disbelief. "He got him a teddy bear with condoms?"

"Yes, she found it, why am I not surprised, at The Castro. Thought it's a useful gift and handed it to him with a quote of 'The little prince': Ones never knows."

"Better than singing 'Be prepared' of The Lion King. Oh Tanya, I wonder what my aunt did wrong with you."

"Nothing, she's great the way she is. And hey, Sofia and I know now, Steve has condoms. So no matter what he and Lea do or not do in bed, there's a gummy bear, that will keep them safe. Unless they've used all condoms already."

"You are amazingly calm for a mother and talking about her fifteen year old son might or might not have sex."

"Well, I can't change it, I can't tell him not to have sex, he'll have it anyway and I prefer to have him sex in his room. If I start to think about what could go wrong, I'd get crazy."

"Like becoming a grandmother? Before you and Sofia have another baby."

"That would not be nice, it's too early, but I'm sure the Captain plays babysitter, so he and Marlene, I really don't think he has sex with Lea, can continue with high school and go to college."

"Sex! Sex!" Jorja said, trying to get the attention of the adults, which she did immediately.

"Great, now they have something new to say. We shouldn't have these conversation with the twins around."

"No, we should play with them. What are we playing?"

"Lego Duplo."

"Farm." Jorja explained, satisfied to have the attention back.

"Sit." She pulled Sara down.

"Okay, we're playing farm. Who is the farmer?"

"Me."

"Me."

"Okay, so you're both the farmer."

"Cowboy." Eric showed her a man on a horse.

"Trac." Jorja had a tractor in her hands.

"Ah okay, Eric is the cowboy and Jorja drives the tractor. So I will build a stable with your mommy to make sure your cows are warm at night. Where's Louise, by the way? I thought she's here too."

"Asleep in her room. We hear her when she wakes up."

"Good. Let the games begin. Come on, mommy, we're in charge of the building. Let's build something nice for the cows and when we're done with the barn, we build a pool for us."

"Nice idea." Jules leant onto Sara's shoulder. "Maybe be can go on vacations in a year or two, when our kids are bigger. Show them how life on a real farm is, riding horses, feed cows."

"Louise has her own pony."

"She does and in four years, when she's old enough and the pony big enough, she can see it regularly and have rides in the mountains."

"While her siblings join her on ponies from a ranch. Or her godfather joins her, he has his own horses."

"He does borrow them to friends. Ask Steve, he liked the horseback riding trips."

"Wouldn't you enjoy these trips too?"

"Probably."

"But you don't ask him because you don't like him and don't take any gifts from him."

"I'm over that." Sara laughed.

"Okay. So? Why not ask him to borrow the horses to you and Sofia and have an afternoon with your wife on the horses?"

"Maybe next year...first the pregnancy."

"Right. So make it two years."

"Yes. Imagine, next year we could have another baby. Wouldn't that be great?"

"Absolutely. Do you want me to be the godmother again?"

"I think your cousin should be the godmother. Brings her closer to the child of her boyfriend."

"You choose Tanya over me?"

"Don't play drama queen, that doesn't suit you." Sara chuckled.

"Mom, Sara, play." Eric complained.

"Right, sorry." Sara took some Lego Duplo blocks and started with the barn. No more talking, time to work. Her godson demanded a barn for his cattle, she promised him one, time to keep her promise.

\*\*\*

Greg smiled and placed an envelope in front of Sofia.

"What is that?"

"A surprise for you."

"A nice one?"

"See and you know."

A little bit skeptical she opened the envelope, started of the piece of paper and then at Greg. "Are you serious?"

"Absolutely. Our case is closed."

"Wow." The blonde shook her head. "When?"

"An hour ago. Don and I talked to the brother of the ex again, this time we weren't that friendly and confronted him with some evidence, made it look like we had everything we needed to arrest him and his only chance to see daylight without bars again was confessing, Apparently he shot him in self-defense."

"Shot in self-defense? Sure. And the vic felt accidentally in the man hole?"

"He panicked."

"Of course." Sofia rolled her eyes. She was sure, there were more dumb excuses than sand on a beach. "We found no evidence that he had a gun in his hands, the wound suggests the killer was a couple of yards away, the brother's life wasn't at risk in case our vic had a knife or a baseball bat in his hands. He shot him because he was sick and tired of the vic stalking his sister. He drew a line for his sister, as much as I can understand he wanted to protect her, it was the wrong way."

"Yes. If somebody stalked Jules, which can happen, she has the kind of patients, who might understand her affection wrong, I wouldn't be happy and might get mad too. Not deadly mad, but very police calling mad."

The kind of patients? That called one into Sofia's mind. "Is Sara a stalker in your eyes?"

"No, Sara is the women, who introduced me to Jules, your wife never tried to get herself into Jules's private life, she was forced to befriend her because her best friend fell in love with her and got her pregnant."

"Did you stalk Jules back then?"

"No. I only asked for a date. Or dinner. She agreed."

"Don't tell you had stopped when she denied your wish?"

"I didn't plan to give up easily. But when a woman draws a line, I accept it. Sara made it clear she is not interested in me, I accepted it."

"True. You are not a stalker. Is the brother is in jail?"

"Yes, Don took care of everything. I write the report and then we have a closed case. Which means, we can concentrate on paper work, finish it and go home on time."

That sounded like a miracle to Sofia. Going home on time, she knew Sara left work already, they could spend a few hours together. Why couldn't every Sunday, she had to work, go like this? A closed case, time for paperwork and coming back to her wife on time.

Sara had various vehicles driving on her while she lay on her side and played with Louise, who lay next to her and tried to catch Sara's fingers. The blue car and the Harley, that were currently driving on Sara, were Eric's toys, who enjoyed having his godmother around.

"You are so cute, Louise, I can't wait until you and Susan are older and we can all to go great places like Disneyland. I'm sure you'll love it there, it's the perfect place for children. We take your siblings with us, have pizza and candies. And I try not to get nuts because the music annoys me."

"You mean the lovely 'It's a small world afterall'?"

"Please, don't sing this song. I really hate it."

"You'll be too busy chasing after these little monsters, you won't even notice there's any music around and you don't have to go into the cave with the happy music." Jules laughed and sat next to her. She got Sara and herself a coffee

"Thanks. We'll be very busy, there are enough kids for all of us. You don't run away from us, right Louise?"

"Not at the moment, in a few months, she surely will. When we go to the beach next year, we'll have a lot to do. Your godson loses his dislike of water slowly, my talented drawer over there loves it already, Susan and Louise might like it too."

"I look forward to have more active children around, be able to do more with them. On the other hand, they are so cute when they're small. It's a real catch-22. Look at Louise, she's so cute, this tiny little hands and feet and the toothless smile. The first words, the first time they say mama, the first steps, the first time they ran into your arms, with a huge smile on a face, calling out mama like you're a miracle, they see for the first time. Then they grow up, they get independent and want to explore more and more. Right now they can only do a few

things, in two years they are more active, we can take them to cool places. I can make little surfers out of them."

"Why don't you teach me how to surf?"

"You want to learn how to surf?" Sara was surprised. Jules never mentioned this.

"Sure, why not? Don't you think I look sexy on a surfboard?"

"Jules, you look always sexy, no matter where you are. Damn sexy. My wife said the same after the first time she saw you. She was right about it."

"Are you hitting on me?"

"The crush on the therapist, isn't that what always happens? You fall for the sexy woman, who listens to you, understands you, does everything she can to make your life better. It's the perfect relationship. Well, except for two little things: you have to pay her and there's no sex. Most times."

"Did you fall for your other therapist too?"

"No, my heart was filled with love to the one and only one."

"Sofia."

"You, dummy. We're talking about therapists." Sara laughed.

"Oh, right. Sorry."

"The moment you greeted me with muffins and coffee I knew you're special."

"You had no idea I was your therapist."

"Don't be a nitpicker." All that count was, Sara stayed and came back the next time. Jules did everything right.

"Would you have stayed? When I hadn't greeted you with coffee and muffins?"

"I promised to see you once, I had stayed and never come back. That was my plan. Therapy was bullocks, it made no sense to spill my guts, it doesn't change a thing."

"Did it not?"

"Well...I had no idea therapy could help me this much. It was because you bent the rules, a lot. Not only when you worked with me, also when you met Greg. I assume it wasn't just because you liked him right away, but because you saw a chance to make him understand what was wrong with me."

"I didn't tell him what you told me."

"No, but you made him understand my behavior, told him, how he could support me best. You used him as a tool - and enjoyed your time with him. After all, he made you forget the doctor you dated back then."

"Who wants a doctor when a cute CSI with a heart the size of Russia is available?"

"Nobody. I'm sure this doctor guy wouldn't be such a great father. And he wouldn't have made me a godmother of your child."

"No. If it wasn't for Greg, it's very unlikely you were here now. Which would be sad because I like spending my time with you."

"What would you have done if we ran into each other in the supermarket?"

"Say hello and go."

"Why?"

"Because you were my patient and I am not supposed to have a private relationship with my clients. Also not when they're not my clients anymore."

"We are friends...and I was quite sure you're kind of happy about it." Now Sara started to doubt it, even when she felt a little stupid thinking this. Jules made it more than obvious that she liked her and was glad she was here. She just said it two sentences earlier.

"We are friends." Jules pulled Sara in her arms. "There are some rules, I didn't say these rules are always correct, but they are in ninety-nine percent. You're an exception, not only because of Greg. The thing is, without him, we had no reason to stay in contact. Or do you believe you wanted to be my friend without him? Without the fact, we got to know each other much better because of him?"

"Probably not. I mean, I was sure you did a perfect job and I am still grateful for what you did for me, but I think after the trial, after therapy, I had little interest to stay in contact with you. You know a lot of things about me, more than anybody else - except Sofia - and it is scary sometimes. I do know you'd never use this knowledge against me, nevertheless...I'm not comfortable with many people knowing too much about me."

"Do I know too much about you?"

"Besides Sofia nobody knows so many things about me than you do. Not even Greg."

"Are you uncomfortably with me having this knowledge?"

"No, I trust you."

"Good, because even when I'm not your therapist anymore, I am not allowed to tell anybody about what we talked about in therapy. And I don't. For the record: Greg doesn't ask, he

knows I can't tell, accepts it and believes, if you want to know him something, you tell him."

"He's handsome and very smart, your fiancé. A rare and very tempting combination. Very dangerous too."

"I am aware of that." Jules smiled. "It's why I'll marry him."

"A wise decision."

"Sad you missed the chance?"

"No." Sara laughed. "I'm glad he found such a nice future wife. And that he's here in Los Angeles, with me, taking care of Sofia. I feel much better with them working together. In Vegas, they were a great team, she taught him a few things, now he returns the favor."

"By now Sofia should be on top of everything and doesn't need his help anymore. Except for the DNA stuff. He has DNA examples of all of us, stuck in the freezer. As a person, who works with dead people almost every day, it's not a big surprise. It disturbs me anyway."

"Our former colleague, Cath, she had a DNA example of her daughter in the freezer. It made her sad to be prepared for something, she feared a lot, but on the other hand, it made her feel safe too. In case anything happened to Lindsey, she had her DNA."

"Do you have DNA of Susan and Steve in your freezer?"

"Yes. Unfortunately my life isn't as far away from crime and death, as I hoped it would be."

"You're married to a CSI, before she was a cop. Unless you and her don't talk about work at all, you will be connected to crime all the time."

"A married couple talks about their work, don't they?"

"A married couple, who takes interests into each other talk about what happened during their days. Loving Sofia means having crime into your life."

"Loving her is worth everything. And as long as I read all her forensic magazines and discuss them with her, crime is a part of my life." Sara smiled. Being loved by Sofia was also worth everything. Sofia was worth everything. And she'd do whatever it took to spend time with her wife. If that meant reading forensic magazines, while they sat together on the couch, snuggled into each other arms, it was a sacrifice she was willing to pay. Okay, to be honest, she wanted to know what was new in the world of CSI. Even when she was a ranger now and didn't want death in her life every day, it was interesting to

see, with which gadgets they came up and imagine, how much easier her life had been, with all the technique around a few years ago.

"Ready to leave?" Greg came to see Sofia at the end of their shift.

"Yes. It feels good to leave the lab without a hot case, with the paperwork done. A nice feeling, I'd like to experience more often." The blonde shut down her computer and got up. The Sunday closed the week, it was the perfect day to finish everything and start new the next day, in the new week.

"Your wife is with my fiancé, we can do straight to my place. Jules sent me a message, she and Sara made dinner, we don't have to pick up something. Susan and Steve are there too, your parents dropped them off. Our families are together for dinner."

"Sweet. Looks like this day tries to qualify for the "Day of the Year" award. All I need now is your help with a special, personal matter."

"What is that?" He opened the door for her.

"I need THE idea for Sara's Christmas present. As every year, she doesn't want any presents, doesn't tell me what I could consider and I wonder if you have the perfect idea."

"She's your wife, you should know her best." Greg laughed.

"Sometimes it's easier to see the obvious from a little distance. I might be blind to the perfect present because it doesn't appeal to my eyes."

"Get a short trip for her and you, away from the children, away from work, that always shows up when you're at home. Two or three days, only the two of you, a nice room, room service, stay in bed, have a lot of sex, go for walks, for a swim, have perfect dinners cooked for you. Time with you is what she wants most."

"Leave the kids alone?"

"Sofia, they've got wonderful grandparents, who will look after them. Or you leave them with Jules and me. Although I'm quite sure your son can look after himself. New Orleans is supposed to be a perfect place for lovers. Take her to a nice restaurant in the French Quarter, a walk on the beach."

"I might be pregnant soon."

"Which doesn't mean you can't enjoy a lover's weekend together. You have to skip the alcohol, the rest can happen."

"True." Sofia liked the idea of being with Sara for three days. It didn't really matter where as long as they were together. Time for themselves. "What will you give Jules?"

"My fiancé asked me to give her nothing, to save the money for a vacation. So I called my parents, they'll take the kids for five days and I'll take Jules to Acapulco in the end of January. She works during Christmas and New Years, it's for a lot of clients a difficult time, so she takes a week off later and we are also quiet busy around this time of the year. The last week in January will be all her and me."

"Sounds like a perfect idea. Acapulco? It's not really a way to save money."

"No, but if I don't spend my money on my wife or my family, on whom shall I spend it? The kids will love their time with my parents, they don't see them as much as they want, so this present makes them happy too. Buy one present, make six people happy."

"If I didn't know it's impossible I'd say, Jules might get pregnant again during this trip."

"You know she won't. At least not with my baby."

"And because we both know she won't sleep with somebody else, she won't be pregnant at all."

"Exactly. That's why I'm not mad you didn't ask me to be the father of your second baby, I can't be it."

"Otherwise I'm sure we had to use Sara's egg. A baby sharing your and Sara's DNA should be your secret wish."

"It was. Her DNA is perfect, I checked that years ago."

"You're kidding me!"

"No and this is our little secret."

"You checked her DNA?"

"Well, she seemed to be so perfect, I wanted to know, if she was completely perfect. She is."

"I'm with you, Sara wouldn't agree. And we really should never tell her you checked her DNA."

"She never agrees when somebody makes her a compliment."

"True. That's one thing she has to learn, I make her compliments all the time so she understands she's wonderful and a dream come true, give me a few more years and she might agree. I mean, look at Susan, she's a little Sara and she's adorable. Sometimes I catch myself how I think, I could eat her alive."

"I've got the same with my kids. Especially Eric, he looks so much like his mother, acts like her, it's amazing. No wonder Sara is in love with him."

"Yeah, no wonder she's his godmother. A good decision."

"Jules knew right away he could take all her doubts away. My fiancé is so damn smart, that's very sexy."

"Yes, intelligence is attractive."

"Did you buy presents for the kids already?"

"Yes, Sara and me were lazy, we ordered them online. Our son gets a new Playstation, he was saving money for it, next to his saving jar for the car, so he can add the Playstation money to the car. This present will also make our blonde daughter happy, she gets a video game, they'll be busy for a while with their presents. Our baby daughter gets a little horse with wheels, so she can drive/ride around the house later. Eric gets a Playmobil train, Jorja the dolls house - although I really hate the fact they're so cliché and Louise gets the same horse Susan gets, so they can race each other."

"You're not supposed to spend so much money on my kids."

"Oh, we only spent half of the money on your kids, the other half we spent on Jules's kids."

"Funny girl." Greg stopped the car in front of his house. When they shared a case, they shared the car because it was very likely they finished at the same time and could save some fuel.

Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her gently. They were home, checked on Susan and went to bed around ten. Somehow it felt late to them, even when for years, they went to bed much later. Or not at all. Back in the days, when the nights weren't disturbed by baby crying.

"For a working Sunday it was a relaxed one." The brunette buried her face in the long blonde hair, smelled the shampoo of her wife.

"It was, especially for you, who went home early. Or shall I say: went from work to another woman instead of home. Or to see our daughter."

"Our daughter was on the beach with his brother and grandparents. She was looked after and happy."

"While you were happy with another woman and her children."

"Yes. Guilty. And I need to have a serious conversation with you, my darling."

"Oh, what did I do?" Sofia turned, kissed Sara's nose and closed her eyes. Being married, going to bed every day together, have a little talk, plan the next day, look after the family and live like in a TV movie. Her life was so wonderful. Like dream, that came true.

"It's not about what you did do, it's about what you are about to do."

"So it's a warning?"

"Yes."

"Now I feel threaten. Okay, what am I not supposed to do?"

"Buy me anything for Christmas and I mean anything. Not a flower, not a CD, not jewelry. Anything. We are about to have another child, something, which will be expensive and I'd rather have us spend money on a sibling for Steve and Susan than a present. You want to give me another child, it's the biggest and most wonderful present somebody can make me. Don't spoil this present with anything else, please."

Catch-22. Sofia really liked the idea Greg gave her, the little getaway for them, a long lover's weekend. Here was her wife, asking her not to buy anything, to let their baby be her Christmas present. The best present she could ask for. So what to do?

"Honey, our baby is a present for you and me, you give it to me just as much as I give it to you."

"No, you'll be pregnant, it's your egg. Biological I have nothing to do with our baby, your DNA, your womb."

"Without you, without your love I wouldn't want to be pregnant."

"So we give each the baby Christmas present. Nothing else. Deal?"

The blonde sighed. Who was she to deny a wish of the woman she loved? "Honey, Greg and I talked about Christmas and presents and...he had a really nice idea, which I'd love to turn into your Christmas present."

"All I wish for is that our children and our family is healthy and safe, things we can't decide, only wish for and the new baby. Again something, that's not entirely in our hands. I don't want anything you can buy with money. If you want to give me something, make it something, you didn't have to spend money for."

"How is that possible?"

"You're a smart woman, if you really want to get me something, you will figure it out." Sara kissed Sofia softly. She didn't need or want anything for Christmas, she was happy with her family. And what could possibly be better than having another baby with her wife?

## Monday, December, 9th

"Miss Curtis and Miss Sidle. No wait, it's Mrs. now. Mrs. Curtis? Mrs. Sidle?" Doctor Blumfield greeted Sara and Sofia when she stepped into her examination room.

"In the end we decided we both keep our name and our kids have a double name." Sofia explained.

"No need to change your papers, very handy. Having you both here, I assume there's a special reason for it."

"Yes." Sara smiled. "There is. We want another baby and you're the trusted person, who can make that happen."

"Another baby? Seriously?"

"Yes." Sofia watched her doctor. "Or is that a problem?"

"Not that I know of one. Or let's say, no other problem than before. It will be the same procedure."

"We are aware of that. We want it anyway. We want another baby, another Susan. Or a brother."

"There are some eggs left from the last time, you want me to call the lab and get you an appointment there?"

"Actually, we want new ones. Mine." Sofia took Sara's hand.

"We have a little Sara, now it's time for a little Sofia."

"Okay, we can arrange that too. What about the sperm donor?"

"We keep Don, he's a wonderful father and he wants another child."

"Very well, I see to an appointment for you."

"You don't look that surprised."

"Sofia, I saw you with your daughter, I saw you when you were pregnant, all of you called mother, you are a born mother and hearing you want another baby fits the picture perfectly. I'm happy for you and I hope, we won't find any reasons why you can't get pregnant again. Or Sara has to be the mother." The doctor smiled at Sara.

"Not a good idea, I don't think I'll be good at being pregnant."

"She's an amazing mother." Sofia said. "You have no idea how much our two children love her, how wonderful she is with them. And I'm sure if she was pregnant with our baby, she'd be perfect again. Sara can't do anything else than perfect."

"I'm sure she is. Please take off your skirt and have a seat."

"I hate this chair." Sofia sighed and started to undress.

"Nobody likes it, it's not made to be comfortable, it's made to be practical."

"I'm sure if men had to sit on something like this, there's be comfy versions, with cushions and the chair would be nice and warm. Like there were pain pills, that take away all the pain you have to go through when you're in labor."

"We have a lot of women, smart women, developing useful things. None of them came up with a solution about what you just complained. For women there are more important things in life to change or make better than this chair or the pain you feel while giving birth to a baby. Some of them don't want any painkillers at all, they want to experience every second in fully consciousness."

"I'm not into pain and like all my painkillers."

"And yet, you want another baby."

"Susan is worth much more."

"See and your second baby will be the same."

"Yeah. Honey, you know you have to be there with me, get through all the tough time again. I'll scream at you, accuse of whatever and blame you for all the pain."

"I know, it will be fun."

"Like no beer, healthy food and...this awful no sex weeks. Doc, are they really necessary?"

"Yes, they are, just like the last time. Sorry."

"I hate this part. The first weeks until we know I'm pregnant, than again after the baby is born, even more than two weeks."

"You'll get over it, it's part of your pregnancy."

"Other women have sex all the time, they don't stop and get pregnant anyway. In fact, they have a lot of sex before they even know they're pregnant."

"These other women have sex with men, which got them pregnant. You, on the other hand, have sex with a woman, who can't get you pregnant."

"But she makes me the happiest person on earth. I so love you, Sara."

"I love you too and you should stop making your doctor feel sick with your declarations of love, I doubt she wants to hear them."

"I'm always happy to hear happy couples. Not all women, who are here, are happy and in love with their partner."

"We are." Sara smiled. "Who couldn't be happy with Sofia?"

"And that's why you want another baby. I can't see a reason why you shouldn't have one. Some of your blood has to stay with me, if that says yes to another baby, I get you an

appointment at the hospital and let you know. I assume, the sooner you get the appointment, the better."

"Yes, let us know, we're ready. Take all the eggs you need."

"You know we need to wait for the right moment."

"Yeah, I know, a lot of long needles, a lot of patience and a lot of doctors."

"And the sperm."

"We send Tanya in the cabin with him, they'll have a lot fun."

"Whatever helps him. It's good to know you child will have happy parents."

"Oh, he or she will. Two happy mothers, a happy father and two great aunts, who will be there too. And uncle Greg."

"What do you want? Boy or girl?"

"Twins!"

"Twins?" Sara asked shocked. They had talked about one baby and not two. Twins were a difference, she and Sofia had to talk about that! Alone!

"Twins?" Sara asked when they were out of the doctor's office.

"When did we decide to have twins?"

"You don't like the idea?"

"It's...another story. We don't have the space for two babies."

"Relax, I don't say I want twins, we'll have two eggs used like the last time, so there's a possibility we'll have twins. How much of a problem is that for you?"

"No problem, I think...I mean...they can stay in one room the first years and later...Steve said he wants to live at his own place when he goes to college or university, which gives us another room. Means, when our son comes home, which he will do every weekend as a good son, he gets a new room; downstairs. Or Tony's or Sally's in case they ever want to move out. Then again, we need their rooms rent out for money."

"True. I don't like the idea of giving Steve a room downstairs, it's like leaving him out. We need to get another room. Somehow. We can give up our private living room, then we have another bedroom." That was better than having Steve live downstairs. Sofia was really not comfortable with this idea. Their son belonged close to them.

"True. We could also give up half of our room, it is very big. Especially compared to the other bedrooms."

"We're two and we need the space. It's not like we have an empty room, with our wardrobe, the drawers, the desk, it's

packed. All our paperwork is done in there, we need an office when we make our room smaller, which doesn't help because there's no space for an office."

"Yeah, we can't do that."

"We need more space."

"You won't like what I'm about to say now neither." Sara cocked her head.

"What's that?"

"I want my rent increased."

"Honey, we've been through this a few times." The blonde sighed. When would Sara understand, she didn't want more money from her?

"That was before we got married. Rules changed after the wedding and with another baby too."

"Are you about to blackmail me?"

"No, I'm about to make things easier. And if you can't sleep with my money in your house, because we don't share things, than you can pay the money back to me. Without interests."

"I've got the feeling we'll have a conversation about this. Later. Not today. Not this week. Can we discuss this when I'm pregnant? Because if I'm not pregnant, we have enough space."

"Sounds like a good idea." Sara took Sofia's hand and saved herself the comment, she wanted to increase her rent money anyway. "Time to go to work, until doctor Blumfield calls, we can't do anything."

Another day, another case. For a change not a homicide. A lot of people got killed every year in Los Angeles, luckily not every day. On the other hand, crime hit the city every day, with a few million people living and working in Los Angeles, it was impossible to have day with no case at all.

After her appointment with her doctor Sofia found herself on a small side street off Hollywood Boulevard. All in all Hollywood Boulevard was less than five Miles long, compared to other streets in Los Angeles a short one, but it had a lot of history, was a or the main tourist attraction in the city and unfortunately also a place, for many crimes on the west side of the city. Pickpocketing, grand theft, vehicle theft, robberies, rapes and also homicides were all part of Hollywood Boulevard, just as the thousands of tourists, who visited every day colorful shops, famous restaurants or the Walk of Fame.

Little Armenia was the area she was sent to. Not too far away from where she found Ellen's body two years ago. Her ex, who tried to make her life difficult the last times they met. Nevertheless, Ellen didn't deserve to die; especially not in the way she did.

Pushing this thought away Sofia stepped next to Lynn, who secured the crime scene. "Officer, what do you have here?"

"Assault with rape, the victim is with the EMTs on the way to Hollywood Palms. Smith is with her, gets the SAFE kit. The crime scene is for you."

"Did she call the assault and rape in?"

"No, a walker did. He found her, naked in the dumpster when he was about to throw his trash away. She was unconscious first, woken up by the EMT, wasn't able to tell us anything before she was taken away."

"How bad was she injured?"

"A pretty nasty wound on the back of her head, my guess is a stick or baseball bat, covered in bruises, various cuts and her right arm looked like it's broken. Whoever did this to her didn't want her to survive."

"Was she dumped in the dumpster or is it also the crime scene?"

"You're the CSI, it's your job to tell me."

"You're the first responding officer, you know how it looks."

"A lot of blood next to the dumpster, this is a dark street, the street light over there is broken, somebody shot it, the dumpster is in the middle of the two working street lights, when the assailant waited for her behind the dumpster, he could have gotten her without anybody noticing it. There's no ID on her, no wallet, no purse. Or it's not found yet. Smith scanned the prints and sent them to the lab before they took off to Hollywood Palms."

"Okay, I'll have a look." With her kit Sofia entered the crime scene. It wasn't normal that her colleague was gone before she arrived, but usually they drove to a crime scene together. Because of Sofia's doctor appointment and starting later, she came here after Smith left the lab and with the victim badly injured, there was no time to wait for the blonde. Smith would make sure the clothes were sent to the lab, get the SAFE kit and talk to the vic when possible. Sofia on the other hand would make the crime scene talk now.

\*\*\*

Snow in Southern California wasn't impossible. At least not when you were in the San Gabriel Mountains. Like Sara was. She was in one of the skiing areas, covering her ears with her woolen cap. Cold. There was more than two dozen degrees difference between Silver Lake and the place she was now. Mount Waterman. An area far away from her usual work place. "I wonder if we meet Santa Claus up here." Shane said, blowing air in his hands to get them warm again.

"You wouldn't get any presents anyway."

"Why? I was a good boy."

"It's not Christmas yet."

"What will you give Sofia?"

"Nothing."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing."

"You can't give her nothing, it's Christmas, you're married, you get in trouble when you don't buy anything for your wife."

"I told her last night not to buy me anything to save the money for our kids. We want another baby, IV isn't cheap, it makes more sense to use the money for that."

"Steve did start a fire in you, you can't get enough of children. What happened to the Sara, who started working here a few years ago? Who never wanted a child?"

"She was taught how wonderful the life with children is. My godchild changed my mind and my wife wants children, how am I supposed to disagree?"

"Tanya doesn't change her mind although her boyfriend wants children."

"She doesn't want to be pregnant, which I can understand. She has no problems with the fact Don is the father of our babies, like she looks after them. It's not like she doesn't like children."

"She just don't want them in her house, I can understand that."

"What about your Christmas? Have you bought any presents for the GF?"

"No, I wait until the twenty-fourth, you never know, she might not be my girlfriend by then anymore, why spent money when it's not sure you need what you buy."

Sara rolled her eyes. The old problem with Shane. Christmas came closer and he started to dump his girlfriend. First in his thoughts, than in real life. That's what he did the last two years. Why be with somebody when you ended the relationship as soon as a special date came?

"I think you're a case for the therapist."

"Your first one is sexy, too many kids now, but sexy."

"Jules is way out of your reach, boy."

"Too old too."

"Don't dump C.C., she's nice." Sara handed the full bag of trash over to Shane. Why did people leave trash behind when they were in a wonderful environment? Why not pack it in your bags and leave it at a trash can later?

"A sexy blonde."

"She puts up with your bullshit, she doesn't nag you when you go out with the guys, doesn't cause a scene when you flirt with another woman, she bought you a season pass for the Dodgers and offered you to join you there, accepted when you told her, you'd rather have it for yourself. She has fast food with you, doesn't complain when your place is a mess and she..."

"I get it, I get it. Jeez, don't tell me you have a crush on her."

"No, I don't."

"Good. So, what am I supposed to give her?"

"What was the best present she ever gave you?"

"The Dodgers ticket...she loves surfing."

"A trip to Hawaii." Sara said smiling.

"And then she dumps me."

"Only when you behave like an idiot. She loves you, I saw the two of you often enough to recognize that. Don't fight your own feelings, stop being a coward and admit to your feelings. Have a real relationship."

"Women talk."

"You know it's true."

"Whatever."

"It is...hey look." Sara pointed to a deer, that walked through the forest around a hundred yards away from them. In silent they followed the impressive deer and before it vanished behind a couple of bushes, another one came in sight. These were the moments Sara loved most about her work. Seeing animals in nature, watching them, it brought her happiness.

"They're amazing." Shane whispered.

"They are. Smooth and full of power."

"Makes you wonder how and why people can shoot them. Why have their head hanging on your wall when you can look at them here, alive and powerful."

"Because when you killed a powerful animal it means you're more powerful. You inherited their power."

"No, it means you're a brainless wanker."

They continued watching the deer until they were all out of sight. Glad to be the witness of this, they continued with their work.

Juana Smith was their newest colleague, she was fresh from university and worked in the lab since September. She was very good with DNA and trace, also with talking to people, which was why Sofia wasn't mad her colleague decided to drive with the victim to hospital. It should have been Sofia's call, she was the leading CSI on this case, but why argue about something, she hadn't decided any other way? Juana would not only get all the trace evidence and possible DNA trace back to the lab, she'd also make the victim talk.

"Hey I've got the clothes of our victim, the SAFE kit and trace from her body." Juana came into the lab and sat next to Sofia after she got herself a coffee.

"Did she wake up?"

"Yes, she did"

"Did you talk to her?"

"Of course. First, she didn't want to talk, I needed some time to make her understand, she is safe now and that even when she promised him not to say a word to anybody, it didn't mean, he'd not come back and hurt her. The best way to make sure this man will never come close to her, will never do something like this to another woman, is telling me everything she can remember."

"You think she told you everything?"

"First not, then I tried something with her I learnt in a psychology class, that brought back more memories and more information."

"I had no idea you're a shrink too."

"It's something they use at the behavior unit of the FBI, very helpful. It went to class given by one of them, it was only one evening, but a very good input. Anyway, our suspect is in his twenties, around six feet tall, skinny, Caucasian, he stutters and has a skin problem. He was either exposed to something he's allergic to or suffers from neurodermatitis."

"Could she describe his face."

"No, he wore a black ski mask. She saw the hands and the lower arm. It's where his skin was reddish. He had no accent and smelled sweet."

"As in a sweet perfume or body odor sweet?"

"Body odor. He might be a diabetic If their insulin is too low, their blood sugar levels are going to plummet because insulin helps blood sugar get into body cells. To compensate for the lack of insulin, their body breaks down fat. For me it would be great, makes me lose weight. When you're diabetic breaking down fat is not good. While the fat is being broken down, a waste product called ketones is produced. Ketones have nowhere to go except the blood. A sweet body odor is one symptom as well as breath that smells like sweet fruit."

"Do you have a master in medicine too?"

"No, I looked that up in the internet and then I called a doctor, asked, if these information are correct. They are."

"We're looking for a suspect, who is a diabetic. Which can help, let's have a look in the computer, get all the sex offenders, who are diabetic."

"And neurodermatitis. Maybe. Plus he stutters."

"You got a lot of information."

"Thanks. What I didn't get was his DNA, he suited up."

"For that I got fingerprints. A few of them, so I don't know which one are his. She saw his hands and arms, he didn't wear gloves?"

"No, no gummy over the hands."

"Good. How did he get her? She walked down the street, the street light was out, he waited behind the dumpster, grabbed her, pushed her down, forced her to stay quiet with a knife, raped her and left?"

"Why do you ask when you know everything already? Was there a camera?" Juana asked impressed. She thought she was good with all her information, Sofia was better with telling her the same story, she had to get out of the victim.

"No, I worked the evidence and the dumpster was the only place, he could have be waiting unseen. The other possibility was, he was walking down the street and attacked her when she tried to pass by or grab her from behind. I went with the hide and grab story."

"What do you do when you walk down a dark street at night and a man comes towards you?"

"If I walk around in the dark it's with my dogs and they'd get very mad when somebody tries to attack me. Only certain people are allowed to hug me without them getting mad."

"Do you carry a weapon with you?"

"We're not allowed to walk around with weapons after work. I'm surprised you don't know this, Juana."

"Oh come on." The young woman laughed and threw her hair back. "Concealed weapons are carried all the time."

"Yes, and most times by people, who have nothing good on their mind. Are you carrying your weapon with you?"

"Off the record? Yes." Juana confessed. "When I know I've to walk home at night, I have my weapon with me. I don't risk being raped or killed because my weapon was at home. I am a law enforcement person, I know how to handle a gun and I will use it when I need it. And I don't believe you leave your weapon at home."

"When I was a cop I had it with me when I walked around with the dogs in darkness, nowadays I don't do that anymore. Most times Sara comes with me, I rarely go out alone. I do understand why you do it and won't tell anybody."

"Thanks. I take my collected evidence and start working on it or do you need me to do anything else first?"

"No and you don't have to ask all the time. You're a CSI, like I am, you know what you're supposed to do."

"You're more experienced, it will take a few more years until I'm where you are. For every advice and information I'm glad because the faster I learn, the faster I can help the police to arrest criminals." The young woman got up. "Oh, one more thing, off the case: are you okay? You went to see your doctor this morning I was told."

"I'm fine, thanks. And don't worry about you and your work, you're doing more than a good job, Juana."

"Thanks and good to hear you're fine. We need you here, Sofia."

"Thanks, I have no plans to leave." The blonde smiled. No, she didn't have plans to leave, but when she was pregnant, she would leave for three months. Until she wasn't pregnant for a few weeks, like twelve, and it was likely she'd keep the baby, she decided not to tell her colleagues about her plans.

"Mom?" Steve sat on the edge of the table, drying his hands on the tea towel.

"Yes my dear?"

"Can I ask you for a favor?"

"Sure. What is it?"

"In case Lea's parents call on Friday, can you tell them she and I are with grandpa out for movies?"

"Don't you have other plans? When I remember correctly, you wanted to teach Marlene how to cook your lovely dinner from Saturday. I can understand that Lea doesn't want to play third wheel, but why should I lie about where she is? And if I do so, I want to know where she really is and why I'm supposed to lie."

Steve bit on his lips. "She'll be out."

"Why are her parents not supposed to know?"

"Because...Zoe and her band have a little gig in a club, none of them is twenty-one and Lea wants to see it, so she'll sneak in. Her parents would never approve. Not with the club and not with staying out all night."

"For a good reason. It's illegal, she gets in trouble when she gets caught."

"She knows about that."

"Why is it this important for her to go there? She can watch them when they practice or play at a high school."

"I can't say."

"No, you don't want to say, you can say because you know."

"Mom, please. I promised."

"So you want me to lie to her parents in case they call, pretend I have no idea where Lea really is and in case something happens to her, what am I supposed to do? Tell her parents: I knew your daughter wasn't with my in-laws, I knew she went to this concert and that she got robbed, sexual abused or in any other way harmed, well, bad luck. She wanted to go there so badly."

"Mom...nothing will happen."

"No, it won't. You tell Lea, if she wants me to give her an alibi when needed, she tells me why."

"Seriously?"

"Seriously. I know it's sounds like I'm the spoilsport of the year, but there is a risk involved and I want to know why. I can imagine why she doesn't want her parents to know what she has in mind, I'd not want mine to know when I knew they don't agree on. Lea's parents are little bit more conservative than your mothers are, but I want her safe."

"Okay."

"Okay, you're a spoilsport."

"Yes you are. I love you anyway."

"I love you too." She pulled Steve in her arms. "So, how often have you been to clubs when I thought you were with Lea at her place?"

"Never. I don't have a fake license. Yet. No matter how good it will be made, I don't look like twenty-one, no matter in which light. Besides, I don't care much about them, a loud place, filled with people, expensive drinks. I'm in a very lucky position to have two mothers, who allow me to have a beer when I ask for it. Although I don't like beer, too bitter. I prefer cocktails. Does that make me sound like a wimp?"

"No."

"You just say that because you're mother."

"No, I don't think you have to like beer to be a man. Tastes are different, nobody has to like everything."

"Can Marlene and me have a glass of wine with our food?"

"No. If I allow you do have some alcohol it's bad enough, I can't let Marlene have some when she's here. Sorry. I'd totally suck on the mom and former CSI area."

"Can I use it to cook? You can watch me put it in and take the bottle away."

"If you tell me you use it only for cooking, I trust you."

"Thanks."

"You never gave me a reason not to trust you, Darling." She pulled him into her arms and kissed his hair. "You know, you are one of the reasons why we want another baby."

"Why?"

"Because you are happy, you make us feel like we're not nightmare parents. If you showed or told us we suck at being parents, we wouldn't want another baby."

"You're great parents."

"And you're a great brother."

"Thanks. It impresses the ladies."

"Especially one lady. The one, who will be here on Friday."

"Fingers crossed she'll come over more often after that evening."

"I don't understand how she can resist you anyway."

Steve laughed. "Of course you don't understand it, you're my mother. Okay, I get Lea so she can tell you why she needs you as an alibi."

"When she has a good reason I'm happy to provide one."

"Believe me, she does. She you later, mom." He hugged her one more time and left to get his best friend.

\*\*\*

"Hey Sara, Steve said you want to talk to me." Lea came down to the living room, where Sara was with Susan, playing on the floor.

"Yes. He asked me to provide you an alibi in case you need one. So your parents won't know you went out to a club."

"And you don't like it."

"I wonder why you don't tell them where you go."

"Because they'd never let me go."

"And why is it this important to go to the club? You know if you get caught, they'll know you lied and then you're in real trouble."

"I won't get caught."

Sara smiled. Oh, she had thought the same when she was Lea's age. Of course it happened anyway one day and yes, she was in trouble then. If she told the girl this now, it wouldn't change a thing. She had been told the same story, it didn't stop her. Some mistakes you have to make on your own.

"It's not so much about the concert, right?" Time to investigate, time to find out, how much of a CSI was left in her. If she could read the evidence she thought she had and play it out the right way.

"I'd like to see them live."

"They're all under twenty-one, right?"

"Yes."

"How did they get this gig?"

"Pretty good faked IDs. A lot of make-up, short skirts, the owner is a man."

"Okay, that explains it. Do you plan to show up with a faked ID, a lot of make-up and a short skirt too?"

"If that gets me in."

"Where is the club?"

"On Sunset, not too far away from the Sunset / Vermont Junction."

"Not the best area, will Zoe drive?"

"They all have a license, they can all drive."

"Like they'll all have drinks."

"You start to sound like my mom."

"No wonder, I adopted you too, remember? We just skipped the paperwork."

"If you don't want to back me up, it's okay. I just hope my parents won't call and if they do, tell them whatever you want."

"Honey, come here." She patted next to her. Lea sat down, took Susan on her lap. "Did your parents know you were at the practice last week?"

Lea looked down. "No."

"Where did they practice?"

"In a garage at one of the girl's house."

"How did you go home?"

"Zoe drove me. She didn't drink."

"Good. You and her, you spend quite some time together, right? I noticed you're not that often here with Steve."

"He's my best friend, that hasn't changed."

"Oh, I'm sure about that. And he starts to hang out with Marlene, or we hope he will."

"They've a got date on Friday."

"Yes, they do. Is your appointment a date too?"

The girl's head turned deep red. Sara knew it, she read the evidence right and was on the right path.

"It's just a concert."

"Their first one?"

"Yes."

"And you want to support Zoe." Not the rest of the band, it was Zoe, who made Lea go there.

"Yes."

"Lea, do you think I will judge you in any way?"

"No."

"Good. I respect your private life just like I respect Steve's. So, when you go to the concert on Friday, why don't you send a text to Steve when it's over? Maybe he feels like some burger or anything else after the dinner they had and I have to take him and Marlene to...a petrol station. And as we are out in the car, we can pick you up. And Zoe if she needs a ride too. This way you can watch the concert, talk to her for a few minutes and then we take you with us, you stay here and when your parents ask where you slept, you can tell them you slept here and it's not a lie. You also spent some time with Steve and me. How does that sound?"

"Pretty good. Thanks."

"Okay, so you go out, have fun, let us know you are ready to go home, we get you and Zoe if she wants, you all stay here or Marlene takes you all home later, I have no idea if she stays or not."

"You wouldn't mind if she stays?"

"Why would I? She stayed here last week. If she and Steve become a couple, I'd rather have them here than somewhere on a car park, getting caught with their pants down by a cop. I'm sure Marlene slept with her boyfriend, they were together for a while and she and Steve will also have sex. Maybe not Friday, in fact, I hope it's not Friday because that would be kind of early, but I prefer to have them sex here, use protection and stay safe afterwards then somewhere else."

"Gosh, Steve's such a lucky boy to have you and Sofia as his mothers."

"He is and you should tell him, so he doesn't forget it."

"I will, but he knows it anyway." Lea smiled and got up.

"Thanks Sara."

"You're welcome. Am I a big spoilsport?"

"You're a mother, you have to be a spoilsport a little bit. Just a tiny little bit. It's part of your job and I appreciate that you worry about me without treating me like a baby."

"Like Steve, you're my baby. A teenage baby, but my baby."

"I go and play now, mom."

"You do that and I play with the other baby here. The smaller one." Sara picked Susan up and kissed her. Did she just do a masterpiece of parenting or what? All right, she lost some points for letting Lea do something illegal, but she scored big time for making the girl call Steve and let her pick her up. Yes, she was good.

"Honey, we were asked to lie." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her lover gently. Time to share her conversation with Lea with her wife.

"We don't lie, we are or were law enforcement people, we stick to the rules and the law. Can you kiss me a little bit more on the right, please?"

Sara smirked and kissed the pulse point of her lover, who moaned happily. "Are you trying to make me stop talking?"

"Why would you say this?" Sofia slipped on top of her lover and started kissing Sara's throat, holding the hands of the brunette pinned to the mattress so she couldn't push her back. Not that Sara really tried to. Why fight her wife, when she did things to her, she really enjoyed? In fact, Sofia's lips made her forget all problems and made her look forward to more of the blonde's lips.

"You wear way too many clothes, my dear." Fast Sofia pulled off Sara's shirt. "Oh I love this sight, my wife almost naked. The only thing that's better, is my wife wearing nothing at all. My wife, all mine." She bent down and kissed her way down to the left nipple, covered it with her lips and sucked on it. What a wonderful taste the skin of her wife was, what a lovely melody to hear her moaning in anticipation and arousal. The only thing that wasn't playing along was her lover, who had her hands busy with her shirt, pushing it up. She didn't want any distraction when she was busy savoring her wife.

"You're not playing by my rules, my dear."

"What do you want to do about it? Call the cops?"

"No, I don't need the cops, I can do it myself." The blonde caught the hands of the brunette again, pinned them down with one hand, bent over to get a pair of cuffs out of the nightstand. What a convenient place to keep them, they could come in very handy. Skilled, as she had slipped on cuffs on people's wrist a lot of times, she cuffed Sara to the bed pole. After she did the same with the second hand, Sofia leant satisfied back.

"Now we're ready to play. Or do I have to tie your legs too?"

"Are you afraid I could free myself? I have no intention to run away. I only want to get my hands on you, let them explore your body."

"It's not your turn to explore, it's your turn to be explored. You're my island and I'll get to know every inch of you."

"You know already every inch."

"Oh, you change every day, I have to find out which inches changed. This looks new." She let her tongue run over the stomach of her wife, played with the bellybutton. "Really nice, let me see what else we have. Too many clothes, again."

"Isn't that like clearing a forest? When you take off my pants."

"No, I'm not doing any harm. Quite contrary." The blonde let her lips run down the left leg, sucking on each toe, listen to the increased moaning of her lover, how her breath got faster. Sara was in her hands, it wasn't the brunette's decision anymore, what happened next, what her body would do.

Slowly Sofia kissed her way up the inner side of Sara's leg, making her lover more and more tremble with anticipation. Just when she was about to let her lips run softly over the center of her lover, Susan started crying out loud, irritating both women.

"She's not going to ruin this." Sofia whispered. "There's no way I'm going to stop because you don't want me to stop."

"Not at all, she'll be fine, only woke up."

"Exactly." The blonde moved over to the other leg, leaving not only a crying baby behind, but also a not happy grumbling wife. "Patience, my Darling."

"Why waste time?"

"Because it's not wasting time, it's savoring moments and every inch of you. I love your ankles too." Sofia kissed the ankle of her lover softly. She loved every inch of her wife and wouldn't mind kissing her over and over all day long. There was nothing better than kissing Sara all day long.

If she was granted the time for it. Right now their daughter seemed to mind, seemed to ask for the attention of her parents loudly. Susan didn't stop crying, she got louder and louder, irritating both women.

"All right, all right, I have a look what's wrong." Sofia sighed and took her shirt.

"Are you about to leave me here? Tied?"

"Yes because I plan to continue with what I just started. Don't run away, Honey." She kissed Sara, put on her shorts and shirt and left the room to see what was wrong with Susan.

"Don't run away? Funny." It wasn't like Sara really had a choice. At least Sofia closed the door, she didn't want one of the dogs come in and join her in bed while she was here naked and couldn't push them off.

"I think it's her first tooth." With her daughter on her arms the blond came back. "Our poor baby, she's in pain."

"What happened you plan continue what you were about to do?"

"Sorry, we might have to reschedule this or Susan wakes the whole house up. I hope you know what a huge sacrifice I bring, Susan, your mother is naked, tied up and I was just about to give her a mind blowing orgasm. When I'm pregnant, we have to live without sex for two weeks."

"Looks like we will have more than just two weeks without sex. Maybe I don't want another baby."

"Oh, of course you do." Sofia laughed, put Susan next to Sara and opened the handcuffs. "We might have even less sex, but we'll have another baby."

"Yeah, somebody else, who will keep us awake." Sara put on her shirt and shorts. "Half an hour later, my dear daughter, only half an hour. I really wanted your mommy to do all these things

with me, she had on her mind. And afterwards I'd have done the same to her. So maybe an hour would have been better."

"Yeah, so many things I wanted to do to you."

"I told you not to waste time."

"Honey, it would have made it only more difficult to stop then."

"At least Susan calmed down since she's in your arms."

"Yeah. Teeth can be mean, Susi, the problem is, they continue to make problems the rest of your life."

"For that you'll see auntie Tanya and she'll give you pain. Not because she's a bad person, only because it's her job. Teeth are painful and expensive."

"Great, our daughter will have nightmares when we continue like this." The blonde chuckled. "We should change the topic. What were you about to tell me? Before we got carried away by passion?"

"Our oldest daughter needs us as an alibi next Friday. She wants to go out and in case her parents call, we're supposed to tell them, Lea is out with your parents."

"Why are we supposed to lie? Where is she?"

"At a club, listen to a band."

"Oh, her parents are not supposed to learn about the faked ID?"

"I think it's more the club."

"Who plays? Anybody we know?"

"Zoe and her band."

"They're not old enough...okay, faked IDs, I get it."

"Yes and no, she can't just go to their practice and listen there, it's not so much about the band. It's more about Zoe."

"Oh, now I understand." Sofia smiled. "And it explains why she and Steve are only friends and will never be more. But why has Lea a problem? Her parents are fine with us."

"Yes, but it's different when it hits home. They can tolerate us, when their own daughter dates girls, it's different. How happy were your parents when you told them, you have a girlfriend?"

"Shocked. Mostly because they wanted grandchildren. Lea is sixteen, so many things can change. And even when they don't change, it's no reason to give her a hard time. As we proved to the rest of the world, you can marry a woman and still have children. Wonderful children."

"That's why we, the understanding and open-minded parents, are asked to give her an alibi. Which makes us lousy parents, from the point of view of a parent. I told her, I'm going to pick

her up after the concert and she can stay here. This way we know she's fine."

"A good idea. But what will you say when her parents call? It's unlikely they call us, they can call her, but in movies they'd call us."

"We tell them...she's out...having a burger, I'm sure they'll have burgers that night, and we'll pick them up later."

"Talking about a gray area."

"A dark gray area."

"Got a better idea?"

"No."

Sofia stopped rocking Susan and the eyes of her daughter popped open immediately. With a sigh she continued playing swing boat. "So, our son has a date with Marlene and our daughter has a date with Zoe. Just that none of them calls it date, right?"

"Yes."

"Maybe a crying teething baby isn't that bad, a teenager is by far more complicated. What are we going to do when Steve lies to us too? Or uses somebody as an alibi because he doesn't trust us?"

"We can only hope he trusts us enough. I think, so far we're pretty cool mothers."

"Until there's a man problem and he'll turn to...Don? Tony? Greg? Leaves us out."

"Which is quite normal. And annoying." Sara agreed. "Belongs to the part of being a parent, I guess. Some things you don't want to discuss with your parents."

"Yeah." Sofia kissed Susan's head. "So many possible problems with you kids and still, we love you and want even more. We are crazy."

"Crazy in love with them."

"Even when they ruin the perfect situation for mind blowing sex." The blonde sighed. "Do you have any idea where my parents left the stuff they gave her when she didn't want to sleep? Maybe it helps tonight. Or some pain killers. Are there any pain killers for babies?"

"We have to ask the doctor. The sleep remedy is in the kitchen, top shelf in the red box. I get it."

"Are we bad parents because we want to use it when our daughter has her first tooth?"

"No, she needs her sleep, we help her getting it."

"True. Okay, get the medication and tomorrow I call the doctor and ask what else we can do."

"Puffy gums are supposed to help too. We can try them tomorrow."

"See, we do know things."

"Our son said we're pretty good mothers." Sara smiled. "We should just believe him and take the compliment. My wife always says it's important to take compliments." She blinked at her wife and left the room. Time to get their daughter to bed so they could maybe continue with what they started before.

## Tuesday, December 10th

When Sofia got the call to her new crime scene, her guts told her, it was related to the scene she saw yesterday. Again a street off Hollywood Boulevard, again in Little Armenia and again a rape victim. Too many details fit the case of yesterday to be a coincidence.

"Where's the vic?" She asked Lynn, who was the officer on scene again.

"Taken to Hollywood Palms ten minutes ago. She was in a critical condition, he cut her, she lost a lot of blood and needs surgery. They couldn't wait for you and from what the EMT told me, you don't have to rush after her, if they can save her, it will take some time. He doubt we can talk to her before tomorrow."

"Not the best news."

"No, sorry. It's a déjà vu. The street light is off again, the dumpster, a quiet street."

"Maybe he is the one, who shoots the street light, make the street darker."

"There's broken glass, might be from the street lamp."

"Who found her?"

"The woman over there. Was on her way to work when she heard something coming out of the dumpster. First she thought somebody dumped a dog or cat in there, although we have these cases more often after Christmas, when people realize, pets do require some work, time and money. She opened the dumpster to help the poor animal and found our vic. No wallet, no ID, covered in her own blood."

"What about the suspects on the list we made yesterday?"

"Kyle is working on them, he has some help, all of the men, they talked to yesterday had an alibi. Whoever did this to the vic, he might have promoted from rapist to killer."

"Let's hope she survives."

"Do you want me to go to Hollywood Palms?" Juana asked Sofia. The whole time she stood quiet next to the two friends, listened, watched the crime scene.

"Not now, when they have to perform an operation first, it will take some time. I assume you told the EMT what we need?"

"Yes."

"Good, I give the hospital a call, remind them of the SAFE kit and to get me the clothes. Hollywood Palms is very

cooperative. Sometimes." Sofia pulled out her cell phone and typed a message.

"Who are you writing?" Lynn wanted to know.

"Doctor Bendler. If she's on duty, she will make sure we get all we need."

"Very handy to know the surgeon."

"I've no idea if she's the surgeon on duty, what I know is, when she gives instructions nobody dares to question or disobey them." Sofia herself had learnt the hard way it was the best to do whatever the energetic woman wanted.

"I remember her from two years ago, she was... she told you what you were supposed to do and you did it."

"Exactly. Okay, time to start." Sofia walked towards the dumpster. "Juana, tell me what you see."

"The dumpster, black, five foot high, eight foot long, four foot wide. No chains around the lid, means everybody can open it. It has wheels, but wasn't moved."

"How do you know?"

"The area around is dirty, no traces of the wheels in the dirt. I do see various shoe impressions, from the EMT guys, the witness, maybe even the rapist and the victim. It won't be easy to get them all, too many people were on scene before it was secured. No blood on the dumpster from here." They were on the middle of the street, facing the dumpster. "People don't pay attention to a dumpster when they walk along in the night or early morning. Nothing interesting to see, a lot of folks listen to music, don't hear in case the vic tried to alert somebody before. You hear the traffic on Hollywood, not that much at night, then again, when it's dark you hurry home, don't spend time to look around. It's Tuesday, last night weren't too many people here, no pub, no club, no twenty-four/seven on this street.

I have no information about the newest vic, the last one was five foot tall, less than one hundred pounds. Our suspect needs a certain strength to lift the vic up and dump her in the dumpster. No reported second attacker, no reported companion. Skinny guy with some muscles, maybe he works out. There's a cardboard box, when it's not empty, he might have used it to step on it."

"In which direction did he run?"

The younger CSI looked in both direction while she tried to remember if the last victim said something about this. "I have

had no idea, victim number one didn't mention a direction. She didn't see him leave."

"What do you think?"

"Sometimes you have to go with your guts to get evidence."

The dark haired woman looked up and down the street. "South. To Sunset. Easier to get away from there, there're no buses on Franklin, you go on Sunset, there're always people, a risk because they can see you, then again, nobody pays attention. You get into a bus, change to Metro on Sunset and Vermont."

"He raped her behind the dumpster, skinny guy, probably skinny woman, there's about a yard between the dumpster and the wall, also a perfect place to hide. Doesn't take long, he sees her coming down the street alone, has the knife in his hands, knows she's his, makes him hard. Grabs her, pushes her down, knife to the throat, in front of the face, makes her shut up, tears apart the clothes, there are two buttons, I bet they belong to whatever the vic wore. Rapes her, comes, messes with her, pants up, gets the vic into the dumpster, maybe throws something on top, something that lays around. The dumpster gets emptied today, if nobody had heard the vic, she'd be dead by now. The truck was due to be here ten minutes ago. Very handy, it's almost impossible to tell where a body was picked up once it ended on the waste disposal side."

"She and we are lucky."

"I'm not sure if she's lucky, she won't feel like she's the lucky one. We're lucky because this makes it easier for us. Easier not easy."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Start at the dumpster, work your way down to Sunset, pay attention to the street light. Like Lynn said, there's broken glass around. He can be responsible for it. We do need to check other street lights on parallel streets. I'll let the police know, they can send an officer. If this is his comfort zone, he'll strike here again. He stroke two nights in a row, he's out of control. I doubt these were his first rapes. If we don't stop him today, he'll come back tonight and rape another woman." Sofia narrowed her eyes. She had to contact her boss, he needed to contact the chief of police, they needed more police officers in this area.

Most school classes came during the warmer seasons to Angeles National Forest. Now in winter, when there often was

snow, only a few school classes found their way into the mountains although it gave the children the possibility to play in the snow, ride a sled. To Sara it was the best part to work with young children, who were so excited and amazed by the forest. They were full of questions, ideas and fun to be around. Today she had two dozen second grade and two teachers with her. While the children enjoyed the snow, throwing snowballs (which they were of course not allowed) at each other, the teacher were busy telling their students off and feeling cold the rest of the time.

"Ma'am, can we see animals?" A young girl asked Sara.

"If you're all quiet and take a good look around, you might spot one."

"The bears are asleep, aren't they?"

"Yes Honey, they're asleep. It's too cold for them."

"How about Mountain Lions?"

"They don't hibernate."

"Are they dangerous?"

"They can be, especially now that it's winter and some of the animals they eat, isn't here or hard to catch. You're safe as long as you stay with the group, alone in the forest, a Mountain Lion might attack you."

"Will you shoot it when it attacks us?"

Sara looked at the gun, she was carrying. "As long as we all stay together no mountain lion will attack us. You don't have to worry."

"Are there any squirrels around?"

"Most of them sleep during winter because they can't find any food, but they wake up and look for nuts they've buried in fall."

"How do they find the nuts? Do they mark the place?"

"They don't find most of their nuts, that's why they have to bury so many."

"Why don't they find them."

Sara bent down and whispered: "They're too stupid to remember. Don't tell them I said this." The children laughed.

"My grandma also forgets everything, she's a squirrel." One boy laughed.

"My dad too."

"Why can't Mrs. Teapot be a squirrel? She never forgets we had homework to do." A girl wondered and her face turned deep red when she caught the eyes of her teachers.

"We won't tell her, one of the goof things in the forest is, things you say will stay here. The trees don't tell anybody your secrets. They're pretty good company to talk to, unfortunately they don't answer, but when you hug them, they share a little bit of their energy. Why don't you try it? Hug a tree, it's fun, even when it looks weird." Sara hugged a tree and put a wide grin on her face. Actually she felt some energy running through her when she hugged a tree. It was crazy, but it was what she felt.

"Does Santa Claus come to Angeles National Forest?" One boy asked.

"There is no Santa Clause!" Another boy laughed.

"There is!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"You're such a baby!"

"Why don't you have a look for hoof prints? If you find some, he might have been here. He needs a place to stay, right? Can't go all over the world without giving his reindeers a break." Sara stopped them before the teachers could react. The question if there was a Santa Claus or not wasn't hers to answer. It was something the children learnt sooner or later, Sara herself liked it when they believed in Santa. Wasn't it nice to believe there was a kind man, who brought you presents? Who loved you although you never met him.

Next year Susan should be old enough to understand about Christmas, to understand there was a holiday people came together, spend time together and presents were around. She'd make sure her daughter knew about the history of Christmas although she wasn't a Christian, but when you celebrate something, you need to know what it is and what it means. If her daughter ever wanted to go to church, experience a Christmas mass, Sara would go with her to it. It was important to keep an open mind to everything, when Susan found comfort in any kind of religion, Sara had no problem with her daughter being an active believer.

"Ma'am, I think an animal hurt itself." A boy pointed down the dirt road into the forest. Sara went to him to see, if there was an injured animal. Instead she saw a large red spot in the snow.

"Is that blood?"

"Did somebody die there?"

"What did happen?"

"What that a mountain lion?"

"Children, do me a favor and stay on the dirt road, I'll have a look what happened." Sara looked at the teachers. "Please stay here with the children, I'll be back in a minute." Carefully she slipped down into the forest and went to the large red spot. Blood. She could smell it. A lot of blood. There was no body around. No animal and no human remains. When she saw the blood she was reminded of the serial killer, who dumped his victims in Angeles National Forest. Here death was around. The blood wasn't too old, there were boot prints around, two pairs. No other signs of human activities.

With a deep breath she pulled out her radio and called her boss. "George, I've got a lot of blood here. The kids and I got maybe half a mile away from San Olene Road, you know where we started. Here's a large blood pool, I mean seriously large. Deadly large."

"Is there a body?"

"No. I can't tell you if it's human, but whatever it is, whoever died, you should send somebody out to check it." There had been a killer around, the question was, did he or she kill an animal or a human being?

After working for three hours on the crime scene Sofia decided she would go to Hollywood Palms to see if their victim was alive and awake and collect the evidence, the nurses had secured for her. She also wanted to collect additional evidence from the victim. They didn't know the name of the victim, so it wasn't too easy to find out where she had been taken or if she was still alive.

"Ma'am, you can't walk around here." A male nurse approached her.

A little bit annoyed because of his tone she showed him her badge. "I'm a CSI and I'm looking for a rape victim. She had been taken here three hours ago, severe cuts to the face, arms and the upper torso." Thanks to the photo Lynn managed to take she knew at least a few details. "She was taken in by EMT, not sure if she survives. I need to get her clothes, pick up the SAFE kit and any other evidence, that we need."

"Name?"

"We don't have her name, there was no wallet around."

"Who is the doctor in charge?"

"I don't know, the EMT couldn't tell."

"How am I supposed to know who you want to see when you have no information?"

"How many rape victims, who were attacked with a knife and came in in critical condition do you have here? I worked for years as a cop, Los Angeles isn't a safe haven, but I doubt there's another woman, who fits the description. Maybe you're plain stupid and incompetent and should change your job."

The impression on the face of the young man changed from red to white back to red. Before he could start to talk a sharp let him and Sofia turn.

"I don't appreciate it when my people are called incompetent! You better apologize to nurse Gonzales." Doctor Bendler had her hands on her hips and gave Sofia a look, that reminded her a lot of her mother.

"He..."

"You apologize or I let you escort you out by our security and whatever you want has to wait until another CSI appears. One with better manners."

"I'm sorry for being rude." Sofia grumbled. In her eyes, she had no need to apologize, arguing with the doctor on the other hand, would mean she'd lose. Doctor Bendler was the one, who ruled the place. It's stupid to start a fight when you knew you can't win.

"Good. Now nurse Gonzales." Doctor Bendler shifted her attention to the male nurse, whose face turned into smug when Sofia apologized. "You will apologize to CSI Curtis. You're perfectly capable of telling her where the young woman is, she's looking for. Otherwise I have to tell you how to do your job and I'm you don't want this."

His face changed colors again and just as unhappy as Sofia was to apologize, he mumbled the same words.

"Good. Now you can go back to work and I take CSI Curtis to the young woman. I got your message and took care of her myself."

"She's alive?" Sofia didn't believe she was this lucky. Doctor Bendler really read her message and took care of the woman?

"At the moment, her conditions are critical and we have to wait until tomorrow. She makes it through the night, she has good chances to make it back to life." Doctor Bendler signed Sofia with her head to follow her. Next to the doctor the blonde almost jogged down the hallway.

"Do you know who she is?"

"No, I couldn't find anything about her in our computer. The SAFE kit is ready for you to collect, her clothes are in sealed plastic bags and if you want you can get trace from under her fingernails. I can show you where she is."

"Thanks. Did you take care of her because I sent you the message?"

"I took care of her because she needed the best to give her a chance at all. You're my personal patient, not my boss."

"Nobody is your boss." Sofia smiled.

"Exactly. How is your leg?"

"Fine."

"Medication?"

"Every day, no problems."

"Good. I need you get out of the room within ten minutes, the woman needs to rest. She's in artificial coma, which doesn't mean you working on her is not stressful for her."

"I make sure it doesn't take long and will be respectful."

"If I thought for a second you won't be respectful you weren't allowed in there." Doctor Bendler stopped in front of a door.

"She's in here, same for the SAFE kit and the clothes. When you find out who she is, will you let me know?"

"Of course."

"I let you know when she wakes up and can answer questions. I'm sure you have some."

"I do. It's unlikely she saw her attacker, which means, I've to find another way to catch him. He did the same yesterday, not that brutal. If we don't get him, I'm afraid we have a dead body tomorrow."

"I'm very, very good, but I can't get dead people back to life, so I won't be helpful."

"No, that would be a case for Cherry, our ME." Sofia took a deep breath. "Thanks for your help."

"You're welcome. The next time you remember your manners and my stuff will help you."

"When they're not incompetent."

"I don't hire incompetent people. Incompetence is something I don't tolerate."

"Of course not." The blonde smiled. Anything less than perfect wasn't good enough for doctor Bendler. No wonder Jules was such a wonderful person.

\*\*\*

Sara was surprised when Don appeared at the forest. They had no idea if it was a homicide case, were they short on other detectives? Why not send an officer?

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

"A large blood pool in Angeles National Forest is a potential crime scene. Not only since the sick Reservoir Killer dumped his victims here, the forest is a favorite spot for killers."

"It could be animal blood."

"If that's the case I'm off the case. Did you find a body?"

"No. A class with second grade students were here, in fact, they found the blood pool first. After I called George I made sure they don't have to see this anymore. The kids believe now a mountain lion killed a deer, absolutely natural."

"Natural is not possible."

"No, if that were the case we'd find bones and traces of animal activities. All I saw were boot impressions in the snow. Definitely made by two human beings."

Don smirked. "Want to replace our CSI? He's a newbie, you could teach him a few things."

"No, thanks. I'm a ranger, I watch and wait what you find out."

Sara's cell phone beeped and she read the message.

"The little smile on your face tells me, your wife sent you a text."

"Correct, detective. She met doctor Bendler, who hopefully saved the life of Sofia's witness. A rapist is on the loose around Hollywood Boulevard."

"Is that her way of telling you she comes home later?"

"No, it's her way of letting me know what happens in her life."

"Did you tell her about the blood here?"

"Yes. I knew she had her own case, but it's a case with a CSI, so I told her. We do talk although we're married."

"Strange." Don laughed. "Did you follow the trace in the snow?"

"Not my job."

"For a former CSI you're not very nosy."

"I made sure the CSI knows about the scene, made sure nobody walked through it before you guys arrived, all other things are not my business. Life is much easier when you care only for your own business and don't do the work of other people."

"Even when you're better."

"Other have to learn, they don't learn when you do it for them."

"True."

"Detective?" The young man came over from the blood pool to Don. "The blood isn't human."

"Good, that's a relief."

"I checked four areas of the pool, all came back negative. Tests will confirm what kind of animal died. It's no longer a possible homicide case."

"Good for me, bad for whatever died here."

"You will continue your work, don't you?" Sara asked. "This wasn't a kill an animal did. The blood looks too fresh and there are no remains around. A human did this. Poachers. Hunting is prohibited in this area and it's not hunting season."

"We keep going collecting evidence, yes. Only with less people."

"Okay, thanks." Of course a poacher case wasn't as important as a possible homicide case. Sara did understand this.

"Thanks for the heads-up. Time for me to leave. Do you want to stick around, Sara, or shall I call you when I hear something new?"

"Give me a call. I'm going to have a look around the area, maybe we find more blood. Or some remains."

"Enjoy walking through the snow, doesn't sound like a perfect day at work to me."

"I take the car and have a close look for traces, that get away from roads into the forest. My colleagues do the same, if we find something else, we let you know."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome. I see you around or later at home. Stay warm, detective."

"Ditto Ranger."

Sara walked back to her car. There could be more blood pools. Poachers didn't stop after one animal. Like other killer, they liked killing too much.

When Sofia came back to the lab she felt sad. The look of the unknown woman had brought back a lot of memories, she had pushed away. Memories of her accident, how she lay in bed. It wasn't like she had seen photos of her in artificial coma, she had no visual memory of these days, but she knew she had looked horrible and the victim did the same. She looked more dead than alive. How did Sara manage to stay sane with her lover in bed, covered in blood, cuts and on the edge of dying? Sofia couldn't imagine going through the same.

She went to trace, left some of the evidence bags with them and took the clothes for herself after she checked if they had an ID on the victim. From hospital she sent the prints to the lab.

"How is the vic holding on?" Juana asked when she saw Sofia.

"The doctor said, when she makes it through the night, she might survive."

"Can't they do more?"

"The best looked after her, the rest is up to the vic. She needs to fight for her life."

"Maybe she did the same when she was raped and that got her almost killed."

"Now she can fight without being stabbed, this time people supported her fight. When there's a change of her situation I'll get informed."

"Good. You were right about the street light, I found the stone, that smashed it. No prints on it. There were various prints on the dumpster, I took them, run them, the first victim said, he didn't wear gloves, we should find his prints. I have the program compare the prints from the first case with the ones we found today. I sent the officers to check on dumpster in the area in case he dropped the knife, they didn't find anything."

"Did you find out in which direction he left?"

"I found blood drops indicating a movement south, DNA is checking if it's the blood of our victim. You were right about the rape behind the dumpster, I found blood, pieces of clothes, you may confirm they're her clothes and some long brown hair. From the photo you sent me I assume it's her hair."

"He stroke two nights in a row, both times in Little Armenia, both times south of Hollywood Boulevard. If this is his comfort zone, he's likely to live here. Or lived here. He feels safe although there's the possibility somebody walks through the street during the rape, disturbs him, sees him."

"I wonder if by the sound of sex people look or if they continue to walk when they don't hear a cry for help. There could be two people behind the dumpster having a quickie. With a knife on your throat you think about every sound you make."

"And then you end up half dead anyway. Did she piss him off? Fought back? What made him be this aggressive and brutal? Is he losing control over himself? Does something inside him break free? Some people get off by killing somebody and they don't know about it until they actually killed somebody. It's like

for them, they finally know, what they're supposed to do. He might feel the same about rapes. His kind of work."

"A sick work."

"You can say this about a couple of jobs, that are perfectly legal. Anyway, I start with the clothes and tell you, if the pieces you found are a match." Sofia checked her watch. "You don't happen to know if there are any news on the Angeles National Forest case?"

"I had no idea we have a case up there."

"We do, a large blood pool was found. It wasn't human as far as I know."

"Is this case related to our?"

"No, but I'm related to the one, who called the police." Sofia smiled thinly. "Doesn't matter, I check on that when I'm done with my work."

"She used to be a CSI, didn't she?"

"Yes. The best."

"Then she should be here, working with us."

"No, she decided crime is not supposed her center of attention anymore."

"Not the worst decision, although she lives with a CSI, crime is still a part of her life. All right, I go back to my work, let me know if you find something out."

"I will. Thanks Juana. Did somebody tell you that you're very good?"

"I'm not, I'm a newbie."

"A very good one and don't let anybody tell you different. That's an order."

"Understood boss. Lieutenant."

Lieutenant? Juana never worked with her as a cop, having her calling her "Lieutenant" made Sofia feel like...like she was still a cop. God, she missed being a cop more than she would ever admit.

"Sorry for being so bad keeping in touch." Sara sat down at the table. She had made a little stop there, the Starbucks on corner of Glendale and Fletcher, the closest to her home and almost in the middle of home and the Los Angeles Zoo.

"We were both very busy and cancelled the meeting twice each. No need to feel guilty."

"Thanks. How are you?"

"Do you want an honest answer or the answer everybody wants to hear?"

"I always want the truth. Remember, former law enforcement member. The truth and nothing but the truth."

"Right." The young woman sat down, pushed her red hair out of her eyes. "Now you're a ranger and still involved in crime. Like in summer."

"Don't remind me of that." Sara rolled her eyes. The Reservoir Killer. He had turned her summer to a disaster and brought death and violence way too close to her. There had been no distance between her and death, she had been involved in crime scene like she had when she was a CSI. And worse, she found the bodies first. As a CSI she had never been a first responder.

"Sorry. He's caught."

"He is and I had to call the cops today again. There was a large blood pool, luckily it was not human blood. Although, we might have a poacher in the forest, which isn't nice at all."

"Somebody should shoot them too."

"Yes. How is your job?"

"Winter time in the zoo is slow, like in the forest." Caro leant back and took a sip of her coffee.

"More time to be at home. Just what you need for Christmas."

"How is your family doing?"

"Susan is fine except for her first tooth, which kept her and us awake. She has no idea about Christmas, next year it will be different. It's her first Christmas, so we're more excited than she is. Steve is a sunshine, he makes me so proud every day, a very special boy with a kind heart. We're so lucky with our two children and...we want a third one."

"Really? Wow, that's cool."

"Sofia is such a wonderful mother, she loves babies and...she's even more beautiful when she's pregnant. I never thought she could be more beautiful than she already is...the last pregnancy showed me I was wrong. She takes my breath away."

"You're such a love fool." Caro laughed.

"I am."

"It's good to see happy couples."

"You're not happy?"

"Let's say there are some dark clouds on my blue sky."

"Oh."

"Yes. So tell me something nice, tell me about your Christmas plans."

"A happy celebration with my family."

"Oh, you're so cliché. What did you buy your wife?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? You should come up with something otherwise you'll be in trouble."

"No, we have a deal, Sofia and me won't buy anything for each other for Christmas. We spend all our money on the children and the third child."

"Who'll be the father?"

"Don. He's perfect as Susan's father, he loves children and he was over the moon when we asked him."

"Your world is disgustingly perfect. I'm glad you're happy. You deserve happiness, Sara."

"Thanks. My happiness is my family."

"Why didn't you bring Sofia?"

"I don't think Sofia remembers you."

"You didn't tell her? About being in contact for over three years? Am I your secret?"

"She should know about you when she checked on my cell phone."

"She checks your cell phone?"

"Sometimes. It's nothing bad, I don't have any secrets, she can read my text messages and the numbers, I've saved. It's not like we have something to hide."

"Are you sure?"

"Until today I was." Sara grinned. She had no idea she had a secret. Was Caro her secret? Because she never told Sofia about them texting and meeting? No, she didn't. Did she?

"Cheer for the most talented and sexiest man alive, who appears in front of your door, Isn't it like a dream, that becomes true?"

Sara cocked her head and looked at Lou Lee, who tried his best Hollywood star smile on her.

"Nope." Her first intention was to slam the door shut and go back to what she had been doing before. Not a friendly reaction.

"Oh come on, can you imagine a sexier man in front of your door?"

"Yes. In fact I can think of a couple men, who are sexier than you are."

"More famous?"

"I so don't care if somebody is famous or not."

"Still the cool and hard to impressed woman. Do you let me in?"

"When you ask politely, maybe."

He laughed. "Dear Sara, would you let me inside your house, please?"

"You get five minutes, that are four more than a cult gets of my time."

"Thank you very much. What do I have to do that you're nicer to me?"

"Stop fantasizing about my wife."

"Impossible."

"Then you can get out right away."

"I promise I behave. And that your son will be happy to see me."

"Teenagers are easy to impress." Sara smiled and walked with Lou into the living room. "I've got a panhandler or priest here, anybody interested in giving him anything? Time? Love? Appreciation?"

"From me, he can have whatever he wants." Lea said. "I'm all his."

"I might ask for a ticket for his new movie, as I wanted to see it anyway." Sofia smirked. "It saves money when he organizes it. Say hello to uncle Movie Star, Susan."

"Hello gorgeous little girl." He took Susan in his arms. "You grew so much since I saw you the last time and you get more and more beautiful. Just like your mom."

"You are aware of the fact he has my DNA and not Sofia's."

"I am and you are getting more and more beautiful too. We only have to work on your charm."

"I'm charming to people, who deserve it."

"Thanks. Hey Steve, how are you?"

"Good. I'd like to add to mom's speech about the ticket, that I'd like to have two tickets to the movie, so I can take company with me."

"Girlfriend?"

"The most amazing girl I know, the sexy blonde here." He put his arm around Lea.

"What about impressing Marlene?" Lea asked.

"Honey, if I have to choose between you and Marlene, it's always you. You're my best friend and that's worth more than anything."

"Isn't he a cutie? Marlene is such a lucky girl to get you."

"Why don't you get him yourself?" Lou asked.

"Because we are best friends, you can't date your best friend, it destroys the friendship."

"She's blonde, I want a brunette." Steve smirked.

"Fair enough. So, two tickets for you and one for Sofia. What about you Sara, can I get you a ticket too? Or do you boycott my movies?"

"No, I like them. Especially the scene, when somebody punches the crap out of you. Although I wonder if you ever take a role that's a challenge, that requests some acting and not only movies, that center are blown off something and punching the crap out of somebody."

"Most times I punch the crap out of others. Okay, I get you tickets. How about an extra one for your girl, Steve?"

"That would be awesome."

"Consider it as done. I'll ask Greg and Jules if they want tickets too. Oh and my sexy dentist."

"You call her sexy dentist when her boyfriend is around and you're dead." Sara said dryly.

"He likes me, he won't shoot me. Like your wife won't let you shoot me, she likes me too. We can have a glass of champagne at the premiere, Sofia."

"Sorry, I'm off alcohol. We want to have another baby."

"I could help you with that."

"Your five minutes are over, get out of here or I shoot you!" Sara grumbled.

"Don offered the same, why don't you guys understand, the only person I have sex with, is my wife. I am a married woman, see the ring? My wife is the only one for me, no matter who asks. I'm all hers, you should know that, I turned you down before Sara and me were a couple because I love only her."

"You chose Don as the father? Why not me?"

"We want a smart kid and Sofia's DNA can't make up for both."

"Oh Sara, one day I might believe you really don't like me."

"I don't."

"Yes you do."

"Don't worry, sometimes she is bitchy to people she likes, you have no idea how she acted when we met years ago, she sent me through hell and back."

"Shut up!"

"And you married her anyway. Well, it won't happen to her and me, as she's more than happy with you, but it gives me hope, I might be welcome here one day."

"Cry me a river, I try not to drown."

"Honey." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "You are one of a kind and I love you so much. Be nicer to our guest, he deserves it. He's always very nice to our son, gets him tickets to his movies, invites him to his villa so he can use the pool, organizes a horseback riding trip so he can impress his flame. You must admit, he's not a bad guy. And a good actor too."

"Don't overdo it."

"She likes you, Lou, don't worry. So, what are you up to? Did you come here to promise us tickets or is there anything else? Did you miss our company?"

"I did."

"You get a star, right? On the walk of fame." Lea said. "I read about it. It was announced two days ago. I so have to be there, no matter if we have school or not."

"Don't tell us." Sara covered her ears. "We don't want to know these things, your parents won't like it when you stay away."

"What about you, son? Are you skipping school too?" Sofia looked at Steve.

"If I do, I don't tell you."

"You are not skipping school for something, you can watch online later."

"Mom, I'm a fan."

"And I'm your mother, telling you, if you want to go to the premiere, you don't skip school. Am I clear?"

"Yes." Steve looked disappointed.

"Sorry Honey, but school is more important. It's not like you don't see Lou. He sits right next to you, that's better than standing in a crowd and look at him from a distance."

"Sara is right." Lou supported her. "You can watch the ceremony online. Same for you, Lea, don't skip school for it. And Monday, after school, you get straight to the Chinese Theater, I'm there for an interview. You can play fan there."

"I like playing your fan."

"Is it an inside or outside interview?" Steve asked.

"Outside. At least when it's not raining."

"Perfect."

"Why?"

"Because outside means a lot of people and then I can send a friend of mine there to play his guitar, he might make some money."

"Are you talking about Felix? He's good. I saw him a couple of days ago on Sunset." Lea said.

"Yes, it's harder to make money when the tourists are gone or just a few are around."

"Why is your friend not at school?"

"Because he's too old for school, Lou. Oh, you know what? He also has a crush on mom."

"He's a man with good taste. Does he also understand your mom loves only Sara?"

"He has no other choice."

"Do you treat him as bad as you treat me, Sara?"

"No, he saved Steve's life a few years ago. I'm grateful for that."

"Seriously? How did he do that?"

"I ran away from the children's home, slept a few nights on the street and during this time, a few older guys thought I'd be perfect to test their new knives. Felix got me out of the situation."

"You returned the favor this summer, when he was a murder suspect and you talked your boss into being his lawyer. He was innocent, but with Mel's help he got out faster."

"We can't have innocent people locked up in jail, right?"

"No and with statements like this, your mother will dream you become a cop one day." Sara smirked and blinked at Sofia.

"He'd look so cute in a uniform."

"I thought become an actor, make millions, have many villas and a girlfriend on every finger." Lou wondered. "You get paid to kiss sexy actresses, travel around the world, everybody loves you, you get all movie tickets for free."

"For that I should take acting classes, I'm not even a part of the school theater. To be honest, and that might not be what my moms want to hear: I like what Jules is doing."

"You want to be a shrink?"

"Therapist, darling, a therapist, not a shrink. Remember, Jules isn't a real doctor; according to her own mother." Sara chuckled. "I think it's a great idea, it helps a lot of people."

"I took psychology this year, if I'm any good, it's something I might like doing. I did ask Jules a lot about her job, it sounds

very interesting, you meet a lot of people, every day is different. And thanks to Tanya and her help, I might be able to offer my service in Spanish too. She does push me to become fluent."

"Mean woman, she wants you to be good and worst part is, you enjoy every second of it." Lea teased. "Which, of course, has nothing to do with the fact, it's Tanya you is your teacher, It's only the language, right?"

"You're only jealous because my personal teacher is sexy. While your tutor is plain boring."

"He is, which doesn't get my thoughts away from the subjects he helps me with. How often do you dream about other things than Spanish when you're with Tanya?"

"It doesn't matter, as long as I dream in Spanish."

"Aren't you over her?" Lou asked.

"So? She's sexy, I had her the whole Friday night on my lap, we shared an armchair, why not dream about a sexy woman?"

"You're right, there are way too many sexy women to be stuck on one and you should appreciate every one of them."

"Is that why you're a single again? Because you appreciate too many women?" Sara asked. She may not been interested in stars, not in the one, who were walking around this planet, but she did hear about Lou's break-up. After only a few weeks.

"Why have steaks and French fries every day when there are so many other things you can taste and eat? There are a few women in my life, who are special. You are one of them, cute little Susan. I won't betray you. Nor you two cute friends Jorja and especially not my godchild Louise. You're my Holy Trinity. Maybe you have to add another to your team, depends on if your mommy will have a baby girl next year or when I'll be a daddy. In a few weeks."

"What do you mean? A daddy in a few weeks?" Sofia sat up. Since when was Lou about to become a father? And who was the mother?

"This is off the records, understand me?" He looked at them. "I'll be a daddy soon. And no, Sara, it's not a one night stand or an affair, it's a surrogate mother. Sofia is the most beautiful one, but she's not the only one. Money can't buy a happy relationship or a family, but it does buy a surrogate mother. I found one and she's pregnant. With twins. I'll be a daddy in a few weeks."

"Really? That's cool. What will you have?"

"I don't know, it doesn't matter. As long as mother and children are fine."

"Your surrogate mother, is she somebody we know?"

"No, a friend from high school. She has nothing to do with the movie business, is a regular woman, single mom. We met at our high school reunion, we talked, I told her I was thinking about getting a surrogate mother because I want kids and obviously my relationship life isn't make for that and she offered, first not serious, she'd be the mother of my kids if I pay for her son's summer vacation trip. He wanted to go with a children group away for two weeks, she didn't have the money. I paid for the trip, sent both of them for a week to Disney Land too and she became the surrogate mom."

"A cheap deal, other people pay more."

"I didn't say that was all she got for it. Her son doesn't have to worry about his college. She wants him to have a better future, that means a good education, he'll get it."

"Maybe some parts of your personality aren't that bad."

"Wow Sara, that was a compliment."

"No, it was a fact. You could have gotten yourself a model, as far as I know, you can pretty much ask for any kind of woman as a surrogate mother, you chose a single mother, you know from high school and gave her son a better future. That's nice. I'm right when I expect, you make sure the expecting mother gets all the medical check-ups she needs?"

"Of course. When she's fine, my babies are fine too. It goes hand in hand."

"True."

"Sofia, do you want to be the godmother of one of them?"

"Sure, I love being the godmother, you get to do all the fun stuff and the rest is left for the parents. Plus it means, I've to come along, visit my godchild regularly and be in your villa. Very nice."

"You're always welcome and even when I'm not there, they'd let you in. You can use the hot spa whenever you feel like it. Take your wife and have a nice evening alone."

"I bet he has a camera there and wants us on video." Sara said.

"Of course and I upload that right away to youporn."

"No, I don't think so, you keep it for yourself, to see my wife naked."

"Right, why share this gorgeous video with others? It will be saved on my laptop so I can see it every night."

Sara formed her fingers to a gun and shot Lou.

"She's a sunshine, you're a lucky woman, Sofia."

"I know. Honey, stay cool, it's not like we'd have sex in his hot spa. Let him have his fantasies, I'm your reality. Nothing will change that."

"You know, I should tell the Captain about his fantasies, I'm sure she can make him pay for it. My mother-in-law is on my side."

"Yes she is. I love you for being this jealous, you're so cute. Especially because I know you're not jealous because you don't trust me, you don't trust him."

"Always happy to make your relationship better." Lou said amused.

"How about I get you a beer?" Steve offered. "To make your evening better too. My moms don't drink anymore, you can have them all for yourself."

"Pretty good idea. Get us a menu from a delivery service too, let me spoil you with nice junk food. Pizza Hut?"

"Cheesy crust?" Lea asked.

"Of course."

"I love this man! He knows what a woman wants. Cheesy crust, extra cheese and some chili on top."

"You can order whatever you want, Darling."

"Cheese sticks and chicken wings." Steve added. "And the chocolate dessert for mom, she loves it."

"I love everything with chocolate." Sofia grinned. It was impossible that anything made of or with chocolate could be bad. And her favorite dream was her wife covered in chocolate.

"Who is Caro?"

"Huh?" Sara looked for a moment irritated at her lover. Then she saw the cup. Right, she had taken Caro's cup with her when she needed an extra boost of coffee and her own was empty.

"Oh."

"Oh? Like 'Oh, I got caught' or 'Oh, I forgot to tell my wife?'. Which one is it?"

"Oh my wife found out I had a coffee with another woman."

"You took her cup home, you didn't cover your tracks very well."

"Because I finished her coffee."

"You drink the coffee of another woman? You must know her pretty good. I don't know a Caro."

"I know her since the night you went home with Ellen and left me and my nightmares alone. Greg took pity of me, took care of me while you fucked your brains out with a woman, who didn't give a shit about you, only wanted to get laid."

"I think we're having our first our first serious fight." Sofia grumbled.

"No, we don't. Caro is the young woman I talked to at the club, the one, who works at the Los Angeles Zoo. We kept in contact, mostly via SMS. Today we met for a coffee at Starbucks, it was the fifth attempt for this, before each of us cancelled twice. She knows about you, she knows about our family and how much I love you."

"Why do I not know about her? Why did you never tell me you're in contact with her?"

"I thought you know."

"How am I supposed to know when you don't tell me?"

"You read my messages, did you never read one of hers?"

"I don't read your messages!"

"No? I thought. You answer my cell phone sometimes."

"That doesn't mean I read your messages, they're private."

"You can read them, I don't have any secrets from you. Anyway, I met Caro at the club three years ago, her and my work isn't much different, it's nice to talk to her."

"Why did you never invite her over?"

"She has her own life, we managed to meet for a coffee maybe once or twice a year for half an hour, an hour tops. It never crossed my mind to invite her over for dinner or so. I can do it, if you want." Sara looked closer at her wife. "You're not really jealous, are you?"

"I might be. There's a woman in your life I've no clue about. Affairs start like this."

"Would I tell an affair how much I love my wife? How much I adore her?"

"If it's part of the role play."

"You're nuts."

"I caught my wife meeting another woman behind my back."

You didn't catch us, you found the cup, I never tried to hide anything. Did I mention you're very cute when you're jealous?"

"Don't try to get your sexy ass out of this!"

"My sexy ass? The ass, who is absolutely your property? Like the rest of my body."

"You can't make me forget I'm mad."

"Of course not, you're too smart to be played." Sara stepped close to Sofia, let her hands slip under the blonde's shirt. "You know when people are playing and messing with you." Daring the brunette let her hands ran over the soft and warm skin of the blonde, pulled her closer and still managed to get her hand on the breast of her lover, pinching the nipple, making her wife moan.

"You're not playing fair."

"Are you complaining?" Sara sucked on the pulse spot of her lover. Oh, what a lovely taste, was a lovely sensation. Her own blood was cooking, hot and wild in her veins. Sofia was so sexy and hot when she pretended to be mad, when she was jealous. Sara felt like ripping off the blonde's clothes and having her right here, right now. Show her that she wanted only one.

"I want answers, you're having secrets and I...ohmygod."

"Talk, talk, talk, answers, questions, answers, questions, women always want to talk. Okay, let's talk. How do you like this?" Sara got on her knees and pushed her head between the legs of her lover, exhaling, biting through the thin fabric, making Sofia moan again.

"I..."

"Not good? So you want a conversation with you sitting at the desk and me standing at the door?" Sara got up and was pushed onto the bed. Before she could get up Sofia was on top of her.

"Don't you dare to get any kind of distance between you and me. You started a fire, you have to live with it. No, you have to continue to heat it until it burns hot and with fierce."

"Didn't you want to talk?"

"I'm sure you can find much better things to do with your mouth. Or your tongue. If not, I can give you a few suggestions what to do."

"Like what?"

"Like you could continue what I started the other night before Susan stepped us."

"Leave out all the fun spots?"

"No, spend a lot of time on them."

"Will you end what you started that night?"

"If you satisfy me."

"If? I'll do more than satisfy you." The blonde lowered her head. She could see Sara's nipples standing up high under the shirt, ready to get all the attention, they wanted so much.

Carefully she sucked on them through the shirt, made the brunette moan.

"Can you do better?" Sara teased.

"Oh, you bet I can." Sofia grinned and her lips crashed on her lover's lips. Could she do better? What a stupid question, she could do more than better.

## Wednesday, December 11th

Lips kissed softly down Sofia's collar bone, warm and wet arms pulled her in, held her while lips continued to kiss her.

"Go on like this and we'll be both late for work."

"Didn't you have enough sex last night?"

"No."

"Not? If I remember correctly I made up for meeting another woman, then you made up for being jealous and in the end we both made up for being stupid. Although I think the last time was only because we were horny again and wanted sex."

"Most likely." The blonde laughed, turned and hugged her wife. Make up sex was phenomenal; especially when they were never mad at each other. "I love you."

"I love you too."

"And I don't mind when you meet people I don't know. Or can't remember."

"Thanks."

"You're supposed to tell me you invite her over so I can meet her."

"I don't do what I'm supposed to do, sue me." Sara grinned and stepped out of the shower.

"Isn't it a marriage rule to do what your wife asks you to do?"

"Nope."

"Damn it." Sofia got up from her shower chair and used the handles on both sides to get out of the shower. They had a special surface so the blond didn't slip with her wet hands. Wrapped in a towel she sat down on another chair.

"We didn't really write much in our wedding contract." Sara handed the body lotion to her lover. "We do have written down financial and children rules. Like you keep the house when we break up, we both keep our money, nobody pays any support for the other. Our kids decide themselves where they want to be, Steve is old enough for that and for Susan it's best to stay with you and your parents. Unless I get my hands on a lot of money to afford a babysitter. No, Susan loves her grandparents too much, she wouldn't like being with a stranger. Your parents are the best for her."

"We are the best for her. Stop talking about us breaking up or I worry about our relationship."

"From my side there's no reason to worry, I love you more than anybody else."

"Good. No secret affair with the zookeeper."

"No." Sara put on her clothes. "My only affair is my wife." The brunette kissed her lover and left the bathroom to look after Susan.

"Should I worry about this? Start to investigate this Caro woman?", Sofia wondered. Sara seriously had been in contact with her for three years and Sofia had no clue about it. If she needed proof to know her wife could hide something from her, she had it now. Nothing that made her happy.

"You look a little bit worried." Greg said when he met Sofia in the break room. They had five more minutes before their shift started.

"What would you say when you find out Jules had been in contact with another man for over three years without mentioning it to you."

"I'd be quiet surprised and a little bit upset. Or more than a little bit. Why?"

"Sara has been in contact with a woman for over three years and never told me. I found about it last night."

"What do you mean? What woman? Sara wouldn't cheat on you. Do you really believe she did something to hurt you?" Greg didn't want to believe the words his friend told her. There had to be a misunderstanding.

"No, she didn't cheat." She really didn't. "It only...confuses me. I never thought she'd have a secret."

"Who is it?"

"A woman she met a few years ago, when you, she and I went out. It was one of my bad evenings, I left the club with Ellen, you stayed with Sara, made sure the nightmares didn't torture her too much. Apparently she talked to a woman that evening, who works at Los Angeles Zoo. A Caro."

"I can't recall her. She can't be special."

"Thanks." The blonde smiled.

"We all have secrets." He pulled her in his arms.

"Do you have contact with a woman Jules doesn't know of? Meet her and don't tell your fiancé?"

"No." He confessed.

"See. Sara could betray me and I had no idea."

"Sofia." Greg sat next to his friend, got his arm around her.

"Sara doesn't cheat on you, she loves you. Okay, she didn't tell you about this woman, she didn't tell you they were in contact,

met sometimes. It wasn't because she didn't want you to know, it was because she didn't think it was important. Like you don't tell her when you talk to a clerk or meet your hairdresser in the shopping mall."

"I know she doesn't cheat on me, it's...it's so strange to know she could without me knowing about it. Not the best advertisement for a CSI. I'm supposed to know who lies, who has a secret."

"You're her wife and not her CSI. Or her cop."

"So?"

"So you trust her because you love her and she loves you. Did you fight?"

"No. We made-up anyway."

"It's the best part of fighting."

"Did you and Jules ever fight?"

"Of course."

"A real fight? It seems impossible you can really fight with her."

"One of us slept on the couch, is that fighting enough?"

"Yes. Really? Wow." Surprised Sofia starred at Greg. She would have never guessed Greg and Jules could fight this bad. They seemed to be so perfectly in love.

"We're an ordinary couple, couples fight. And don't tell each other everything."

"Apparently." The blonde sighed. "Time to get back to work, I've got some evidence to look at. And hope there won't be a new victim today." With every minute passing by she hoped no woman was attacked last night. Nobody reported a rape. Nobody found an abused woman. Or a dead body.

Death was a part of Sara's day. Shortly after she started her shift she and Shane were called to a new blood pool. Large like the last one, skidmarks twenty yards away, leading to the road.

"SUV. Looks like the ones I saw yesterday." She pulled her cell phone out of her pocket, took a photo of the skidmarks.

"We have a poacher problem."

"We do. They're the same."

"How do you know? Did you take a photo of the ones of yesterday?"

"Of course. Somebody killed a deer in our forest I want to know who it is. Skidmarks are good evidence to find the killer,

connect crime scenes. Although we can't be entirely sure it's not human blood."

"Yuck!" Shane jumped back a little bit. "When all of this is human, there's not much human left."

"At least not much blood inside the dead body. No chance to survive this massive blood loss."

"How do we know it's not human?"

"We don't unless you have a test with you?"

"No...we should call the cops."

"Yes." Sara dialed Kyle's number. Don was homicide and it was more likely this was not a homicide. "Hey Kyle, do you have some time on your hands?"

"I'm at work, what do you think?"

"I think you might want to catch some fresh air. Angeles National Forest."

"Don't tell me you have a body there."

"I've got a lot of blood. Like yesterday. Not human. At least not yesterday."

"Angeles National Forest is not my jurisdiction unless you suspect the killer is from here. We do cooperate, especially around this time of the year. Let me give Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department a call, it's their job to come over. I might step on some toes when I do without them being okay. I know there's a special deal with Don, he can do more, but this is more likely a poacher case...what do you need?"

"An officer and somebody to tell us it's not human blood."

"I see that you get an officer with lab experience. Although, you could do the lab stuff when you have the right equipment."

"No, I can't. Not if you want to have a solid case."

"True. Let me get some help for you, okay?"

"Yes. Thanks."

"You're welcome." Sara turned back to Shane. "We get a cop send here. A cop, who can tell us if this blood is human or not."

"It was deer blood you found yesterday, right?"

"Yes. Poachers like them, they can sell the meat and the antlers. Nice extra money."

"Somebody should put their head on a wall."

"I saw this before, believe me, it's nothing you want."

"You saw a human head on a wall? Like a antler?"

"Yes. In Vegas. These people believed aliens took over the human body, in order to properly kill them, they had to cut off the head and put them on the wall."

"Sick. CSI is not a job for me. The stuff we see here is more than enough. Dead bodies with cut off fingers, blood pools, hideouts for killers. Horrible."

"It was not our best year." Sara went to Shane, took her arm around him. "We were all aware of the fact this can happen."

"Yes, I had police investigation a few times here, I saw crime scenes, never a dead body. Or this much blood. The last time we had poachers in here, they left a body. Why take the whole animal? Just for the meat?"

"I don't know. Make it more difficult. With us having only the blood we need somebody to confirm what kind of animal was killed. Or if it was a human."

"I don't want to think about this possibility."

"We're like ten miles away from the scene of yesterday. It's the same person. Or persons. There were traces of at least two people."

"Maybe next year I apply for a job that requires me to stay inside. Visitor center. Office."

"You'll miss the outside after a few days or weeks."

"Not the crime."

The brunette sighed. A part of her understood him perfectly. She left Las Vegas to start a new life, to get away from crime and still crime was getting back at her. Somehow her past always showed up in the present.

"Lieutenant, your rape victim is awake." Doctor Bendler herself called Sofia.

"Can I talk to her?"

"Otherwise I wouldn't call. You get five minutes. No second more. Understood?"

"Of course, doctor. And it's CSI."

"The CSI is what you're now, the Lieutenant is what you'll always be. You can't change your destiny by changing jobs. Once a cop, always a cop. I arrange you can see the young woman. We still need a name."

"We don't have one, nobody reported her missing."

"Then you better work out yourself who she is. Goodbye Lieutenant."

"Goodbye doctor." Sofia got up from her desk, took her kit and drove to Hollywood Palms. When the victim was alive and she could talk to her, why didn't she tell the doctor what her name

was? Couldn't she remember? If so, was she able to recall what happened to her yesterday?

With not high expectations she went to see a nurse, who took her to the room of her victim. Connected to tubes and covered in bandages, the woman lay in bed, still, like she was asleep. Her eyes were open and fixed on a spot on the ceiling.

"Miss? I'm CSI Curtis." No reaction.

"Miss?" Sofia stepped closer and got the attention of the young woman.

"Hey, your doctor called me, told me you're awake. She didn't get your name, can you tell it to me?"

"I...I don't know..."

"You can't remember your name?"

"I'm...I'm not crazy...am I?"

"No."

"Why can't I remember my name? I must have one. Everybody has a name."

"That's right. You were assaulted. Can you remember anything of it?"

"No. Who did this to me?"

"We're about to figure this out. What do you recall of Monday night? Why were you around Hollywood Boulevard?"

"I have no idea. Maybe I live there. Work there? Do I have a job?"

Great, this woman had more questions about herself than Sofia did. This wasn't a conversation, that helped the blonde to find out, who their victim was or who attacked her. "What can you tell me about yourself?"

"I'm...I have no idea...why...do I have money? I need to pay for the treatment and..."

The door was opened and doctor Bendler came inside. "Good morning, I'm your physician, doctor Bendler. How do you feel?"

"Awful."

"You're a tough cookie, I'm sure you'll recover. Now, CSI Curtis and I wonder about your name."

"Why can't I remember? Am I crazy?"

"No, you suffer from temporary memory loss. With the head injuries you have it's a common side effect. In a few days you should be able to recall all these details again."

"I'm not crazy?"

"No, you're not."

"Doctor, can you tell us anything that helps identifying her?"

"You're likely a waitress. At least you have some injuries, that are common among waitresses."

"I could have been on my way to work...or home?"

"I'd say home. You were attacked around three in the morning." Sofia wrote down the new information. She had to check for restaurants and diners in the area. Of course, the woman could work somewhere else, took the bus and left there because she lived nearby. "I need to take a photo of you, so we can ask people if they know you."

"I look awful, I'm...how do I look? I never saw a picture but all these bandages."

"Let me take a picture for you." Sofia took a photo with her cell phone and showed it to the woman. Immediately she started crying. No surprise and understandable. It was a shock, Sofia had no idea how the woman looked before, she might not remember this herself but she saw, she was severely injured and not in a good condition.

"Ohmygod. What did he do to me? Did he also...?"

"Yes."

"Ohmygod." The young woman started shaking.

"I think it's best you come back tomorrow, Mrs. Curtis. This lady needs to rest."

"Okay." No point in arguing. The victim had no memory and was no help at the moment. Together with doctor Bendler Sofia left the room. "When she gets her memory back, will you let me know?"

"Of course. Do you think you'll be able to get more information about her?"

"With the waitress angle I've got something new to work on. I pass the photo on to some officers, let them show it to various restaurants and diners."

"What about the rapist?"

"So far I have no information about a new case."

"Which doesn't mean he didn't rape a woman last night. He could have killed the woman and disposed the body."

"I know."

"You need more sleep, Sofia." Doctor Bendler stopped and put one hand on the blonde's shoulder.

"I did sleep."

"Not as good as you should, I can see it in your eyes. Is everything okay?"

"Family...not problems...being married has not only perfect sides."

"No, there's dark and light, you need a lot of work to keep a marriage running, it doesn't run smooth all the time, there're bumps and sometimes even a dead end. As long as you drive together, it doesn't matter how the road looks, you get to your destination and that's what's important."

"Wow, that could have been coming out of the mouth of your daughter."

"I know. She is a smart woman."

"Of course, she is your daughter."

"That she is. Good luck Sofia, with your job. You don't need luck with your marriage, you found the perfect partner for the trip."

"Thanks." Of course Sara was her perfect partner, they only took a dead end road and had to turn. Was it a dead end? After all, nothing happened and they had a wonderful evening.

"Do you have a minute?" Sara sat in the car, the cell phone in her hands and waited for her wife to respond.

"Yes, I can take my lunch break. How are you?"

"We're having poachers in the forest. There was another blood pool today. Not human."

"Not good news."

"No. What about your case?"

"I didn't get another call, he might have not attacked somebody last night. The last victim is still without a name, she can't remember anything. I saw her earlier."

"Shit."

"Yes, could be easier. At least her life isn't at risk anymore."

"Good. Do you have an idea when you come home?"

"No. Why?" Sofia hated herself for the tiny little bit of suspicious in her voice. Sara didn't ask because she planned something, she asked because she missed her. What the hell was wrong with her?

"I can leave around three. When you know what time you come home, I prepare dinner, make Steve stay so we can have a nice family dinner together."

"Sounds good."

"Any dinner wishes?"

"No."

"All right, then I ask our son what he wants. How about mouse au chocolate as dessert?"

Did Sara feel guilty? Did she offer Sofia's favorite dessert to make up for something? Was it her way to apologize for...did she really think these things? Sofia felt like smacking herself. Sara offered to make Sofia's favorite dessert because she loved her. How stupid did anybody have to be to come up with only suspicious thoughts? She should be ashamed of herself.

"Nothing says 'I love you' more than mouse au chocolate."

"What about chocolate spread? Chocolate bars? Chocolate ice cream?"

"All right, all right, nothing says 'I love you' better than chocolate in any form and shape. A reason why we have to save our planet, it's the only place with chocolate."

"I make sure to pack a huge bag in case we ever have to leave this planet."

"Where are we supposed to go?"

"As long as I'm with you I don't care where we go to."

Could this be the words of a woman with a guilty conscience? Or were these the thoughts of a crazy woman? A crazy jealous woman.

"I like where we are, let's not move planets. Steve likes his high school, we're happy in our jobs, a new planet means a change for all of us. And at one point the big bag of chocolate is empty."

"Right. Do we need anything? Shall I go shopping on my way back?"

"I think we have everything."

"Okay. And Honey?"

"Yes?"

"When we had dinner, Steve is busy with his computer and Susan in bed, we'll have another conversation."

"About?"

"You worrying why I didn't tell you about Caro. Me forgetting to mention her to you. You realizing there are things in my life you have no idea of. Me realizing small details are important in a relationship too."

Sofia swallowed. Sara knew. Somehow everybody seemed to see there was something wrong with her. Was it this obvious?

"I'm stupid."

"No, you're not stupid, I didn't marry a stupid woman. You're the woman I love, my everything. We talk and sort things out. How does this sound to you?"

"Perfect. I love you."

"I love you more. And now go back to work and catch some bad guys while I chase poachers."

"Kick their asses."

"First I kick their balls, that hurts more."

Sofia grinned. This was her wife, her Sara. Gosh, she loved this woman. More than words could say.

Sara picked Susan up on her way home. Not from her parents-in-law, from daycare. Today her daughter went with Eric, Jorja and Louise to daycare and from what Sara saw when she watched her daughter for a few minutes, she liked it. Louise and her were in a competition who could pull herself up most often and made a step. Which didn't work out for either one of them unless they had help from nursery care teacher. Sara still liked Marie and Marc most as babysitter for her daughter, but there was joy she saw in the eyes of her daughter, when she was with other kids.

"You're going to be such a sociable girl." She kissed her daughter. "Like your daddy. It's good you're not like me, keep more to yourself. It makes life easier when you're somebody, who can connect with strangers. Just make sure you don't trust everybody. The world can be bad, my Love."

"Ma!" Susan said.

"Ma? Can you say mama? Susan, say mama."

"Mama. Mama." Susan cheered.

"You're such a smart girl." Her daughter said mama. "Can you also say daddy? Dad?"

"Da!"

"Daddy."

"Dada."

"Well, that's near enough. Say grandma."

"Ma. Mama."

"Okay, I'm sure Marie will be happy with this too." She opened the door to the garden, stepped outside with her daughter. The sun was shining, it wasn't very warm, but warm enough to enjoy the sunshine for a few minutes. The dogs greeted them when she stepped into the garden. "Hey guys, how are you? How about we have a cookie and a coffee and then go all for a

walk?" The dogs didn't care about the coffee, the cookie and walk things were the things they were after. And some time with their pack.

With a photo of the latest victim Sofia walked along Sunset Boulevard. Famous Sunset Boulevard, twenty-two miles of history, broken dreams, dreams, that came true, love, life and death. From Figueroa Road to the Pacific Coast Highway, passing Echo Park, Silver Lake, Hollywood, Beverly Hills and other parts of the city.

The blonde had no idea how many restaurants and diners were on Sunset, not even how many were in the area she was walking around, her feet felt like there were at least five dozen on one mile. So far none of the people she talked to had seen the victim.

"Good afternoon, my name is CSI Curtis, I'm looking for this woman." A small twenty-four hour shop was her next destination. A woman in her late fifties was behind the counter. She looked at photo and slapped her hand in front of her mouth.

"Oh my god! That's Anna. What happened to her?"

"She works here?"

"Yes, I was wondering where she is, she didn't come in last night, she is always very reliable. I couldn't reach her, worried and was about to call the police in case she doesn't show up today."

"Did she work here Monday night?"

"Yes, until two in the morning. What did happen?"

"She was attacked a few blocks away. What is her full name?"

"Anna Koslovski. She's twenty-one. I...I can give you her address when you need it."

"Yes, we do need everything you've got. Do you know if she has family around?"

"No, she's from Delaware, came here for university. I don't have their telephone numbers. She does have a boyfriend."

"You don't happen to have his name and address?"

"His name is Murphy, I don't know more. Sorry."

"That's okay."

"Let me get you her address. One minute, please."

"Thanks." Sofia took a deep breath. With the new information she could call Lynn and have her join her at the apartment of Anna. There should be more information, contact details or the

name of the boyfriend. Not the first time a boyfriend was the perpetrator. It wasn't likely unless he also attacked the woman Sunday night. Maybe he did. Mistook her for his girlfriend.

"Here you are." The woman gave Sofia a sheet of paper.

"Thank you very much. Is this your business, Mrs....?"

"Doe. Melinda Doe. Yes, it's my business, a family business in third generation. My grandfather opened it back in the days, when Sunset wasn't much more than a dirt road."

"A long time ago."

"In 1931 they paved the road from Horn Avenue to Havenhurst Avenue. Sorry, you're not here for Sunset Boulevard history. How can I help you and Anna?"

"I need you to be available for further questions."

"Sure, I write down my phone number. You can also reach me here, I live above the shop, so I'm around almost twenty-four/seven. Please get whoever did this to Anna. She will be fine, will she?"

"All I know is she'll survive. I talked to her today, she can't remember anything, not even her name. It should be temporally, in a few days or weeks she should be able to remember everything."

"Tell her, when she's fine again, she can continue to work here. Her job won't be gone."

"That's very kind of you, Mrs. Doe."

"Not only the shop and the Boulevard are old-fashioned, my husband and I are the same. We're from a time when you didn't send your employ home or took away her job because she was ill. A good work relationship is like a marriage, it works both ways and you don't end it when there are some troubles. You stick together in good and bad times. Unfortunately people seemed to forgotten about this; in all areas. Nowadays people throw things away that are broken instead of fixing them."

"Yes, I'm afraid you're right." Sofia took the sheet of paper and left. Time to call Lynn and see, what they could find out.

An hour later she and Lynn stood in the apartment of Anna Koslovski. A one bedroom apartment, a small kitchenette, tiny bathroom without a window, in the north east part of Mid-Wilshire.

"The house is a dump, the apartment is nice. Like you step into another world. When we walked up the stairs, we stepped on I

don't know how many tiny insects, I was sure it'd look the same in here."

"She made this little security wall to keep insects out." Sofia kneed next to the door. A thin plastic barrier kept air and insects out, even on the lock was tape so nothing could get in.

"Fly screens on the windows. She did everything to make this place a clean and nice place."

"Does. She'll survive, it's still her place. There is her BF on the photo, looks nice." A man in his twenties, a few inches taller than she was, big smile, kind eyes. "Her BF is not the rapist. At least not of the first victim. His skin is too dark, no neurodermatitis."

"Good. She'll need somebody to comfort her, with her family far away, he's probably the only one she has in Los Angeles. And I hope he's not an asshole and lets her fall because she was raped."

"That would be hard for her, but you're right, some men do react like this. We have to get him to the department and tell him what happened." Sofia said. "Plus he will worry about her. Did he not file a missing people report?"

"No." Lynn shook her head.

"Oh." Maybe he didn't miss her. Maybe they gave him too much credit. Nobody was perfect.

"I found his phone number." Lynn read in a little notebook next to the telephone. "At least it should be his, she drew a heart around it." She pulled out her cell phone, dialed the number and turned on the speaker. After a few seconds somebody picked up.

"Yes?"

"Is this Peter Young?"

"Yes."

"LAPD, do you know Anna Koslovski?"

"Anna? What happened to her? Is she okay?"

"How is your relationship?"

"I'm her boyfriend, for Christ's sake. What happened?"

"Your girlfriend is in hospital. Where are you?"

"Hospital? Why?"

"Where are you?"

"Salt Lake City, I have a conference here this week...I have to get back. Where is Anna? I want to call her."

"Hollywood Palms. Her life isn't at risk." Anymore.

"I don't care, she needs me. I come back to Los Angeles right away!"

"Let us know when you arrive, we want to talk to you."

"After I saw Anna you can talk to me as long as you want."

"One more thing, Mister Young. Who can confirm you were in Salt Lake City the whole week?"

"Call my company, I work for the L.A. Bank in Downtown L.A.. We're five of our company, you can call anybody to confirm what I told you."

"Okay, I will do that. Is there somebody else we have to inform about Miss Koslovski's health?"

"Her parents."

"Anybody in Los Angeles?"

"No, she doesn't have...no wait, her boss. Mrs. Doe. She needs to know before she believes Anna quit or is lazy. Anna loves her job."

"Mrs. Joe is informed, we'll also contact the parents. Thanks for your cooperation, Mister Young."

"Thanks for telling me what happened, I worried when she didn't pick up her phone, we had no fight and I...I should have come back to L.A. when she didn't answered any of my calls. It's my fault."

"No, it's not. Get here, make sure you arrive safely, please."

"Yes."

Lynn ended the call. "What do you think?"

"He sounded shocked, check the alibi anyway. We never found her cell phone, so we can't check if the rapist took it."

"He took the wallet, a cell phone is something, you can make some money with too."

"It is. No answering machine. "

"There are men's boxers in the drawer, also shirts. I don't think he lives here too, only stores a few clothes for change when he stays over. They must be together for a while." Lynn checked a few more drawers.

"He'll feel guilty for not protecting her, although there was nothing he could have done."

"I hope he sticks to her after he finds out she was raped. Does not leave. Or make her feel like it was her fault. Tell her she dressed too sexy, asked for it."

"Some men are idiots." Sofia felt how she got mad. When she heard about stories like this she felt like bashing some sense in the heads of the men. No woman asked to be raped. No matter

what she said, did or wore. It only happened because the men wanted it, not the other way around.

"Mom! You've got a visitor." Steve yelled up the stairs.

"I'm coming." Sara answered. Why did her son not just send the visitor upstairs? Or was it somebody, who wanted to sell her something? In this case Steve was allowed to close the door and ignore the person.

"He's lucky we don't have a "don't yell" rule in the house." Don said. "Or I'd arrest him."

"You are off duty, get a beer and relax. Look at your daughter, take her out, the sun is nice warm, she can crawl in the garden. She's downstairs waiting for you."

"Playing with my daughter, the favorite past time for every father. Who knows, next year there might be my son around too. A Don Junior."

"Or another daughter."

"Mom! Come on, he came all the way from Frisco and I have to go. Susan is awake."

Sara stopped and swallowed. Her eyes met Don's. A visitor from San Francisco? He came all the way? She knew only one man, who lived in San Francisco and she didn't want him in her life or around her family. She could see Don thought the same, he was at the stairs before she was and ran down to the living room.

"Okay you son of a bitch, what part of "stay the fuck away and out of her life" did you not understand?" He had his gun in his hands when he stormed into the living room. "I think she made it more than obvious you are not welcome. Maybe you don't understand words, maybe I have to talk to you in a different way."

"Wow, easy."

Don released the safety catch. "Say again."

"Doug?" Sara starred in disbelief at the man in the living room. That wasn't Sam, that wasn't her brother.

"Sara...hi..."

"What are you doing here?"

"Well, my plan was to visit you, I might change it to, I try to survive Los Angeles. It seems to be more dangerous to be here than I thought."

"Don, it's not my brother." She put her hand on Don's gun. "Put the gun away."

"Who is he? Steve said he's from San Francisco."

"We worked together, yes. He's not one of the bad guys. Not all of San Francisco was bad."

"Okay."

"I'm sorry Doug, we're a little bit edgy when we hear somebody from San Francisco is here."

"Let me guess: your scumbag brother showed up?"

"Yes. And he had problems to understand he's supposed to stay away."

"I always knew he should rot in hell or a cell, brainless wanker."

Sara smiled. "You got that right."

"Now that we have established you're one of the good guys and hate Sam just as much as we do, how about a beer?" Don offered. "Especially after you called Sara's brother a scumbag."

"I'd much rather have a beer in my hand than a bullet to the brain. Thanks."

"Sorry for the gun, man. I thought you are Sam or were sent by him."

"It's good to see Sara has all the protection she needs."

"She does. Look, here's somebody else to protect you." Don picked Susan up, who came crawling up to them. She had been asleep on a blanket. "Hey Susi, how was your nap? Are you up for some playtime in the garden? Why don't you go to your mummy and I get some beer. Shall I get you a cookie? I bet you'd like that." He handed Susan over to Sara. "You take the baby, I take the beers."

"Okay." Sara kissed her daughter. "Hey Sunshine, you look sleepy."

"She's adorable and looks exactly like her mother." Doug said amazed. It was more than obvious he was very surprised. "I never picked you as the mother type, but she suits you."

"Thanks."

"I hope she doesn't have the temper of her parents. I know her mom can get very emotional and mad, from what I experienced the last five minutes, her dad isn't any different."

"Her daddy is only protective." Sara put a thick jumper on Susan, opened the door to the garden and stepped outside. With a smile she set Susan down in the fenced playground, Steve built for her. A thick blanket on the ground, surrounded by a colorful plastic fence. There were toys inside and enough things to grab so Susan could continue with her favorite new

thing to do: pulling herself up. She started that four days ago and usually she ended up on her butt whenever she stood for a second, but she kept trying to stand longer every time.

"As any good man should be." He shook his head. "Sara Sidle is a married woman and a mother. This is much not like San Francisco."

"No, it's twenty years later and another city. Fortunately my life has changed. A lot."

"It has changed to good, I can see. How old is she?"

"Nine months."

"Oh, you might start walking soon. Running away or towards mommy. Don't try to hide, she's a CSI, she'll find you."

"I'm not a CSI anymore. I'm a ranger in Angeles National Forest. So I can still find her, I read her trace."

"Not a CSI anymore? Wow, you've changed a lot."

"And how do you fit into the story of her life, Doug?" Don gave him a beer and sat down.

"We're old friends. I'm not a threat to you."

"Why would you?"

"Some men might get nervous when a man from his wife's past appears."

"My wife's past? Since when are we married, Sara? I can remember your wedding, I can't remember mine and I certainly can't remember we married each other."

"You're not...I thought...your daughter..."

"My life has never been the way it looked, Doug, you should know that." Sara laughed and took a sip of her beer. "Don is Susan's father, I'm her mother. So far the DNA story. Now it's getting different from other stories: I wasn't pregnant with her. We are not married, were never a couple."

"But you are married." He pointed to the ring on her finger.

"I am and I'm a very happy married woman. And Susan is a child of love, the love between Don, me and my wife."

"Your wife?" He almost dropped his beer. "You're kidding me."

"No, I'm serious. I'm married to a woman. Another difference from San Francisco. Sofia was pregnant with Susan, which makes her her mother too. Don is our friend, the best man to be the father of our daughter. He has no legal rights or responsibilities, but he's her father. And she is a daddy girl."

"Wow. And the boy, who let me in...he called you mom too."

"Stephen? Yes, he's also Sofia's and my son. We adopted him."

"No responsibilities for me neither." Don said. "Beside the fact we're all a big happy family and he's the brother of my daughter, the only one who is allowed to fight me for being her hero."

"I see. Gosh Sara, that's...really a surprise."

"Now that you know almost everything about me, what about you? How did you know where to find me? What are you doing in Los Angeles?"

"I worked a case in Las Vegas a few weeks ago and one of your old colleagues mentioned you are in Los Angeles now. Then I got sent here, NTSB investigated a case, and I thought I see if we can catch up over a beer. By all the things that happened in your life, one beer won't do it. Just this little Sara is worth talking about for hours. She really looks like you, through and through. Sorry man, but I can't see a single piece of you in her. She's all Sara."

"I know, we decided after she looks like Sara, she'll have my personality and become a cop."

"The cop thing is something Susan has to decide not you. Not Sofia. And not the Captain. If our daughter wants to be an actress because it seems like half of all girls in Los Angeles want to be actresses, she becomes an actress. Like it or not."

"Don't fight with her, she wins anyway." Doug smirked.

"What kind of case did you work in Vegas?" Sara got the topic away from her and back to Doug and how he found her. "Who did you meet there?"

"A plane crashed not too far away from the Strip, we came there to investigate how that could happen. We found out, together with your colleagues, it was sabotaged. When I mentioned I'm from San Francisco and I worked there with you, Nick told me you're here now. He did not mention the married or child part."

"Good, my private life doesn't have to be displayed to anybody."

"I'm not anybody."

"To him you are, unless you told him our story, which I doubt. Are you in L.A. because of the plane, that crashed into the ocean two days ago?"

"Yes. The pilots are alive, they're highly trained and they said, they lost control over the plane. Out of the blue it didn't react to anything and just went straight down. They saved themselves with their parachutes."

"Somebody hacked into their system?"

"Possible."

"Interesting case. It will keep you a few days in Los Angeles."

"Probably. We could have dinner together."

"Did you guys date back then?" Don asked skeptical. He wasn't the jealous husband, but the friend of the jealous wife and when somebody tried to hit on Sofia's wife while the blonde wasn't around, he had to fight for her.

"Yes."

"And you heard and understood the part of Sara being married, right?"

"I did. I said, we can have dinner together, not run away to another state. Your wife is also welcome, I'd love to meet the woman, who made you change so much. I barely recognize you, Sara. And I don't mean this in a bad way, all changes you made seems to agree with you. You're looking even more gorgeous than you did back then."

"Sara, this guy is way too happy to see you."

"Is he always this protective? Not only when it comes to you but also to your wedding?"

"Of course he is, he's our friend. If you want dinner with me, it will be here with my family. By the way, I've got a mother-in-law living close by, who has a very nervous trigger finger when it comes to our marriage. You better make sure she sees no threat in you or you might end up dead."

"Sounds like the greeting I got today."

"Believe me, compared to the Captain I'm harmless. She had shot first and ask who you are and what you want."

"Nice."

"We're a nice family, yes. Are you sure you want dinner with me?"

"I'd die for it."

"That's something that can be arranged." Sara grinned. And in a house with a CSI and a detective, they'd get away with murder. Nobody would ever find Doug's body, the ranger knew the best hideouts in Angeles National Forest. She only hoped Sofia was fine with the dinner idea. After Caro's coffee cup, this might be too much for her jealous wife. One thing was for sure, Sara had to tell Sofia right away tonight about Doug, the dinner and how their relationship was. No more details keeping away details of meeting with other people from her wife. It only got them into trouble. Or made Sofia sad, which was very bad too.

\*\*\*

"I heard you had a visitor today. A good looking one." Sofia watched her lover, who fed Susan. First she found a cup with the name of another on it, a woman, Sara had been in contact with for over three years and never told the blonde about it. Now there was a secret man, who appeared in their life.

"Yes."

"From San Francisco."

"Yes."

"Don pulled a gun on him."

"Yes."

"He works in Los Angeles now."

"Yes."

"All right, what do I have to do to get more than one word as an answer? Or is this guy your secret? Too."

"No."

Sofia took a deep breath, walked over to her wife, pulled her up by her collar, pushed her to the wall and kissed her hard. "You stop answering in one word sentences, do you understand me?"

"Of course." Sara smirked. There was a two words sentence.

"Sara!"

"What? Are you going to slap me? Restrain me? Because I don't give you what you want." The voice of the brunette was full of mock. If it hadn't been Sofia, this situation could have felt like a threat, but it was her wife, Sara knew, she didn't have to fear a thing. Sofia would rather cut off her own hand than hurt the women she loved.

"No, like I won't make you sleep on the couch or not talk to you for a day. Worse. I will make you suffer by torturing you in a way, only I can because I know all your sensitive spots. I will tie you to our bed and make you come this close to the edge and then leave you there, unfinished, until the morning."

"You surely know how to threaten people, so much like your mother." Sara kissed Sofia. "I love you."

"I love you more when you give me a few answers in whole sentences. Otherwise I get jealous. Mister Universe was here today. I saw a photo of him. Which is more than I got from the woman, whose cup I found."

"Doug isn't Mister Universe. Yes we dated, yes we have a history together and no, I have no intentions on taking our past into the present or future. I told him I'm a happily married

woman. Married to you. Mister Chatterbox should have told you this tiny little detail too."

"What did he say?"

"He was surprised."

"Okay. What else?"

"He wants to have dinner with me, corrected himself and invited you too. I told him, the only way he'll have dinner with me is when he comes over and has dinner with you, the kids and the rest of the family, who might want to see or threaten him."

"Tell me, how does a Mister Universe and Grissom fit together? You have a wide taste in men. They're not very alike, from what I know."

"Did you check on Doug?"

"I'm a CSI, I can't check on people anymore."

"Liar. And guess what, I not only dated two different kind of men, I also married a woman. How does that fit into my curriculum vitae?"

"I'd say it's the best part of it." The blonde smiled. "I love you."

"I love you too." Sara kissed her lover again. "Now I will continue to feed our daughter, she's hungry."

"Tell me about Doug."

"You know all about him, probably more than I do, you have the computer at the lab."

"I'm not talking about official stuff."

"You'll meet him, then you can ask him all the questions you have."

"Why did you agree on dinner?"

"Why not? There's no bad blood between him and me. Only a few memories and most of them are good."

"How long were you together?"

"Two years."

"Wow, that's...you have more than a few things in common."

"We had."

"Any funny stories to share?"

"Nope."

"Oh come."

"There aren't. I can't even tell you a funny story about Grissom and me. We had good moments, but not really funny moments. I guess in the area we worked, there are not many funny moments. Besides, Grissom was never a man, you went out with to do crazy things."

"And Doug wasn't neither?"

"Doug...we had fun when we went out, we had our bars, we had our friends, did what you do when you go out with friends. Nothing special. It was all good and normal and, no matter how horrible 'normal' sounds to some people, I like normal. Especially at that time. Normal means, nothing bad happens, you can live your life, have fun, some small dramas, nothing more. We two have been through a lot together, a lot of good moments, a lot of bad moments. Our last weeks together were quiet, ordinary, laid back, I really enjoyed that. It's not like our wedding wasn't good, it was awesome, I loved every second of it, but I like this too. Going to work every day, come home to my family, talk with you about your day. You had no cases, that haunt you, nothing that was too personal, you could relax after work. That's what I want. I want us to like any other family."

"You are right, some people would call that boring. I'm glad you like because I like it too."

"Lets stay boring for a while, shall we?"

"How does the new baby fit in it? Or do you want to put this on delay?"

"No, we won't lay this aside or you'll be too old."

Sofia's eyes became narrow. "Too old? Honey, you're not making yourself very popular."

"The truth is mean sometimes. You're over forty, your best years are over."

"I married you this year, my best years are just about to come. You know, like the old Frank Sinatra song: the best is yet to come."

"Another great song for a wedding. The best is yet to come and babe won't it be fine. You, my dear." Sara gave Susan her last spoon of her dinner, cleaned the mouth of her daughter and gave her a kiss. "Are ready for bed now and you, my other dear, are ready to meet me in bed for an evening with a movie. I want some quiet cuddle time with you and you better don't have other plans because I want to be with you and don't want to share you with anybody else."

"I don't, I like your plan." Sofia answered. Plans, that included Sara and her alone, were always her favorite plans. Okay, she might have some additional ideas about the evening, the night, nothing she couldn't squeeze into a movie night in bed. Actually, her plans fit perfectly to the bed.

\*\*\*

With Sara in her arms, Julia Roberts and Richard Gere on screen, popcorn and a beer the evening was the perfect movie night. In their own bedroom, in their bed.

"I love them together, they have a chemistry. And he's the only man, who looks sexy with gray hair." Sofia said, digging her hand deep into the popcorn.

"Gray hair can be very sexy."

"Right, I forgot, you were engaged to a man with gray hair. After you dated Mister Universe. Was he a football player? Or does he just work out a lot?"

"He did when we were together, I have no idea if he still does. Why?"

"Like I said, Mister Universe."

"How comes you're jealous about everybody? Do I go nuts when you meet an ex?"

"No, which worries me."

"Because I don't care for you?"

"Exactly!"

"Or I trust you and have no reason to be jealous."

"Or this." Sofia grumbled and got more popcorn. Sara won this round.

"You're really cute when you're jealous. Which reminds me, I sent Caro a text, invited her over for a beer next week. She brings her boyfriend."

"Boyfriend?"

"Yes, boyfriend."

"Didn't you say you met her in the club where Ellen took us?"

"I did and guess what, not all women there were lesbians. Some came because of the music. And some women can be interested in men and women. We both dated men until a few years ago, other people can do the same."

"Right. A boyfriend. She didn't have the boyfriend back then, did she?"

"No, they're together for almost two years."

"Is Doug taken too?"

"I have no idea, I didn't ask."

"You know, I was quite stupid a couple of times today."

"You thought I can cheat on you because you had no idea about Caro. You wondered what else I do and you have no idea of. Honey, you know me, when I try to hide something, like when I feel bad or worry about something, you know it, you see it. It

would be the same when I try to keep a secret from you. You'd know because I'd act different. I didn't act different the last three years because I had no secret, these conversations with Caro just weren't that important to me. If you didn't worry, I would have never asked her over."

"Are you annoyed with your stupid wife?"

"No, I love her and I'm sure I'd react the same way. Rational thinking is switched off when it comes to you."

"Ditto." Sofia kissed her lover. "Will I like Doug?"

"He thinks Sam is a brainless wanker."

"Yes, I will like him! He has a great taste in women and knows people pretty good. Would he give Sam a hard time when they met?"

"He'd punch the crap out of him and I'm not sure if there'd be something for a ME to examine."

"Oh, Mister Universe starts to sound more and more interesting. I might even like him."

"You never know. He likes beer and sports, is smart and has humor..."

"Stop it right there or I'll be jealous again."

"Sorry." Sara laughed and kissed Sofia's hair. "Our daughter was very happy at daycare today. I watched her for a few minutes before I picked her up, she likes other kids around her. Must be her father's DNA. Oh, and she and Louise were in a competition: who can pull herself up fastest and make the first step alone. Both failed."

"Maybe she makes her first step on Christmas, walks towards her presents."

"More the Christmas tree and all its shiny lights and decoration. We have to keep an eye on her when she's around the tree or she could hurt herself." When Susan tried to pull herself up the tree was likely to fall onto her.

"True."

"She said mama and dada."

"Wonderful words, aren't they?"

"Yes. She looks at us and says mama with a smile on her face. My heart does somersaults when she says it."

"The pride of a mother. In two years there could be two children calling us mama."

"There are already two kids calling us mama. Don't forget our son."

"He calls us mom. Both of us and I'm amazed we always know whom he means." And how good it felt to have Steve call them mom and not by their first names.

"We're smart mothers." Sofia snuggled into Sara's arms and closed her eyes. Wouldn't a family evening in bed and movies be a good idea? With their kids...of course they'd both be delighted! Especially Steve. Maybe not the bed, the couch would be better.

## Thursday, December 12th

Somehow Sofia had known this would happen. It wasn't a big surprise and yet, she hoped somehow she could avoid this. Hoped, there had been something for her to do, to save them all this. She didn't do it, she failed and because she failed Juana and she were called to a new crime scene. Again a rape, again off Hollywood Boulevard. The difference this time was, the victim was dead.

"He didn't even bother to hide her body in a dumpster, he left her on the sideboard." Sofia guessed the age of the woman of early twenties, she was around five foot two, slim, brunette and was dressed in what was left of her top and skirt. No underwear, no coat. There were various wounds all over her body, various cuts, different sizes. Some were shallow, two were deep and at least one of them was the cause of death.

"The wound on her throat looks like probable COD." Cherry knelt next to the body.

"What about the one on her wrist?"

"It's deep, like he wanted us to believe, she committed suicide. I wonder why he cut her there. I doubt it's the COD, but I can tell you for sure after the examination."

"No wallet, no ID, he takes them all with him, his souvenirs. These are the women I had. I wonder if he intended to kill the first victim too. Or if it was an accident with the second and he liked the power. He plays God, he decides who lives and who dies. And when. First he takes their dignity, then he takes their life."

"He's the man."

"Or he doesn't get it up without killing them. Or not at all and this is what his rage makes. After all, it's their fault when he can't get it up."

"It's never his fault."

"TOD?"

"At the moment I put it between three and five this morning, A waitress? A clerk? I doubt she just took a walk around that time of the night."

"I'll send a few officers with her photo to canvass the area. The last vic worked in a shop two miles down Sunset. If she worked around the same area, we have an idea where he finds his victims. Although, victim number one came from a different direction. Maybe he picks a place at night, waits and strikes."

The street light was off, shattered glass is on the sidewalk and the street."

"It's part of his M.O., darken the area and get the woman. I wonder how many people passed by without knowing what he had in mind. Couples, men. Or women, who didn't look the way he wants his victims." Sofia took a look around. "There are garbage bags, a gap between two buildings, the perfect area for him to rape her." The blonde watched Juana, who was exactly in this area, looking for evidence.

"Do you have any idea how we can get a list of white men, who suffer from neurodermatitis and diabetes?"

"You can't access all doctor files without a warrant and no judge will give you a warrant without more evidence. You can go public."

"Might be our only chance. Otherwise there might be another victim tomorrow."

"What about the last woman? Can she remember anything?"

"No. Her boyfriend's alibi is solid, he also doesn't have neurodermatitis." It would have been easy for her when the boyfriend were the rapist, on the other hand, Anna Koslovski needed him now and he was the only thing, she could rely on, the shoulder she needed. For her it was better he was innocent.

"I think going public is the best chance we have. Maybe somebody saw how he shattered the lights, saw him waiting in the streets. I can't believe nobody noticed him. And we might get some names of men, who suffer from both diseases."

"It's worth a try. I doubt it scares him away. He needs this."

"Yes. It's not a choice. He might be capable of choosing the victim at the moment, but he can't choose if he rapes and kills or not."

"Sociopath."

"My favorite."

Sofia sighed. The media was their only chance if they didn't find any evidence, that got them closer to the rapist, now murderer. They had his fingerprints, but they weren't in any system, so no help.

Sara was hunting. Hunting poachers. So far there hadn't been a new scene, nobody reported a large blood pool, but the forest was big and this time of the year not a lot of people were around. Her cell phone beeped. A message from Sofia. They had a third victim, dead this time. Sara was supposed to look

after herself. She answered her wife that she was fine and there was no need to worry. Not that it would change a thing, Sofia always worried about her, like she always worried about Sofia. The other person, who was on her mind, was Doug. After all those years he came to Los Angeles to see her. Okay, he came here because of a case, but he came to Silver Lake to see her. He put some effort into finding her, Nick didn't have her address, he couldn't have given it to Doug. He found her somehow else.

Like Sam found her. Why did people find her? She wasn't a member of a social network, she didn't give her contact details away easily. Okay, Sam got her through their mother and Doug ... he had the sources to find her. The transparent society. NSA and other government agencies knew more about her, than she liked and sometimes they had leaks. Or were hacked. Was Doug really here to have dinner and a conversation, nothing more? Or did he have more on his mind. When did she become this skeptical? Or was she neurotic?

There was no reason to worry, her life was good. In fact, it was perfect. Her private life couldn't be better, she had a family, a wife, two kids, was about to have a third one. Her parents-in-law loved her, she had great friends, an adorable godson. No, she had no reason to whine or complain. Her new job, or not so new job, was good for her, she liked the time in the forest, she liked the nature, working with people and not facing death every day.

So what was bothering her? Why wasn't she as happy as she was supposed to be? It wasn't because Sofia wasn't happy about Caro, they got that out of their way. Was it because of the baby? Did her old fear come back? When they wanted Susan, she didn't feel comfortable, came up with many ideas, why it wasn't a good idea they became mothers. She was a good mother. No need to argue about it, she was very good with her son and her daughter. She knew it, other people said the same. But something was going on. Something made her... uncomfortable.

"Margaret Tierney." Lynn came into the evidence room, where Sofia worked on the clothes. Or what was left of them. She had found various traces, hairs, fibers, had some given to the lab techs, some were still on the table.

"I beg your pardon?"

"The name of the latest victim. I canvassed Sunset Boulevard between Vermont and Normandie and in one late night club I found somebody, who knew her. She worked at "Tease", an entertaining club, men only."

"Sounds like a gay club."

"More a club, where men don't have to fear their wives and girlfriends surprises them because they can't get in. The only females allowed in the club are the ones, who are on stage. Young, sexy, half naked and always offering a beer. Or maybe even more."

"And what else you want and not want your wife to know. Our suspect might have seen her there."

"I asked if they saw a man with neurodermatitis, who smells sweet, no hit. And I'm not sure they would give me any names. Not good for business."

"Death isn't good for business neither."

"Unfortunately it's easier to replace a young woman than a dozen good customers. You get dancers everywhere in this city, all these young women, who come here to become rich and famous, they need a job before their career starts and these are the jobs, you can do and have the days for audition. Plus they pay good."

"How much for your dignity and your body? Or in her case, for your life. What else do you know about Margaret Tierney?"

"I only checked her background, she got a slap on her hands for smoking pot, was caught drunk and disorderly on a Saturday night, that's it. Nothing big, teenage things. She lived in an apartment in Glendale."

"The bus to Glendale leaves on Hollywood Boulevard. 180 and 181."

"Might explain why she was there. What did Anna do there? She lived south of Sunset, didn't she go in the wrong direction?"

"Depends on the bus system. Check on metro if there was a bus on Hollywood and not on Sunset."

Lynn pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and checked the bus connection. "You're right, the 217 leaves from Hollywood, it's the best connection for her to go home at night. Is that what he hopes for? Catch women, who want to get the bus? Maybe they're in a hurry to catch it in time, you don't want to miss your bus at night and wait for a long time for the next one. It's dark and you're tired, so you pay less attention to your

surroundings. The bus stop was only around the corner from where she was attacked."

"There are plenty of busses running on Sunset, both streets are busy, day and night. The little side streets are quiet, no bus lines, not many people around. Three different streets, all of them not one of the bigger ones. Not Vermont, not Normandie, not Western. He goes for the small ones, not the residential ones neither. Chooses the ones with business buildings, empty at night, dark, nobody reports a broken street light. No security cameras around. Who protects a dumpster?"

"He spreads out to the west, towards Hollywood. Smart. More crimes in Hollywood than Los Feliz. Most of the crimes there are between Vermont and Hillhursts, the main streets running north and south."

"Do you think he leaves his comfort zone?"

"I believe this is his comfort zone. Hollywood to Sunset a mile or two east to west. I'd also add Santa Monica Boulevard to it. It's where you go when you're young, when you hang out. The fact all of our victims have worked on Sunset supports the fact, he is there. Frequently lives there, works there. Or lived or worked there."

"I also described the people I talked to our suspect, what we know of him, nobody came up with a name. At noon there'll be an alert out on the news, with the details we know about the suspect. Hopefully we get anything this way."

"Or we scare him away." But Sofia didn't think so. To her the last attack looked like he didn't have control over himself. First a rape, then a rape with attempt murder, now murder. Brutality increased, he doesn't find release in rape anymore, he needs more, he needs to kill. If they didn't get him tonight, they could be lucky and he was still satisfied from his last kill, by tomorrow he'd need to go out and hunt again.

"Is Don on the case now that's a homicide?"

"No, Rock is the leading cop."

"The captain herself."

"She'll see you later."

"I hope by then I can give her something. Right now there isn't much I can add to the puzzle."

"How about the confirmation we have the same set of fingerprints on all three scenes?" Juana walked into the room.

"Doesn't help us."

"We also have a murder weapon, a steak knife, same knife he used on the second woman. Five inches long, one inch wide. Nothing exclusive, one you can get in almost every supermarket. And, and this might help us, we have DNA."

"We have DNA?" Sofia was surprised. These were news to her.

"Yes, trace found DNA on the pendant the last vic wore. Male DNA."

"Male DNA?"

"They suspect he sweat while he raped her, the sweat dripped on the pendant. When his DNA is in CODIS we can arrest him by the end of the day."

"I like her, she's so optimistic, the youth believes in the good things in life." Sofia smiled. When she started her job, she had been the same, optimistic that could solve every case, catch every killer. Quickly she learnt, these were only dreams, in reality the bad people won way too often.

One thing Sara liked about her job as a ranger was, she had short days in winter. Yes, summer hours were long, days off seldom, but in winter she got rewarded for it. Six hours of work and her duty was over, there was still some daylight and she could spend the rest of the afternoon with Rantanplan and Scooby. Instead of their usual reservoir walk, she took them to Griffith Park today, walked from the ranger station up to Beacon Hill. It gave her the opportunity to have perfect view over Los Angeles, as it had rained last night and was a clear day today. She took various pictures of Silver Lake, got even a shot of their home, of Burbank, Glendale, Griffith Park and Downtown. Tonight was the perfect day for a trip to Griffith Park Observatory, watching the sunset and take more photos. After all, they had an appointment with Doug, wasn't it the best place to take a guest from out of town? He had to work until six, Sara hoped by then Sofia was back home too. An hour earlier she sent her wife a text message, telling her, she loved her and hoped, the best CSI in town could get herself away from work not too late because her wife was waiting for her and every minute without her felt like eternity. Was she childish for sending such messages? Even when they were true? The house was her home and yet, without Sofia it didn't feel right, incomplete. Hell, her whole life was incomplete without her wife. When did she become this depended? Didn't she swear herself that she'd never be totally depended on

somebody? She was an adult, it was her own life, she didn't need...who was she kidding? She needed Sofia like she needed the air to breathe and it felt good to need her lover. How empty and senseless her life would be without the woman she loved. Love was better than independency.

With a smile on her face she arrived back home, let the dogs and herself in the house. Music was coming from upstairs, Tony, who worked on a song. He had a new role, a DJ, and for this he was composing a song. The producer wanted to give him one, but he insisted on doing it himself so he could play his part more realistic. Steve wasn't home yet, after school he went home with Lea, she expected him back any second. Sally was probably at her boyfriend's place and Don and Sofia at work. For a second Sara played with he thought to get her daughter home, then she decided it was better to prepare dinner and wait for Marie to bring the toddler back. After all, the busy and caring grandmother had plans and didn't like it all the time, when Sara or Sofia showed up too early to take their daughter home. With being close to Christmas, Marie and Mark might have taken Susan with them shopping. Let the girl choose what she wanted. It was Susan's first Christmas and Sara was sure, her daughter would be more than spoiled. Presents from her mothers, her father, the grandparents.

The doorbell got her out of her thoughts. Did Steve forget his keys again? Sometimes she wondered if the head of son was spinning around video games, fast food and his crush or if there was some space left for more - well, for him probably boring - thoughts like a key, homework and the garbage.

"What happened to your key?" She asked before the door was completely open.

"You haven't given me one yet."

Sara froze. This had to be a nightmare. It couldn't be real. Her mind was playing tricks on her. Did she have something bad for lunch? Something, that caused hallucinations? Reality looked different, she was sure about this.

"Nice to see you, Sara."

"Hi mom, oh, good you're at the door, I forgot my key." Steve jogged up to the door, where Sara stood and continued to stare at the other person.

"Mom?"

What did she have to do to make this bad joke of her mind disappear?

"Are you all right?" Steve kissed her cheek and looked at the man, his mother starred at.

"What a surprise, you never told me about your son. Hello, I'm your uncle Sam."

Yes, Sam was here, he smiled at Steve like he was his favorite uncle and never did anything wrong. Like he had all reasons in the world to be here. Come here without being invited. Worse, he was told never to come back here. Hadn't she been clear?

"Uncle Sam? Like in mom's brother?" Steve asked irritated.

"Yes, she told you about me?"

"She did, you're fucked up asshole, who is not supposed to be here. What do you want from her? Get lost, she doesn't want you here and you're not welcome." To protect his mother, he got between her and the man. His mother had told him about Sam, enough for Steve to know, he wasn't somebody, who was welcome at this place. He had let her down more than once.

"She didn't teach you any manner, just like her when she was your age."

"Steve?" Sara got herself back together. "Could you do me a favor? Leave us alone for a minute, okay?"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I was about to fix dinner, could you continue?"

"Okay."

"And take the dogs with you." Sara could hear Scooby and Rantanplan growl. They didn't like Sam and they were right.

"Why don't we go inside? I have to talk to you, Sara."

"You know you're not welcome here, I told you, I never want to see you again, Sam. Things haven't changed. Go back to San Francisco."

"You have to get a grip Sara and get over things, you're not a teenager, who can pout forever."

Sara clenched her fist. Sam was such... "You are not welcome, Sam. Go back home."

"Not until we haven't talked."

"I have nothing to talk about with you."

"Our mother."

"I don't have a mother."

"Yes you do, you know it."

"If you are talking about the woman, who gave birth to me, she isn't my mother. She never acted like a mother. No wait, that's not correct, she did once. When she killed the man, who fathered us. The only moment when she looked after her

daughter was when she stabbed her husband. Ironic, isn't it? And she didn't do it for me, she did it because she's sick."

"She's very sick, Sara."

"Not my problem. When I needed her, needed her help, she let me down. More than once. She told me to forget what happened, like it wasn't anything bad. This woman isn't my mother, she's nobody to me. I don't care how she is, what she wants or needs."

"She is your mother."

"No."

"You can't..."

"I can do whatever I want, Sam."

"What will your son say about you? When he hears you don't care for your mother. How is he supposed to respect you?"

"He knows what happened, what mom did. And didn't do."

"The last time I was here, he wasn't. So where was he? Sent away? With foster parents? Are you better than her?"

"Stay out of my family."

"I'm your family too."

"No, you're not."

"I'm your brother and you let me inside. We need to talk." He tried to push her away.

"No!" Sara threw her weight into the door. Under no circumstances would she let him in.

"Hey ya, scumbag!" Suddenly Sam got pulled away and Sara won control over the door. When she looked up she saw Felix with a gun. "Got any problems with your fucking ears? The lady told ya to fuck off! Ya betta do what she told ya to do or I'm gonna empty my gun on ya. Got that?" He waved with his gun in front of Sam's face.

"You put the gun away or I call the police."

"Go ahead, call them. You know how much they like you." Sara said. "I'm sure they'll enjoy the idea of arresting your sorry ass."

"This isn't over, Sara. I'll be back."

"You come back and you end up in jail."

"This little dirtbag will go to jail." Sam gave Felix a hard look before he turned and left.

"Dirtbag? I had a shower this morning. Not a nice man."

"Could you put away the gun, please?" Sara asked.

"This one? It's a nice one, right? Very handy." He turned it on himself.

"Felix, put it away."

"It makes fun." He pulled the trigger.

"Noooo!" Sara closed her eyes. This couldn't be real. Her day started so great, then it got very bad with Sam appearing and now? Why did Felix shoot himself? Why...wait. She never heard a shot. Even with a silencer, she should have heard anything. Carefully, preparing herself for the worst, she opened the eyes. Felix was alive and looked quite happy.

"Are you okay?"

"What...?"

"Oh, you thought it's a real gun. Sorry, I was sure, as a former CSI you see the difference immediately. It's a toy, a good one, but not real. When you pull the trigger on this gun, there's no bullet coming out. Much better, it shoots whiskey. Want a shot?" He opened his mouth, pulled the trigger and liquid came out of the gun, shot straight into his mouth.

"A water pistol?"

"A whiskey pistol. The best way to have a nice shot with you when you walking around. And a good way to get scumbags out of your way. Your brother is an asshole."

"I know."

"Hey Felix, what are you doing here?" Steve came to the door.

"I thought it's time to see what little Steo is doing."

Steve rose his middle finger.

"Ah, you're fine, little boy."

"Fuck off."

"No, he stays for dinner." Sara said. "Thanks Felix for helping me out."

"Oh, thanks for the invitation."

"Could you leave the gun in your pocket?"

"Sure thing."

"Why the hell do you carry a gun with you?" Steve asked.

"To shoot whiskey. And scare idiots. Where's dinner?"

"On the oven."

"Sara?"

Sara turned. There was Jules and the look, she gave her, was very, very concerned.

"We finish dinner, come on." Steve took Felix's hand and pulled him into the house.

"Jules..."

"Get into the house, now. Straight to the living room."

"But..."

"No, go!" Jules stayed a yard away from Sara and followed her friend when she turned and went into the house.

"Why did you send me here?"

"Because I don't want you to break down outside." Jules pulled Sara in her arms and on the couch. At the same moment Sara felt how something broke inside her and she started crying and shaking. All the pictures came back. Of her childhood, of her teenager time, the moment she got sent away to the first foster home. How Trevor raped her, how she cried out for help and nobody came to rescue her. How she wished for her brother to do something and he went away every day. All these memories and more. More tears, more trembling, she was sure, if Jules didn't hold her tight, she would have fallen off the couch.

"It's all right Honey, nothing happened." Jules kissed Sara's hair. "He's gone."

"He'll come back."

"If he does, he gets in trouble, you're not alone. Sara, take a deep breath, please. Slowly inhale, keep the air for a few seconds and exhale even slower." Her old breathing exercise, one of the first things she learnt in therapy.

"Jules...I feel dizzy...what if...what if I get a bout?"

"You won't, I'm here, I won't let that happen to you. Or do you believe I can't be a good therapist anymore? Now that I'm only a friend."

"You're the best." Sara buried her face in Jules's hair. "How comes you're here?" Wasn't it time for her friend to pick up her kids? She never came around this early. It was only a little bit after five, Jules must have left her office and come straight here.

"Steve called me. He said your brother is here and you might need some help."

"He's a smart boy."

"He is and he was right. Where did Felix come from?"

"I have no idea."

"Did he use his gun to scare Sam away?"

"Yes. It's a water pistol. But it's not the first time somebody pulled a gun when Sam was here. Why does he not understand, he's not welcome here?"

"What did he want?"

"Talk about Laura." Sara didn't want to call her mother. It felt like an insult to all real mothers to call this woman a mother too.

"Did she call you?"

"No." Sara took a deep breath and sat upright. "Thanks."

"Hey, it's my job."

"You're not my therapist anymore. Although when Sam keeps appearing, I might have to see you in your office again."

"You're always welcome in my office; as a friend. For a therapist you go one level below me."

"I don't want the second best, I want the best. You."

"As a friend, Honey, as a friend." Jules smiled. She knew Sara responded best to her, but ethical rules forbid that the brunette could be her patient again. Besides, she didn't need a therapist at the moment. "Can you walk?"

"Sure...I mean, I suppose I can. Why?"

"I want to know if I can let you alone. It's time to pick up the kids, otherwise I'd stay with you a little bit longer."

"No, go, I'll be fine."

"You also lay down for a few minutes, no need to rush."

"There are two, even three, men in the house, they'll make sure I'm fine. Plus my daughter should come soon too. Which means, my parents-in-law will be here."

"And your wife. Talk with Sofia, otherwise I'll do it. You better make sure she knows about Sam before I send her a text later."

"Are you blackmailing me?"

"Yes."

"Bad therapist."

"It's why I'm your friend, no patient-therapist-secrets."

"You know I'll talk to her. Like Steve will tell her about Sam's appearance. And Marie will see right away something is wrong, no matter how strong you try to appear. She can see it."

"Of course she can, she's the captain."

"So many people in my life, all are very nosy."

"The word you were after is caring." Jules hugged Sara. "I call you later, might come over too. Although I'm sure you'll be busy with your wife."

"She's the best medicine."

"I'm aware of that. All her side effects are healthy."

"Absolutely. Your son is a good medicine too. It would be nice to see him." With Eric in her arms problems always faded away. He was like his mother, one look, one hug and you felt like the burden you carried before, was gone. A gift, he hopefully used wisely in his life.

"I'll consider it for the evening plans."

"Thanks. Love you, Jules."

"Love you too. Get some rest."

"Yes." Obedient Sara lay down. Maybe a minute or two with closed eyes was a good idea.

When Sara opened her eyes she found Marie sitting next to her. Did she fall asleep on the sofa? At five in the afternoon? All she wanted was to close her eyes for a second, work through the last minutes and get herself back together. It seemed like her plan didn't work out.

"Oh, hi Marie, sorry, I must have fallen asleep. Why didn't you wake me up?"

"You looked like you needed a break. When Steve told me who was here this afternoon, I knew you did need a few minutes to rest. How are you?"

"Better. Jules did first aid, so to speak." Sara sat upright. Time to get back to real life. "Where is Susan?"

"With her grandfather, brother and the little criminal in the kitchen."

"The little criminal scared Sam away."

"So I've been told. With a whiskey pistol."

"Yes. People come up with strange ideas. Sometimes these ideas are helpful. You won't give him a hard time for scaring Sam away with a faked gun, will you?"

"No, I won't."

"Thanks. Is Sofia not home yet?"

"She's on her way. Do you want me to do anything because of Sam? He's still in the city, he'll come back. Maybe not tomorrow, but he won't just disappear."

"I know, I have to make him disappear..." Now, this sounded not right. Not when you talked to a former cop. When you talked to your mother-in-law it was okay. The doorbell rang. "Oh shit. Doug." She had forgotten about her old friend from Frisco.

"Who is that?"

"A man I dated back in San Francisco."

"Sounds like I have to shoot him. There are too many Frisco people around."

"No, he's a nice guy...Sofia knows about him, he has dinner with us." Sara got up.

"A nice guy?"

"Yes." She hugged her mother-in-law. "Do me a favor and don't shoot him, Don almost did that yesterday. You can shoot Sam." Then he wouldn't be her problem anymore. Hopefully he'd stay away for the rest of the day, if not for longer.

"Hey." Sara opened the door before Marie could get in her way.

"Hi...wow, what happened to you?" Doug asked after one look at her. Of course he recognized something was wrong. He had seen her often enough when something wasn't right.

"Sam."

"What? Low life? What did the fucking wanker do?"

"He was here. An hour ago."

"Seriously? I hope you kicked his ass."

"Not really."

"Oh sweetheart." He pulled her in his arms.

"You let go of this woman or I rip off your balls and stuff them down your throat." Marie's voice was sharp like a knife.

"I'm sorry, Ma'am." Doug let go of Sara.

"Doug, meet my mother-in-law, Captain Curtis. Marie, this is Doug and you don't rip off anything, please."

"He got way too close to comfort. This beautiful woman is married to my daughter and if anybody ever tries to get between them, I won't hesitate to eliminate the threat. Do you understand?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Don't Ma'am me, I'm not a lady, I'm a Captain."

"Yes Captain."

"Good. Keep your hands where I can see them and let it be far, far away from Sara."

"Mo-om!" Sara rolled her eyes. "Stop it. Please."

"Just telling him the rules."

"He knows them, I told him before. Don't worry, nothing and nobody will get between Sofia and me." Sara looked at her watch. "She should be here any second. Unless she bumped into Sam and got him into interrogation."

"Or just shot him. End of trouble."

"You are quite aggressive today."

"When an asshole shows up and harasses my little girl, I get cranky."

"She has such a big heart, she calls me her daughter, her baby girl and loves me. The perfect mother." Sara blinked at her mother-in-law. "Come on in, Doug. Steve made dinner, since

his grandfather started teaching him how to make fabulous dinners, he does treat us every once in a while. Especially when he can impress a girl with it."

"Some girls are easily impressed, other are very hard to impressed." Doug said.

"Your luck you don't have to impress Sara."

"Marie."

"What? Just saying."

"Don't say it anymore. Please."

"Okay."

"Thanks. Why don't you have a seat, Doug? I get you a beer and set the table for all of us. I assume Mark and you stay for dinner, Marie?"

"Now that we're invited."

"You are when you're nice." Sara liked having her parents-in-law around when Marie didn't play too much cop. Doug wasn't a threat, he was here as a friend and she wanted him treated as one.

When Sara heard how the front door was unlocked, she excused herself from the group and walked out of the room. She wanted a minute with Sofia alone to tell her, what happened this late afternoon.

"Hi." The blonde was busy with her shoes and jacket so she didn't pay attention to her wife.

"Hey, how was your day?"

"Long. Satisfying. We closed a case and...what's wrong?" The second she turned and looked into the eyes of the brunette, Sofia knew something was wrong. There were no words needed.

"Sam was here."

"No!"

"Yes and he..." Sara was pulled into the arms of her lover and stopped by a kiss. Soft and gently, comforting and full of love.

"I'm so sorry I wasn't here."

"We had no idea he'd turn up here."

"Did you kick him out?"

"You know...I'm not exactly good with kicking him out. He doesn't care what I say and want and...no, I couldn't make him leave."

"He's not still here, is he?" Sofia saw the car of her parents, she knew they'd never let Sam stay.

"No, he was forced to leave by Felix, who appeared out of the blue and waved a gun in front of his face. It wasn't a real gun, but it looked real and made Sam go. He'll come back, he threatened to do so."

"He comes here again, I call the cops and let him throw into jail. He's trespassing. I'm going to shoot this asshole...why did you not call me?"

"I...wasn't exactly in a state to do anything."

"Honey, you don't have to get through this alone, there's a reason why we're married."

"We're married because we love each other more than anything else. Steve called Jules, he knew she was my therapist back then, she was on her way home from work, was here within minutes and she took care of me. Which was good, I trembled a lot, thought for a minute, I might have another bout. Having a therapist by my side was helpful."

"She's your friend, not your therapist and your wife should be helpful too."

"My wife is the best medicine, the problem was, I needed fast help and even when you left work right away, it had taken you half an hour in this traffic, Jules was handy and fast available. Not a replacement, nobody can replace you, she was my first aid."

"How are you now?"

"Better. I slept a few minutes, when I woke up, Marie sat next to me. She also told Doug, if he gets too close to me, she rips off his balls and sticks them into his throat. She's not very nice to our guest."

"Somehow I'm not that mad with my mother." Sofia smiled a little bit.

"Honey, he is no threat."

"Even he was here for you before I was."

"He was early, yes, and he hates Sam as much as we do. If he had been here when Sam was here, my brother would be in hospital now. And Doug at the police department."

"In this case I had supported your ex. He can't be worse than Sam."

"Doug is a nice guy, if you had met him somewhere, without knowing he and I were a couple, you would have liked him right away. Do me a favor and be nice to him. He's not here to steal me away."

"Okay."

"Thanks." Sara kissed her wife. "I love you."

"I love you too and I'm sorry I wasn't home early today."

"Not your fault." Sara took Sofia's hand and walked with her into the living room, where the rest was waiting for them with dinner.

"Good evening, everybody."

"Hi mom. Say hello to our mother." Steve had Susan on his lap and waved with the hand of his sister, who had her eyes on her mothers, waiting for them to pick her up.

"Honey, this is Doug, we worked in San Francisco together. He's with the NTSB and has a case in Los Angeles at the moment. Doug, this is Sofia, the love of my life and wife."

"Pleasure to meet you." Doug said. "I see, Sara has a very good taste."

"I'm the one with the good taste and because my mother threatened you already enough and I promised my wife to be nice, I don't repeat them. Besides, I heard you can't stand Sam, you get some credit for that."

"Thanks."

"Mama!" Susan protested and looked at Sara and Sofia.

"Oh, somebody doesn't want to be with her brother anymore." Steve smiled and got up.

"Mama!"

"Yes, you can go to your mama. Which one?"

"I take her." Sara took Susan in her arms and kissed her. "Hello cute girl."

"Mama!" Susan looked at Sofia.

"I'm right here, baby girl."

"Maybe you're not close enough." Sara handed her daughter over to Sofia.

"Mama." Now the voice of their daughter was happy.

"Looks like you were the mother, she wanted. I pretend I don't feel offended by the fact, my daughter didn't want me."

"Of course she wants you." Sofia kissed Sara. "She wants us both. Don't you, Susi? You want both of your mommies around." The blonde sat down, Susan on her lap. "We can share dinner."

"She looks absolutely like Sara." Doug said. "A cute little mini you."

"Yeah, all my good DNA, made perfect by Sofia's body. The perfect baby from the perfect woman." Sara got the mashed potatoes over. "Thanks for cooking, Steve."

"You're welcome, granddad helped me with pimping it, so it's enough for all of us. Want some veggies for Susan too?"

"Yes, as for you, vegetables are very healthy."

"I leave the healthy stuff for you, as a gentleman." He took a steak. His mothers and sister could have the vegetables, he stuck to the steaks and fries.

Sara snuggled deep into the arms of her lover. Tonight, she needed her closer than ever.

"How am I supposed to leave you alone tomorrow?" Sofia kissed her lover. "You need me with you. I call in at work and tell them, I need a day off. Or two. Depends how long it needs to get your stupid brother out of town."

"We can't stop with our lives because of him."

"He is a threat to you, I can't let you alone, being at risk."

"He won't hurt me."

"Just by appearing he hurts you. I was next to you when Jules called, I know she doesn't call because everything was fine."

"Jules called because she's my friend. And wanted to know I'm fine. She does know when you're with me I'm fine...which supports your idea of taking a day off."

"Thanks for acknowledging it."

"You're welcome. Honey, I'll be at work from eight to four, Sam has no idea where I work, he can't because not even I know where I'll be tomorrow. By the time I'm back, you're off work too."

"Four-thirty?"

"Yes."

"I'll leave at four tomorrow, to make sure I'm here when you arrive and in case your brother shows up, I let him arrest for trespassing. I'm so sick and tired of him showing up, you told him to stay away, that he isn't a part of your life anymore. He never was, when you needed him, he left you alone."

"Yes he did."

"What did he want?"

"Apparently Laura isn't feeling well." Sara shook her head. "I start to call her Laura, can't call her mom because then I feel like it's a betrayal to all real mothers. When she's a mom and we are Susan's moms, we might act like her. The way my mother did."

"You are not your mother, Sara. You're a wonderful and perfect mother and Susan knows, she can trust you, you will never let

anything happen to her. You can't compare you to your mother. She didn't earn this name."

"Am I a bad daughter because I don't care what's going on with the women, who gave life to me?"

"No, you're not. Am I a bad CSI because I believe, when Sam continues to hurt you, I'll make him disappear. Forever."

"Don't." Sara didn't doubt for a second her wife would do exactly what she said. Make Sam disappear forever. She knew her wife loved her enough to kill. To kill Sam only to make sure, Sara didn't have to be afraid of him. There was nothing Sofia wouldn't do for Sara. And it was the same the other way around.

"I don't want him to hurt you and apparently do guns not scare him."

"We can't kill him."

"Yes we can and we can make him disappear. Get rid off him in a way, nobody will ever realize it was us."

"Sofia, we are not killers."

"Sometimes there is no other way."

"We have to and we'll find a way. Don't worry. Please, promise me you won't do anything stupid. Promise, you won't do anything, that might endanger your future with our children and me. We need you here, not in prison."

"You can't imagine how much I hate him. How much I hate the fact, he doesn't care how you suffer."

"I know you, I'd feel the same. Nevertheless, there are some things you can't do if you don't want to make me unhappy. I need to know you're there when I come home, I need to know you're here with me in bed, when I fall asleep at night and wake up in the morning. You are my everything, I can't live without you, Sofia. I can't. I need you more than I need the air to breathe because without you I can't breathe."

"I promise I don't do anything stupid."

"Thanks."

"Hey, I don't want to be apart from you. You're my life. And I want to marry you again. In Paris. In Sao Paulo. In Sydney. All around the world because the whole world is supposed to see how much I love you."

Sara pulled her wife into her arms and kissed her passionately. She also wanted the world to know how much she loved Sofia and she wanted to marry her again. Why do something only twice when it made you happy? The happiest person on earth.

\*\*\*

It had been a wonderful day, the sun shone, music played on the radio, happy voices had been all around, chatting, agreeing and disagreeing, laughter. The way an afternoon with friends was supposed to be. There had been drinks, fizzy, cold, with strange smells or sweet. The smoke in the air was sometimes sweet too, then more herbal. With every hour the mood gotten better and better, then the first people left, went to another place, another party. The garden became empty, chairs were abandoned and voices faded away. Time to call it a day, to go to bed and dream of new adventures.

A hand was placed on her shoulder and immediately Sara knew this wonderful day was over. She wanted to scream, break free, but the second hand was placed over her mouth, while she was pulled in close to the body behind her. Tall, much taller than she was, vicious, one hand almost cutting off her oxygen because it also almost covered her nose, the other slipped down from her breast between her legs. Grabbed hard. She heard the moan, she smelled the smoke, the alcohol.

"Gonna be fun, girl."

No, it wouldn't be fun. She knew. It wasn't the first time, she had been through this a few times, every time she thought she'd die, that he'd strangle her, beat her to death. Or that she'd bleed to death. So much blood.

Her little arms tried to fight, which made him grab her only harder, cut off more of the oxygen until she held still, running out of air, tired, almost unconscious. He picked her up, carried her away from the almost empty garden. Into the old shed, filled with trash, dirt, dust. The old blanket with dozens of holes, the smell of old sweat, mold and fear. Her fear. Not the first time, if no wonder happened, not the last. Her parents didn't notice, they never did. They were happy, had a lot of alcohol, drugs. Her big brother was gone, he always left when the friends of his parents came over. She was too small to leave, had to stay. Helpless.

The door of the shed made no sound when he opened it, kicked it close behind him. Nobody would come here anyway, they were alone. Sara wished she were alone. Far, far away. In a place nobody hurt her, where she wasn't forced to do things, she was disgusted of. A place, where people understand what 'no' mean and didn't hurt her.

His hands pulled down her pants when he threw her on the blanket, the other hand still on her mouth, controlling her breath. She should bite him. Hard. Bite off his fingers, the hand. If only she wasn't a little girl, if only a hero would appear and help her. She was half naked, he dropped his pants and she knew, there was no hero, no help. Only pain, a lot of pain...

"Sara! For heaven's sake wake up!"

Again hands on her shoulder, a hard grip, she was shaken. Not from the man, the blanket was suddenly soft, warm, smelled fresh and...there was light...

"Sara! Get out of the dream! Now!"

The voice wasn't his, although she felt like she not in control of her body, like she was helpless and felt how fingers buried themselves in her flesh, she didn't feel danger.

"Sara!"

"So...Sof..."

"Yes, I'm here, you're safe. You're here with me, in our bedroom. It was a dream." The hands let go of her shoulders, arms pulled her in. Not like before, not to take away her control, these arms meant comfort. Love. Safety. Not a hero, a heroine. Her heroine.

"He...he was there...."

"It was a dream, Sara. He's not here, nobody is here except us." Sofia kissed the face of her lover, got her lips on the brunette's, kissed her, passionately, tried to put all her love in this kiss to show Sara, everything was all right. There was no danger, there was nobody, who wanted to hurt her. She was in bed, she was safe. It was all a dream. One, Sofia knew, had been true a long time ago. It wasn't a nightmare made of Sara's fantasy, it were old memories. She relived what happened to her back in San Francisco.

"It felt so real."

"It was a nightmare, a bad, bad nightmare."

"It was real."

"Back then, not now. You're safe." Two bumps on the sheets made them look up. Scooby and Rantanplan had opened the door and jumped on the bed, whimpering, crawling to Sara, like they wanted to flank her, make sure, she was safe, comfort her.

"Hey, did I wake you guys up?" She petted their heads.

"Sorry."

"You cried in your nightmare, called out for help. Not very loud, loud enough for them to hear. When somebody of their pack is at risk, they come and protect."

"Like their mommy." Sara took a deep breath. She, she could breathe. Nobody cut off her oxygen, she was free, she could move.

"It's all love."

"He was about to rape me." Sara swallowed. "Carried me in a little shed, that was in the garden. An old one, my parents didn't use it anymore, it was full with trash, there was this old blanket on the floor, stinky, moldy and he..."

"Sara, don't go back." Sofia stopped her lover. "Don't. It's over, it was a nightmare. When you go back, you've to go through it all again. You'll feel the fear, you won't stop trembling. Look at your hands."

The brunette looked down, her hands were shaking and she couldn't make them stop. As did her arms and she felt so cold.

"Close your eyes, inhale and count to four." Breathing exercise, getting Sara's body back to normal, out of the flight state. Sofia knew, this was how bouts started, they had to fight them, had to stop them or Sara would end up in hospital tonight. She, Sofia, couldn't deal with a bout. A doctor was needed.

"I don't want to lose it."

"You won't. Continue with the exercise, I hold you."

"What if I have a backslide? When everything starts all over again? Have to go back to therapy? Jules told me today again, she can't be there for me. I know it, but when she says it, it gets more real. She's the only therapist, who can really help me. I feel safe around her, safer than with her cousin."

"You don't." Sofia stroke softly over Sara's back. "You're doing good, you shake less. Repeat the exercise twice and you should be much better." And the same went for Sofia too. A few more moments and she should be better. When she heard the cries of her wife, heard her words, she knew what the brunette dreamed, she knew where Sara was in her nightmare, what was happening to her. Or about to happen. And Sofia knew, she had to get her lover out of the nightmare. It was hard, she spoke to her a few times, called her name, then started shaking her, first softly, then harder. She feared when she was too aggressive, Sara would be even more scared, believe the nightmare was real when she woke up and found herself an a strong grip. But she had no other choice, she had to be almost brutal to wake

her lover up, hoped the light helped and her voice made her understand, she was safe. These nightmares, those memories, they'd never been gone forever, on days like today, they came back, showed Sara, wasn't healed, only better. No matter how much therapy the brunette had, no matter how often she talked about what happened, it was a trauma and it took every chance it got to come back and haunt her, make her life miserable.

"Okay." Sofia kissed her lover. "Much better. How do you feel?"

"Like crap."

"Can you breath?"

"Yes."

"Good. Why don't you drink some water? I can also get you something to calm down, the herbal tranquilizer Jules left here. Why not take one of them? They don't knock you out, they don't take away the fear, but they help to calm down.

"Okay." Sara hated tranquilizer, no matter if herbal or chemical, in this case it was better. She needed to get back to normal - whatever normal was after a dream like this.

"You guys look after Sara, I'm back in a few seconds." Sofia ordered her dogs, kissed Sara again and left the bed. The medication was in the bathroom, they should keep it in the bedroom, in the nightstand.

"You must be confused." Sara hugged the dogs. She felt bad for waking them up. And mostly for waking up Sofia, disturbing her wife's night, the sleep she needed and the worries she caused. These nightmares were not only hard on Sara, they were also hard on Sofia. Her wife deserved better than that. Than her.

"Here you go, take this and you feel better. I hope." Sofia gave Sara the little pill.

"Thanks." Sara took the water bottle and swallowed the pill.

"I'm sorry I woke you up and you have to get through this. Again. It was supposed to be over, you dealt enough with my damn past years ago and..."

"If you start to think I'm better off without you I want you to use your brain. We had the same topic a few years ago, when you disappeared. You know what happen to me when you're gone, I go crazy and threaten to kill myself. That's what your shrink said and I have no idea what I might have done in case she hadn't appeared. I'm not better off without you. I married you because I don't want to be and live without you. Your past

isn't easy for any one of us, but a life without each other is worse than anything else. Am I clear?"

Sara bit her lips. Sofia knew. Of course. She knew her wife. Better than she knew herself sometimes. Which was scary. And the greatest sign of love.

"Yes."

"Good. In good and bad times. Remember? When I feel lousy and worthless because of my leg, you tell me you love, no matter how I look. I'm covered in scars, miss half of my left leg and nevertheless, you tell me you love me, even think I look beautiful."

"The most beautiful woman in the world." Sara said and pulled her wife in her arms. No scar not a missing lower left could change that. True beauty was stronger than anything else. "And I love you more than my life."

"So why push me away? You can't live without me, I can't live without you. To me it sounds like it's an easy solution to all of this: we stay together. Forever. Make each other happy and look after each other."

"Deal." Sara smiled.

"Good. Do you want to stay awake a little longer? Have the lights on?"

"We need to sleep."

Sofia knew they both needed to rest, needed the sleep, but that didn't mean they were able to find the inner peace they needed to fall asleep. "Can you sleep?"

"I'm not sure. What I can do is lay next to you, in your arms, and make sure, you sleep. The pill should do the rest."

"There won't be another place for you than in my arms. Do you want some music? Or is silence better?"

"I want to listen to your breath, listen to your heartbeat, these things calm me down and show me, you're here, right next to me. I can't see you but I can feel, smell and hear you."

"Then it's only you and me, no music. What about your two knights? Want them out?"

"That would be mean, they worried. Let them stay here, they want to know I'm fine too." And at the moment the weight of the dogs on their legs, their warmth, felt good to Sara. Made her feel safer.

"Okay, tonight you're allowed to stay on the bed, guys, only today." Scooby and Rantanplan had made themselves comfortable on their legs and looked up. For them it was no

questions they stayed. Apparently something was wrong when they weren't here, to make sure the rest of the night was fine, they had to stay. Protect their two owner. It was their duty and it was, what they wanted. In a pack everybody looked after the other.

## Friday, December, 13th

There had been a couple of calls coming in after the police reached out to the citizen of Los Angeles about the serial rapist. The DNA wasn't in any database, so that wasn't a help. What worried her most was, it was likely there was a new victim. A dead one. Last night had been more cops than usual been out in Hollywood and Los Feliz, checking on the little streets between Sunset and Hollywood, which might have saved somebody's life there, but could have cost the life of another woman, somewhere else. When the impulse to rape and kill was bigger than the fear of being caught, she was sure, the man looked for another place to strike. There were more than enough in Los Angeles.

"Anything new?" She asked when Juana joined her.

"I haven't heard of anything. The police is checking streets, looking for possible victims."

"What about the telephone?"

"If there were information, that might help us, they haven't told me. You look like you didn't sleep a lot."

"Thanks, I had better nights."

"Do I have to tell your wife off?"

"No, it's not her fault." Sofia had been awake because of Sara, Sara's nightmare, but that wasn't the brunette's fault. She wasn't to blame for it. Her idiot brother Sam and Trevor were. Unfortunately she couldn't get her hands on either one of them.

"Good. Trouble at home do mess with your work."

"Words of experience?"

"Amen."

Sofia took a closer look at her colleague. Juana didn't look troubled, she appeared to be in her usual happy mood, like the world was a good place to be, even though she knew, it could be the opposite. Was it the real Juana or a face she put on? To be honest, Sofia never questioned the good mood of her young colleague. She took it as a present, she got every day.

"Do I have to tell somebody off?"

"No, we don't waste our time."

"We could..."

"Concentrate on the case, because that is what is important." Juana interrupted her. "We have to catch this man before he hurt more women. Did you contact the hospital today? Ask about Anna?"

"No." Now Sofia knew there was something going on and Juana's life wasn't all peaches and cream.

"Then I do that. Maybe she can remember anything today. Sitting here, doing nothing drives me crazy." She got up and left the room.

"Somebody's avoiding a conversation, sounds a lot like the woman I'm married to. Let's see if I can get this one talking too. Later." First she'd contact Lynn to see if there was something new about their case. Or better, she would call Rock. Ask the captain, she knew everything.

"Sara!" Shane's yell got Sara out of her thoughts. Before she could react, he had reached over, pulled the steering wheel to the left. They missed the deer on the road only by inches. How could this happen? How could she get so deep into her thoughts, that she didn't see the deer? It was big and lay right in the middle of the dirt road. The legs were still moving although there was a lot of blood around. Did she hit the deer? Did she caused this?

"Oh my god!"

"Are you all right?"

"What did I do?" Her eyes were fixed on the deer when she jumped out of the car. Afraid of the car and her, the deer tried to get up and flee, but was too injured.

"Be careful, it's injured." Shane stepped beside her, pulled her a little bit away. "It might try to attack us."

"Did I...?"

"No, we never hit it. It was on the road and...are these skid marks fresh?" He pointed to skid marks in the snow, leading away from them and the deer.

"Yes...Shane, I think..."

"The poachers were about to kill it, heard us and took off." He got his radio out. "Here's Shane, I've a deadly injured deer on the dirt road, the poachers can't be far away. They took off north, we can't give you any description of the car nor the people. Please look out for a truck, or a car big enough to carry a deer."

"You poor thing." Sara stepped a little bit closer to the deer, caught its eyes. Pain and fear, it knew it was about to die.

"We can't do anything for it." Shane said quietly. "Except for one thing."

Sara knew what he was saying. The only way they could help the deer was to end its life in a fast way. Shoot it.

"I can get my gun." He offered.

"No, I do it." He had done enough, it was time for her to take responsibilities. Plus, he never shot anybody. It would be her first time to shoot a deer, she shot people in self-defense, that wasn't the same, but...it was the only thing they could do for it.

With a deep breath Sara got her gun and released the safety catch. "I'm so sorry, but this will save you more minutes in pain. I'm sorry we weren't here earlier to help you. Please forgive us." She aimed for the head and fired, her eyes closed. After she fired the bullet everything was quiet. Done. She killed a deer. Ended what somebody else started.

"It's dead." Shane said.

"Its suffering is over." Sara's voice was rusty.

"You had no other choice unless you wanted it to suffer longer."

"Shane, I almost ran it over."

"You didn't."

"Because you pulled the car away. I'm sorry..."

"Hey, this is not your fault. We call somebody to pick it up and hope, they get whoever is responsible for this. Why are they killing deer daily? What is wrong?"

"Christmas is coming, deer meat is expensive, brings good money."

"Means we're dealing with somebody, who knows how to prepare meat. You can't just take a dead deer to a butcher. Unless you work with a butcher together. A hunter goes out, shoots it, the butcher prepares it, sells it."

"Two men are out here, butcher and hunter." Sara forced her eyes away from the dead animal. They had been too late. Again. And it didn't make her happy the men weren't able to get this deer into their car. It only meant, they'd hunt another one. Maybe not today, but tomorrow.

"George, here's Shane, Sara and me have a dead deer, can you send somebody out to get it? We're about five miles north of the office. Had to shoot it, these bastards left it here to die." Shane's words got her back into reality.

"Okay, we stay put. See you later."

"What did he say?"

"We better get these men or they kill all deer in the forest."

"At least one every day. Maybe we need to close the forest for a few days. This way the gates are locked and they can't just get in. Or if they get in, we have more evidence."

"Closing the forest to the public isn't that easy."

"I know, it's unfair towards all the others, who come here to enjoy the wildlife and nature. The good people always have to suffer because of idiots."

"True." He got his arm around her. "What is wrong?"

"I shot a deer."

"You were absent-minded before that. I never saw you like that, you had totally forgotten where you were. Like you weren't here."

"I'm sorry, it...I could have injured us."

"Forget about that, what is wrong? Did anything happen? Is Sofia fine? The kids?"

"What? Yes, they're fine."

"So what happened? Don't say nothing because I know something did happen. Something big. Otherwise you wouldn't be like this."

Sara took a deep breath. She didn't want to tell Shane about her childhood, about what happened to her. But she knew, she had to tell him something, he wasn't stupid, and like he said, he knew something was wrong.

"My brother showed up last night. Or yesterday afternoon. He and me...we're not close and the last time he was here, I told him not to come back. A lot of things happened when I was a child, things I'd rather not mention, he brings these memories back...screwed up a few times. Him back in Los Angeles is not exactly good for me."

"He must have screwed up big time to get you this distracted. You worked murder cases, saw dead bodies and all these gross things."

"It's different when it's family. Smaller things have a bigger impact."

"True. Anything I can do?"

"Yeah, drive for the rest of the day, in case I get lost in my thoughts."

"Done. We also don't mention this to anybody. The car got parked like this because you had to avoid the deer."

"Thanks."

"Not for that. Does your idiot brother know where you work?"

"He knows I'm a ranger, it's unlikely he finds us, Angeles National Forest is big."

"In case he does appear, we shoot him, claim we thought he's one of the poacher and had a gun. Our mistake it was only a branch. Oops."

Sara had to laugh. Everybody wanted to shoot Sam, he should think about it, realize, Los Angeles could be very unhealthy for him. Heavy rain in form of bullets from all sides.

"We let him live and make him leave."

"Feet him to the bears, wolves or any other wildlife. Mountain lions are always hungry."

"We don't want them to have an upset stomach."

"Right. Will he stay away?"

"No, I'm sure he shows up today or tomorrow."

"Sofia knows he's here."

"Yes, everybody in the house knows. He won't get into the house."

"Good. Your mother-in-law..."

"Will kill him with her bare hands when she finds out about this or how bad my last night was. She saw me yesterday and saying, she was mad, is an understatement. She was furious."

"Having the Captain as your opponent isn't healthy."

"No, it's not."

"Promise you let me know when he is here, I'll be with you, you don't have to face him alone Whatever exactly he did or didn't do, I'm sure you have very good reasons why you don't want him in your life anymore. As your colleague and friend I want to support you. You'd do the same for me, so don't argue with me, Mrs. Sidle."

Now she really had to laugh and hugged him. "Thanks Shane. I let you know when he shows up." Not only because she could use his help but because he deserved to know. It was important to him to be there for her, he saved their car and their health by taking over the steering wheel and getting her attention back to the road, she had no reason not to do, what asked for.

"Captain Rock, do you have any news?" Sofia answered her cell phone when it rang and she saw the number of the police captain.

"We have a suspect in custody. I need you over here."

"Right on my way." The blonde jumped up and went straight into the office to get her folder. On her way she called Juana.

"Captain Rock called me, they've got a suspect in custody, I'm on my way over. Any evidence you're working on, that can identify the suspect, you better finish fast and get it over."

"We need his DNA to compare it."

"I'll try to get it." She had no idea if they had enough for a warrant. Was the suspect a person of interest, who was taken into custody because he refused to cooperate or did he fit the description of what they had of their rapist and murderer.

"Captain." She greeted Rock when she saw the woman in front of an interrogation room. "What do we have?"

"Male, twenty-five, visible neurodermatitis, we're working on a warrant of his medical records."

"How does he smell?"

"He stinks. Sweetly."

"Sounds like him."

"We do have taken various photos and also contacted the first victim, will get her here. Some victims, especially rape victims, show physical reactions to their rapist before they realize, this is the man, who raped them."

Sofia nodded. She had seen women throw up before they could tell the police, the man in front of them was their rapist. The body reacted faster than the brain cells could order the mouth to say the words. Throwing up, tremble, even faint. Like Sara's reactions when she saw Trevor, at least of what Jules had told her.

"Do we have his DNA?"

"No, he refuses to give us his DNA and he also asked for a lawyer the very moment he entered the department. So we have to wait for a public defender."

"More time for him, more waiting for us. Who will be the PD?"

"I have no idea. You have some history with Mel Powers, I hope she doesn't take this case to work with you."

"It's more against me and no, I doubt she takes this case. I'm sure she barely has a conscience when it comes to tax offender, traffic violation, even murder when her clients pay a lot of money, she's also interested in cases, that draw media attention, but she wouldn't work a serial rapist case pro bono. Not her style."

"Since when have lawyers a style?" Rock asked back dryly.

"Your point. How did you catch the suspect?"

"We got a call, anonymous, a man, who fits our description lives on Normandie. Skinny white guy, weird skin, funny smell

and a strange behavior towards women. Got a scratch, that looks like it was made by a knife, on his forearm."

"Who called?"

"Jane Ode."

"As in Jane Doe?"

"You ask me, e got this tip from a nurse, who works at his doctor's surgery. Maybe saw our alert on TV yesterday and when he came in this morning, she figured, this could be the guy. Of course, as a nurse she can't just call us and say: hey, the guy you're after might be here in our surgery. Also can't call us while he's there, can't give us his complete address because, how would she know when she just saw him?"

"You have to come up with another way to let the cops know, their man is in reach. Did you ever wonder how many criminals are still free, how many innocent people died, because doctors and nurses aren't allowed to talk to us?"

"No, that would give me a major headache."

"Your point."

"Do you have evidence, that proves he's our man?"

"The best we have is the DNA. We can also compare his cut wound to the ones, the victims have. When we have a warrant for his apartment we might find more evidence. Shoes with trace of the crime scene, clothes with blood. He didn't rape and kill them and walked away shiny and clean."

"We're working on it, give us a few more minutes. I want you here in case the lawyer arrives sooner than usual."

"Juana can search the house."

"She's new."

"Has an incredible eye and understanding of crime scenes. Brandon can join her, we need answers and evidence fast, it's better when they work together."

"What about Sanders?"

"Working a robbery gone bad. Don't worry, Juana and Brandon will get us what we need."

"Good. I want this scumbag booked and locked up tonight so women can go home with less fear. It's Los Angeles, you will never be able to walk home being absolutely safe, but we can make the city safer."

"That's our job." And as long as she could, she'd do her best. Protect and serve, her oath and she intended to take herself up on it.

\*\*\*

"When you were a CSI, did you close up road?" Shane asked.

"Not we didn't, the police did Why?" They were back in the office, having their lunch break. Hot soup to make her feel better. She was sure, she did not only feel cold because it was cold outside and she had been the whole morning outside, it was also because of what happened this morning. The picture of the deer in front of her, on the dirt road, bleeding, almost dead, looking at her in fear and pain, didn't let go of her. Like she had a video playing in front of her eyes, how she shot the deer. She killed it, the coup de grâce.

"You're still pale." He sat next to her. "After the soup and the tea."

"You don't get a nice complexion by having soup and tea."

He smiled, not a happy smile. "Which one is it?"

"Both."

"The only thing you could do for the deer was to shoot it. There was no other choice. Calling a vet wasn't an option, it was too late."

"We were too late."

"How on earth were we supposed to know they were there?"

"I don't know...gut feeling?"

"Stop bashing yourself, Sara."

"It's easy to say words, hard to feel them. Can you put it off like nothing happened?"

"No, not at all." He sighed. "The only thing that makes me feel better, and I hope it will make you feel better too, is they closed all roads out of the forest and checked on every car. Even the small ones."

"Hopefully it helps."

"It did." Now his smile was real. "They stopped a white pick-up truck, it had blood on the tires and on the trunk. The explanation how the blood got there is bad, the police is called, also CSI and I'm sure they'll confirm, it's deer blood. They can prove it's the same blood of the deer we found this morning, right?"

"Yes. They caught them?" Why didn't he tell her right away? These were great news.

"Looks like. Thanks to us interrupting them and calling for back-up. They weren't fast enough. Isn't that worth a smile?"

"More than one." She hugged him relieved. These news didn't bring the deer back to life, but it could mean, no more deer had to die. With the poachers arrested and DNA would tell them, if

the blood was the same, they had a solid case. Plus skid marks and other possible evidence in the car.

"Since when do you know?"

"Two minutes? I got the call and came to see you. Hoped it cheers you up a little bit."

"It does."

"Now we only have to take care of the other problem."

"Yeah, I'm sure I can find a solution there."

"Do you want me to take you home?"

"No, I can do it alone. As far as I know Sally is home, when I see his car around, I drive on and pick up Susan at my in-laws. One word to Marie and you can imagine what will happen. Otherwise did Sofia say she wants to come home early, looks after me."

"As she's supposed to do as your wife."

"She's the best."

"It's why you married her. Tell her we might have caught the poachers, it will make her happy to know, you feel better. And she might be able to tell you if the DNA is a match."

"It's not her case."

"No, but she knows the people there, can give us a hint. I want to know if we can come to work relaxed tomorrow or if we need to look out for more killers on the run. To me, poachers are nothing else than killers."

Sara nodded. She agreed with him. In her eyes hunters were killers too, only they had a license to kill. Which wasn't a comfort to the animals they killed. It didn't matter if James Bond or Doctor No shot you, you were dead anyway.

On her way home Sara got a call from Sofia. Putting her wife on speaker she continued driving.

"Hello Darling, how are you?"

"Missing you."

"I miss you too."

"Are you in the car?"

"Yes I am, you're on speaker. My hands are on the steering wheel, detective Curtis."

"It was lieutenant. Lieutenant, CSI Sidle. Stop ignoring my rank." The blonde laughed. When Sara came to Los Angeles, she called her a few times 'detective' to annoy the blonde. Now it looked like it was a part of their foreplay, a way of flirting.

"Now you're CSI Curtis, not supervisor, not even pretending, uhm, I mean acting, supervisor. Only a foot soldier."

"Be careful this soldier doesn't arrest you."

"She won't."

"Are you feeling better?"

"Yes." She had told Sofia about the morning, had called her after Shane and she were in their car and back to their normal job. "We might have caught the poachers."

"Really? That's great. how?"

"The roads were all closed, they stopped a car with blood on the tires and the trunk. The story the two men came up with was bullshit, they called the police and CSI. All we need is your colleagues to confirm the blood on the car is the blood of the dead deer. Skid marks are a match, it should be a solid case."

"Sounds like really good news."

"Absolutely. What about your case? You said you have a suspect in custody."

"He is, cried for a lawyer. So far everything points towards him...which brings a little problem with it..."

"You can't come home on time."

"Captain Rock wants me here. She doesn't trust Juana, she's too new."

"Understandable. It's okay, Honey."

"Are you sure? What if Sam..."

"If Sam is around, waiting for me, I drive straight to your parents and tell Marie he's waiting. You know what that means for him."

"Mom will rip off his balls and feeds them to whatever animal is around."

"Exactly. Sally is home too, I'm safe, you don't have to worry."

"Okay." Sofia would worry anyway.

"You nail the son of a bitch, make sure the city is safer, I stay at home and make sure, the scumbag doesn't get close to me."

"You don't plan to call Doug for help, do you?"

Sara laughed. "No." Her wife was so cute when she was jealous.

"Good. Mister Universe isn't supposed to be too helpful."

"You like him."

"Not that much."

"Good, me neither. Not enough to see him every day."

"You know what I want to hear. Now get your attention back to the road."

"Yes Officer."

"I'm going to make you pay for that later."

"Can't wait for your punishment. Make it long and very... hot. Maybe you can punish me twice."

"We'll see if you're this enthusiastic tonight." Sofia grumbled, trying not to let her wife hear, how amused she was herself.

"I bet I will. With you, punishing me... repeatedly. Bye Detective Dazzling."

"Lieutenant."

"Lieutenant Lascivious...Lieutenant Lust..."

"Concentrate on the road! I see you tonight." Sofia ended the call before her face turned too red. Sara calling her words like these made her feel very hot and...horny. She had to concentrate on her work, was at lab, there was no time for sex talk with her wife. Not now, later there was. A lot of time. For more than just talking.

Sara smiled when she opened the door and Jules stood there, Eric and Jorja next to her, Louise on her arm. "Hey."

"Sara!" Eric opened his arms to be lift up.

"Hey sweetie, how are you?"

"Love you."

"I love you too." She kissed him. "What a nice surprise."

"Mom said look Sara."

"Mommy wants you to look after me? Oh, there's the doctor talking. Come in, doctor Weinberg, I'm honored you offer a home session to me. I'd offer you some coffee, but in therapy you don't eat or drink, sorry."

"Crazy woman." Jules hugged Sara with one arm. "I don't bring my kids to therapy."

"Right, I knew there was something wrong about this picture." Sara walked with them into the living room, where she let Eric back on the ground. He started playing right away with Susan's toys. Jorja followed while Louise was placed next to Susan in the, how Sara called it: crawling cage. An area with a thick carpet, fenced so Susan and Louise could crawl, pull themselves up but couldn't get away. This way their parents didn't have to look after them every second.

"Give me a sec, I get us a coffee."

"Water is fine too."

"Don't tell me you try to cut down your coffee, the last time you did, you became bitchy."

"Not true!"

"Oh dear, it happens already. The therapist bitch is back."

"No wonder I kicked you out of therapy."

"You only did that because you wanted me as your friend, a normal friend after you have these strange doctor friends."

"Like Tanya?"

"She doesn't count, she's your cousin."

Jules followed Sara into the kitchen after she checked again if the gate of the fence was closed so Louise and Susan were safe. There she pulled her friends into her arms. "Did Sam come back?"

"No, he didn't. But he's still in Silver Lake." Sara rested her head on Jules's shoulder. It felt good to be in her friend's arms. Almost as good as being in Sofia's arms and the best thing was, her wife wasn't jealous when Sara with Jules. She understood her feelings for the therapist.

"How do you know?"

"I thought, it makes sense when he stays close by, so I called the motel, where I stayed when I came here the first time. The woman at reception remembered me and she told me, Sam booked a room until Sunday. It's likely he comes back, maybe tonight or tomorrow."

"Shall I stay here with you?"

"No, you don't have to. Sofia comes home soon, she planned to be back at four, then a case got new evidence, I told her not to worry, that I'd pick up Susan and might go over to your place. I don't want her to worry or rush through the evidence."

"Now I'm here and we stay until Sofia is back. Unless you want to be alone."

"Did I ever not want to be with you?"

"Yes."

"Okay, forget the first two weeks we knew of each other. I mean afterwards."

"No." Jules smiled before she got serious again. "Did you have nightmares?"

"Yes, first I dreamed of Trevor pulling me into the little shed in the garden, Sofia woke me up before he could rape me. I took a tranquilizer, the dreams didn't get better. Then I dreamed about Sam and Laura. Not my childhood, or not about the rape and the abuse. Laura tried to pull me back into the past, she wanted

me to undo what I did to Trevor and...then Sofia appeared, she did some kind of kung-fu on Sam, told Laura off and rescued me. My personal heroine. When I woke up, found myself in her arms, in a tight grip and I knew, I was safe. In my dreams and in reality. My wonderful wife was there, she took care of me and I had to kiss her - until she woke up. No more details"

"No more details needed. Did you have him on your mind during work?"

"Every now and then. Most times I was busy with what I was doing and I knew, he had little to no chances to find me. Besides George nobody had any idea, where Shane and me were. And...I had to shoot a deer."

"Why?"

"Because it was injured, the poachers had left it on the road, we must have disturbed them. The only thing we could do for it, was end its suffering fast. With a bullet."

"You don't have to feel guilty for it."

"I do."

"I can see that. You had no other choice and you had no idea these men were there, so it's impossible you could have been there earlier."

"Still...the 'what if' sentence is there, it's stuck in my head. What if I came there earlier. What if we had stopped them."

"What if you haven't come there? The deer would have suffered a lot and these men got away with it. Did you catch them?"

"Yes."

"You did everything right, Sara."

"It doesn't feel like it. Yet."

"Maybe a skilled therapist can help you out with that." Jules smiled. "Is it okay when the kids and me stay until Sofia is back?"

"Jules, do you really believe I'd send one or all of you away?"

"No."

"Good. Remember the wonderful time you stayed here? Okay, not wonderful because of the threats, but it was great having you here. I miss that. Knowing you're only one door away from me all the time. Very comforting. If you ever feel like giving up the house, I'm sure Sofia offers you a room here. Maybe when your kids are at college, Tony and Sally moved out, you and Greg can move into their rooms. Or you get the whole downstairs area."

"You are so cute when you build castles in the air." Jules kissed Sara. "You know I love you?"

"I do. Do you know I love your fiancé?"

"How could I forget it? He has a photo of you on his desk. He loves you and if I was a jealous person, I'd never let you and him alone for a second. Luckily I trust him and I know you love your wife, so there's no danger."

"Exactly. Like you and Greg are the only people on this planet, who can be with me all the time without making her jealous. I can fall asleep in your arms, meet you for coffee, have a movie night with Greg, Sofia is fine with it. When an old boyfriend wants to have dinner with me, she's ready to shoot him."

"I'm not surprise." Jules laughed.

"Mom, Sara sad?" Eric stood behind them and watched how his mother held Sara.

"No, I'm not sad my sunshine." Sara got out of Jules's arms and picked up her godson. "I was sad yesterday because a bad man was here and your mommy wanted to make sure I'm fine. Your mommy always worries when somebody she loves is or was sad. Whenever you're sad, you go to your mommy and she'll help you out, no matter what the problem is. Your mommy and daddy are always there for you. And so am I. Can you promise me that you come to us when you're sad?"

"Yes." The boy nodded. Sara knew, he didn't understand exactly what she was talking about, but when he got the main point, it was enough. He was never alone, somebody was always there for him because he was loved.

"Hi Honey, I brought a visitor."

"Hey, oh my Greggo." Sara kissed Sofia before she jumped into Greg's arms. "How nice you come along after work. I missed you, you should come over more often."

"Of course, I had to make sure you're fine and you have my family with you."

"They took care of me."

"I know, they love being with you. Just like I do. You know, when you become a CSI again, Sofia and I can be with you all the time, we don't have to wait until after work. How about you coming back to us? Becoming the cutest CSI in town and my sidekick? I can teach you all the things you missed the last years."

"The student became the master? Master Greg? Believe it or not, I am quite up to date, thanks to my wife, who has all the science magazines at home and I read them too. I might not have tried all these new theories and machines, but I read about them."

"Perfect, you can start tomorrow. I'd love to have your opinion on my case. We can go to work together, work the case, have breaks together, come home together."

"Jules, you're a doctor, I have a strange twitch in my right hand, it feels like it wants to slap your fiancé. What can it be?" Sofia asked sweetly.

"It's normal, I have it too. Must be a reaction to how he behaves, what he says."

"Jealousy is a sin. I think." Greg smirked and kissed Sara's cheek. "They're cute when they're jealous, not that they're really mad, but we can pretend we're scared, right?"

"Like they pretend they're jealous? These two love us, they'll never hurt us. I can't even pretend I'm scared. What's your case about?"

"Not that important, did Sam appear?"

"No, he didn't. He will at one point, he's still in Silver Lake."

"Did you see his car?"

"No, I called an old resource and got told where he stays. The same motel I lived in when Sofia and her men kicked in the doors and made me look like a criminal."

"Seriously? He stays there?"

"Are you still in contact with your fan from the reception there?" Sofia cocked her head. "The one, who wasn't very helpful to me? First."

"I saw her a few times, when we ran into each other around the reservoir, otherwise, no." Sara got out of Greg's arms and into the arms of her lover. "There is no other hidden woman in my life. I promise."

"Good. She was way too helpful back then, I think she liked you."

"Maybe she doesn't like cops."

"Does she tell you what he's doing."

"She has no idea what he does."

"I don't think he comes here when you're not alone. I'm sure this sick bastard observes the place and when you're alone, he comes back."

"It didn't work out today, the only one, who came here, was Jules. My therapist is back. Did you know she cut down caffeine again? Makes her bitchy."

"Oh my gosh, you're pregnant." Sofia squeaked.

"What? No, I'm not. I can't get pregnant anymore, you know that." Jules shook her head. Since Greg was sterilized it was more than unlikely she got pregnant again.

"If she is pregnant, she has to come up with a very good explanation or she needs to print new wedding inviting cards because my name can be replaced." Greg kissed his fiancé. "As a smart man I'm aware of the fact it's nothing is one hundred percent, it happened before that the woman got pregnant without cheating on her spouse, but I'd worry, Honey. To be honest."

"You should trust me."

"I do trust you, nevertheless it would be strange."

"The first thing he'd do is take the baby's DNA and cross-check it to his own. He did check the DNA of a girl years ago, to see, if her DNA was good enough for him. Not very romantic, in my opinion." Sara chuckled.

"Did you do the same with my DNA, Love?"

"No, I didn't. I knew right away you're perfect. The moment I saw you, I knew you're the mother of my children. Positive thinking. Or self-fulfilling prophecy. We have three wonderful kids and I'm the happiest man alive. Did I thank you for that today, Jules? I think I didn't. Thanks for making me the happiest man. Every day." He kissed her.

"They're so cute together." Sara smiled and pulled Sofia closer.

"I'm almost not mad at him anymore for misbehaving back then."

"You're glad he did what he did because it made Jules your friend. And even I, who should be jealous because she is very important to you and you're often in her arms, am glad she's here. She takes care of you and thanks to her son, you know you're a great mother. Made my plan to have a family with you much easier."

"Yes, Eric is a lot like his mother, he's a natural talented therapist. You're around him and you feel great. Which reminds me, I should play with my little cutie." Sara went back into the living room, where Eric and Jorja played and Susan and Louise seemed to be in a private crawling competition.

"Sara, cat." Jorja showed Sara a stuffed tiger.

"No Honey, it's a tiger. It looks like a cat, but a tiger is much bigger. Even bigger than Scooby or Rantanplan when they want treats." Sara sat down and a moment later both dogs were next to her. They heard their names and the word 'treat' in one sentence, which had to mean, they were supposed to get treats.

"Look at them, all they want are treats. Can you say that, Jorja?"

"Treat."

"Perfect. Shall we get a treat for the dogs?"

"Yes." It was hard to tell who was more excited, the dogs or Jorja. The girl loved feeding the dogs.

"Mama!" Susan said when she saw Sofia. "Mama!"

"Yes my dear." The blonde picked up her daughter. "How are you, my fast crawler?"

"Eg!" Susan looked at Greg.

"You want to go to Greg? Okay, say hello to Uncle Egg. I'm glad I'm not the only one, who got a ridiculous nickname by babies. Egg is worse than E-a."

"She says 'Eg', with only one g. And not egg." Greg corrected.

"Egg! Egg!"

He took the girl in his arms. "Hello my baby Sara, how are you? Do you like playing with my daughter?"

"My godchild." Sofia took Louise in her arms.

"E-a."

"Great, just like her siblings. I turn into a donkey again."

"Donkeys can be important." Jules sat next to her son. "Eric, Sara needs a new picture. Can you draw her something nice? Maybe how she and Sofia go for a walk on the beach with Scooby and Rantanplan?"

"Mom too?"

"I can sit next to you, yes."

"I'd like to have a picture too." Sofia said. "Something nice. How you and Jorja play with Susan and Louise. Could you draw that for me, please?"

The boy nodded. He liked drawing pictures, especially when the adults put them up on walls.

"Thank you very much, that's really kind of you." Sofia smiled.

"In a few months you can draw pictures for me too, Louise. In summer, when we're on the beach, you can draw the ocean. It's so big and beautiful. I hope you will like it there. It's great, there's a lot of sand, perfect for walking, when you fall, it doesn't hurt. Great playing place too." There were already so

many plans she had for their children. All she needed was warm weather and by then the children were older, could enjoy the beach more.

"Hello Marlene."

"Hi Sara, how are you? Hi Susan, you are looking happy, does mommy play with you?"

"I'm fine, thanks. We play 'stand up and drop right away', her favorite game. She gets better on the not fall right away part. How are you?"

"It's Friday, we've no school the next two days, how do you think I am?"

"Sad because you have to work tomorrow?"

"Yes. Don't mention it."

"Sorry. Don't worry, Steve has to work too. He's upstairs, waiting for you."

"Cool. Oh, before I forget to mention it: you don't have to pick up Lea, I'll do it. By the time the concert is over, we've finished dinner, I take her home on my way home."

"That's nice but I take her, she can't go home. Her parents think she stays here, so she'll stay here. It's a deal. We won't tell her parents where she is, in the unlikely case they call, and she stays here, gets picked up by me at ten thirty."

"Okay. It's nice you help her out."

"I think it'd be best to tell her parents where she is and why...I have to say this as a mother because I expect Steve to tell me the truth where he is."

"He has no reason to lie. And if he doesn't tell you, I let you know when he's about to do something stupid."

"Oh, did I mention I like you a lot? You're always welcome here."

Marlene laughed. "Good to know. I go upstairs and meet Ratatouille."

"Have fun." Sara held the hands of her daughter, who tried to get up again. Sooner or later she'd walk, first on her mother's hand, then all by herself. What a proud moment.

"Hey, did I miss Marlene?" Sofia came back with the dogs.

"You did by thirty seconds. She's upstairs now."

"Thirty seconds? They could be already naked."

"I can't see Steve as the type of guy, who greets a girl on their first date by pulling off her clothes. And I doubt Marlene

would agree on that. No, I think they're both still dressed and might be in or just over the awkward moment of being alone."

"Our son's first date. I'm so excited."

"He too, he changed four times."

"Why? He always looks good."

"How often did you change when we had dinner in Malibu?"

"You know, the dinner you won?"

"That...it was a super expensive place...I had to make sure I wear the right outfit...it had nothing to do with...seven times ...but it was..."

"Honey, don't try to get yourself out of it, you changed more often and it had nothing to do with the restaurant, you were nervous because of me."

"Who's the smug one now?"

"Am I wrong?"

"No." The blonde smiled. "It was worth it, you kissed me there."

"I did and I wished I had kissed you before. I wasted time, I could have spent with you." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her. "Ignoring my feelings to you, thinking, they might be wrong, was one of the most stupid things I've ever done. I had my love, my luck, my everything right in front of me and tried hard to look the other way. Not very smart."

"In the end you realized how wonderful I am. That was smug." Sofia grinned.

"It was and it was so you. I like that a lot." Sara smiled and got her attention back to Susan, who found out, it was helpful to have your mothers sitting on the floor with you. You could grab their clothes and pull yourself up.

"She is devoted to stand up and walk." Sofia said.

"Yeah, she is. Crawling is a fun thing to do, it gets you around, you can crawl away if you think your parents are annoying, or they don't get you where you want to be. Walking is even better, although she's a champion in crawling up and down stairs. Must be something she got from you. Remember, when you were supposed to sit and used a skateboard to move around the house?"

"I am an adult, when I want to go from one room to another, I do it. If I can't walk, I find another way."

"You were not supposed to do it because you had a broken arm, a dislocated shoulder and not your prosthesis. You crawled up the stairs."

"I had to use the bathroom. My bathroom. I knew I could do it, I was right."

"You acted not very responsible towards your own health."

"I knew what I was doing...what do you think Steve is doing right now?"

"Wash his hands?"

"Huh?"

"Honey, they want to cook. Get the sex idea out of your head, it won't happen tonight. Not for them. Maybe for you."

"Oh, I hope this is true, he's way too young...okay, I stop and concentrate on my sex life. Which will be over next week. Doctor Blumfield called, we have an appointment on Monday. Don and I."

"That was quick."

"My cycle says it's the best day, otherwise we have to wait for another month. We don't want to waste four weeks, do we?"

"No."

"See, so we go there, I did start taking the medication she gave me, maybe it won't work, we never know, but even when I'm on the medication for a few weeks, there's no guarantee I get pregnant."

"No, there isn't, we were lucky last time."

"Which is an advantage for us now. Last time, I wanted to be pregnant, no matter what, I put a lot of pressure on myself. This time I want to be pregnant, of course, but if it doesn't work out, we have two kids, we have a child, that has your DNA and lived for nine months in me, so I'd be sad if it doesn't work out, but not devastated. I'm more relaxed, which will help."

"It will. You and Don will be parents."

"You'll be the mother too, don't forget Honey, it's our child. He's the daddy. It must be weird for him, to go to this place, into the cabin, with everybody knowing what he's about to do."

"Then being on your honeymoon must be weird too because everybody knows what you're doing at night. It's their job, if no man was coming to their place, they were out of work and had to close the whole place down. At what time shall we be there?"

"Half past five. I sent him a message so he can clear it with his captain. And tell Tanya, in case he wants to take her with him."

"I'm sure she thinks it's fun." Sara laughed.

"Probably. I wonder if she never wonders how her and Don's children might look like. Or if she really doesn't want her own children. I mean, she could have a surrogate mother."

"Maybe in a few years she changes her mind. Until then she can play mommy to Susan and her sister or brother. And is a happy aunt."

"And her boyfriend is a proud father. Look at his daughter, she's standing again. That's right Susi, keep your balance, very good, see, just one hand, no hands and...back on the diapers."

"She looks slightly annoyed about this falling down thing." Sara chuckled. "Things don't work out the way she wants them to be."

"No, an early lesson of life."

"And when life fucks you over, you raise your middle finger and get up again."

"Honey! Language!" Sofia reprinted her wife in shock.

"Sorry. Looks, she listened, she gets up again." Using the armchair Susan pulled herself up again, holding on the furniture and gave the world a look like she wanted to say: sooner or later I will be walking and there's nothing you can do to stop me. Slowly let go of one hand, then of the other. For two or three seconds she stood up before gravity got her back down.

"Keep trying, you're getting there." Sara supported her daughter. "Oh, that reminds me, I did some shopping today."

"The fridge was full."

"No, not food shopping, baby stuff shopping. I got Susan a moving chair. She sits in there and when she walks, she can move around the house with it. But she can't fall, so it's safe. And I got her a jolly jumper. You attach it to the doorframe and Susan can jump up and down it, walk a few steps, gets pulled back. It looked like fun, like a workout for babies. We can try it."

"Sounds good, where is it?"

"I get it." Sara kissed her lover and got up.

"You hear that, Susan? Mommy bought a lot of fun stuff for you and it's not even Christmas. You get spoiled big time. Again. You'll be a spoiled girl one day."

Her daughter didn't pay attention, she was standing again, let go of the armchair, swayed, caught her balance, swayed again, lifted her feet and...fell. Angry she started crying.

"Oh Honey, you almost got it, don't worry." The blonde picked her daughter up and kissed her. "You're doing so great, you were almost there. Don't give up."

"What happened?"

"She was about to do her first step alone and then gravity won again, which really pi.... annoyed her."

Sara smirked. Pissed her off? So much for watching the language. She got the jolly jumper out of the box and attached it to the doorframe. "Ready to use, have fun."

"Let's try it." Sofia put her daughter in the seat and stepped a step back.

Surprised by the new toy in her life, Susan stopped crying and touched the seat. It was made of cotton, with two holes for her legs, so she sat in deep, couldn't get out alone, not fall out. When she realized her feet were touching the floor, she started to make a step. Satisfied she was still kind of standing, she did another, sat down, which got her back to where she started and did it all again.

"She looks impressed and satisfied." Sara observed.

"Yes, her first steps without falling back on the floor. Oh look, she jumps. She jumps!" Sofia cheered excited. Her daughter walked and jumped. "Oh Honey, this one is perfect, it will help her train to keep her balance."

"Yes, we can use it anywhere. The other one, with the wheels, should be used only downstairs before she takes it down the stairs."

"We have the gate so she doesn't crawl them down, but you're right, she can use it here. Or outside. We can take her to...a huge car park when it's closed. Or somewhere else, where she can run and have fun."

"When Greg buys one too, she can race Louise."

"And we chase after our kids."

"Our new exercise, child chasing. Not that we aren't running after the twins anyway because they love to run away."

"They want to explore the world, like all children do." Sara watched Susan jump in her hanging chair, or whatever it was. Her daughter was having a blast.

When Sara's cell phone beeped it was a little bit after half past ten. "Time to pick up our oldest daughter."

"She'll ruin the date upstairs."

"Honey, you only want to know what's going on upstairs." Sara teased.

"Don't you?"

"Maybe."

"You do too!"

"Yes, but we'll be good mothers, we stay downstairs and let Steve have his space."

"We are such great mothers... Shall I come with you?"

"No, stay with Susan, I pick Lea up and come back right away." Sara kissed Sofia.

"Bring Zoe too."

"If she wants I will. I get the kids home safely and go to bed with my wife. We have to work tomorrow."

"We do." When she was honest, she'd rather stay at home with her family and prepare everything for Christmas than go to work. Unfortunately when she wanted money for Christmas, she had to go to work. It all belonged together somehow.

Sara got her car keys and left the house. It was only a short drive to the club on Sunset, where Lea was waiting for her, just over two miles, but too far let the girl walk it. It was dark and Sunset Boulevard wasn't the best area for a sixteen year old girl to be alone at night. Sofia's last cases made that obvious.

To her surprise Sara found out, Lea wasn't alone when she stopped at the club. It was not Zoe, who was with her, it were Marie and Marc.

"What are you doing here?"

"We heard about the concert and decided, it was about time for us to participate at a rock concert." Marie grinned.

"You went here to have a look after Lea?" Sara looked apologetic to the girl. That wasn't the plan.

"When we get used as an alibi, we want to make sure, Lea is fine. And it was a great concert, really. The band is great, reminded me of our young and wild days, when we saw ACDC, just this time it was not a male rock band, it was a female rock band. Very talented, very good rock sound. You should come to the next concert too."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, it was great." Marc supported his wife. "We were by far the oldest people in the room, which didn't bother us. Age should never be in your way of having a great time."

"Okay. Did you like the concert too Lea?"

"Yes, great sound and Zoe plays the drums like Tré Cool."

"Who is that?"

"The drummer of Green Day, one of the best."

"For us, that would be Phil Rudd or Simon Wright. Anyway, it was a great evening, now let Sara take you home, or to your second home, and enjoy the rest of the evening. Oh, and if your parents ever find out, you weren't with Steve, tell them, you were with us at a concert. Good night Honey." Marie kissed Sara's cheek. "Give a kiss to my daughter and my gorgeous granddaughter."

"I will. Good night."

"Sleep tight." Marc kissed Sara. "And don't look this surprised, the Captain and I aren't that old, we do know what good music is."

"It's just a surprise."

"Life is full of surprises."

"Looks like." Sara unlocked the car.

"I was as surprised as you are. And first I thought they were checking on me."

"They were."

"Yeah, but in a cool way. They wear leather pants and jackets. With patches of rock bands. Your parents-in-law are cool." Lea slipped on the passenger seat. "How is Steve's date going?"

"I can't tell you, Sofia and I were the whole evening downstairs with Susan, he and Marlene have the whole floor to themselves."

"No reason to worry, he is a gentleman."

"I don't worry about my son, he's a good son, stays at home while my daughter goes out with my in-laws. Any police control? Besides the one in leather?"

"No." Lea laughed. "Only the leather cop...which sounds like a S&M movie."

"We won't tell Marie you said that. Could you talk to Zoe?"

"Yes, we had dinner together with friends. They're all cool."

"Will you and Zoe do something alone?"

"I'm working on that."

"Does she seem to be interested in spending time with you alone?"

"I honestly can't tell. Would be nice."

"If she's a smart girl, she will." Sara squeezed Lea's hand. "The movies are a great place to get closer, why don't you suggest a movie night? In case she hesitates, tell her, you want to ask Marlene and Steve too."

"Maybe they want to be alone."

"We have a look how things went for them. First I'm glad you had a nice evening, everything worked out and you're not too shocked Marie and Marc were there."

"If my parents were there I'd have been shocked."

"And in need for a very, very good explanation."

"No explanation needed, just granted for four years."

"Which is not what we want." Sara stopped the car in front of the house. "Let's see what Steve and Marlene are doing."

"Greeting us." Lea pointed towards the door, where and Marlene appeared. "Hi, is dinner already over?"

"Yes, but we left you a plate, it was delicious." Marlene smiled.

"Zoe is still at the club?"

"Yes."

"Okay. I'm going home, dad wants me at the surgery at quarter to eight. I miss the times when Saturdays were free."

"Tell me about it." Steve agreed.

"You see how life will be after school, it's all about work. Have a safe trip home, Marlene."

"Thanks Sara, good night."

"Night, night."

"I see you Sunday." Marlene hugged Steve. "Tell Lea about our plan, maybe she wants to join. I'll tell Zoe. Bye Lea."

"Bye and good night."

A plan for Sunday? Another date? Sara smirked secretly. It appeared like the evening had been good. She had to tell her wife, the blonde would be over the moon.

"Okay, now that your mothers are gone and we're alone, you can tell me all details about your date. Was it a date?" Lea switched off the light and slipped next to Steve into his bed. They decided preparing the bed in the other room was too much of a hassle.

"Was your date a date?" He asked back amused and pulled Lea into his arms.

"No. It was more like going to a concert."

"Mine was more a dinner."

"A dinner can be a date."

"I never had a date...but...I don't know."

"You meet her again on Sunday."

"Together with you and Zoe. Friends meeting. Did you and Zoe have any time alone?"

"No. First we had dinner with the rest of the band and after the concert, there were too many people around. Including your grandparents."

"My moms weren't happy about them checking on you."

"They were cool, I had no idea they like rock music and they were at a couple of very cool concerts. AC/DC, Black Sabbath, Metallica, The Rolling Stones. Did you know they left your mother with her grandmother quite often to see those bands? Or for a weekend on Sunset Strip to see all new and famous rock bands? The Captain has a drumstick of Tony Chapman?"

"Who is that?"

"That was the drummer of The Rolling Stones. And they have various signed albums of bands. Some are rare and worth a lot of money."

"I know they have got a record player and like a thousand records, granddad still buys them. Most times I prefer an MP3, then again, there's something about listen to an old record on a record player. The cracking sound belongs to it and makes it special. Plus I store my songs on blank CDs or the computer, to have a shelf with records, you can touch and look it, looks cool."

"We definitely need a record player in our apartment later."

"You get one when I get a beamer for huge movie nights."

"Deal." Lea kissed his cheek. "What is the next plan for you and Marlene? Besides the shopping tour on Sunday."

"None."

"You can take her to Lou's premiere movie."

"The second ticket is for you."

"It's a great chance to be alone with her. Okay, alone with a lot of other people."

"Yeah, alone between famous people, great, she will be busy looking who is around and doesn't pay attention to me anymore."

"No, that would be me."

"You're allowed to have a look around and ignore me. I wonder who we'll see."

"I know a few people I'd like to see."

"Me too. How about we take Lou's offer and go to his place tomorrow? It's too cold for the pool but we can play tennis."

"We both have no talent when it comes to tennis."

"No, which doesn't mean, we don't have fun."

"True. First work and then tennis. We end with Triple Burger? I ask my parents if I get the car."

"It's so about time that I turn sixteen and can drive too. Being a baby is annoying, I have to take the bus all the time or need somebody to drive me."

"That's why you have me, you personal driver. A few more weeks and you're sixteen too."

"Finally."

"Do you want a big party?"

"Yes, you, my family and me, what a huge party."

"Marlene."

"We'll see."

"Okay, so she didn't kiss you?"

"No." Steve laughed. "We were not even close to a kiss. We talked about school, sport, music. Nothing about us."

"Sounds like my evening."

"Well, at least we've got us, haven't we?"

"Yes, we do. Who needs Marlene and Zoe?"

"Nobody."

"Exactly." Lea closed her eyes. They had each other, they had a best friend, a lot of people weren't this lucky.

"I wonder if there's ever a girl, who likes me."

"Of course there is one. She's right with you."

"Thanks." He chuckled. "You don't like me the way you should as my girlfriend. Maybe I'm an 'only friend' type."

"No, I know one girl, who likes you."

"You."

"I'm not talking about me, I talk about Jenny."

"Who is that?"

"She's in my English course. A few days ago, while we were waiting for the teacher, she told me, I'm very lucky to have you as my boyfriend. Which irritated me first, but then I realized, they don't get our relationship. I told her, you're not my boyfriend, you're my best friend and she looked happy about that. You got yourself an admire, a shy one."

"Is she cute?"

"Guys, your first questions is always how a girl looks. Aren't there more important questions?"

"Okay. Is she one of the nice girls or one of the bitches?"

"She's not a cheerleader, not a nerd. More a... a loner. She keeps a lot to herself, doesn't participate much in school activities. The few times I talked to her, she was nice, you can

have a real conversation with her, she is not one of these girls, who giggle all the time for no reason."

"Sounds a little bit like you."

"More than a cheerleader, yes."

"That is good. How about we have lunch with her next week? If that's okay with you."

"Sure. I'm much more open to people since I've met you."

"Am I your hero?"

"Absolutely. Does that give your ego a boost?"

"I feel like Hercules. So Jenny? You think she can make me forget about Marlene?"

"That's up to you. Marlene is nice, the question is, is she interested in you? Or still attached to her ex? Or not into younger boys. Age does matter, sometimes. The problem with Jenny is, she isn't exactly your usually prey."

"You make me sound like I've got another girl every night!"

"I didn't mean it this way, I mean her hair is black like Tanya's, her skin is darker than Marlene's. Much darker."

"So she's black? Better than a blonde."

"You're such a charm!" Lea slapped him. Why again was this idiot her friend?

"Tell me you're kidding. My parents did not go to this concert." Sofia couldn't believe her ears. Her parents went to Zoe's concert? To watch Lea and listen to the music? This was so not right. Her parents didn't belong to a concert of a high school rock band, they belonged to a concert of.. a crooner.

"Nope, they were there. Dressed in leather."

"That is so embarrassing."

"Lea thought it was cool."

"It's not."

"They want to go to another concert, apparently it reminded them of the old AC/DC concerts."

"Please, shoot me!"

"No, I'd rather kiss you." Sara pulled the blonde in her arms. "I don't shoot the woman I love. Not even when she asks me to do it."

"Your in-laws are playing teenager, must be their tenth spring or so."

"Oh come on, they're not that old and you went to the last AC/DC show too. These guys are the same age like your parents, so it's not bad."

"They're rock stars and not groupies."

"Look on the bright side, the next time Lea wants to see Zoe live, she tells your parents, they come with her and she can tell her parents, she spends the evening with Steve's grandparents. No lie needed."

"Okay, I'm going to push this thought aside. Can you kiss it away?"

"I can try." Sara kissed Sofia again, got her arms around the waist of the blonde. "Do you think you can take a day or two off next week? I want to ask for Monday and Tuesday off."

"I plan to do the same because of the IV appointment. We are busy, but not busy like with a serial killer. We had enough of them in Los Angeles the last years."

"They all get attracted by the City of Angeles."

"Yeah, it seems to be a good place for murderer, just like Vegas. They blend in here perfectly. Why did I not go to... I don't know? A tiny town in Montana?"

"First of all your decision to give women a try because you had bad luck with men isn't likely to work out in a small town in Montana and probably also not very accepted there. Second, they don't need a CSI or if they do, they're fine with the one or two they have. Third, and that's most important, we hadn't met if you were in Montana."

"Right, being with you is worth having serial killers in my life. Every now and then. Actually, being married to you is worth anything."

"It's not only us, if you were in Montana, Greg had never met Jules."

"True. We are the reason they're married. They should thank us more often."

"You can tell them tomorrow, I invited them for dinner. With their kids. A house full with children. Just like today."

"Perfect. Are we going to cook something or order?"

"I'll prepare pasta with salad and tomato sauce. Yes, with meatballs for you Spicy ones."

"And cheese?"

"Of course."

"Have I ever told you you're the perfect woman?"

"Yes, you did. By the way, you're the perfect woman too."

"You beat me on this point."

"And you're the sexiest woman alive, a movie star hits on you whenever he has the chance. He must know you're the sexiest

woman alive. With that swagger of yours, you just make everybody drool. Sexy ass." Sara grabbed Sofia's ass and squeezed it.

"Are you marking your property?"

"I could give your ass a hickey, but the last time I tried you squeaked like a piglet." The brunette laughed. Her wife was ticklish, but she had no idea, Sofia was this ticklish.

"You call your wife a piglet?"

"No, I said she squeaked like one."

"My ass and I are very sensitive and very, very ticklish. When I sank my teeth in your ass, you did the same, my love. Comes to mind, I'd like to do that again."

"Stay away from my ass!"

"See, you're the same." Sofia slipped on top of her lover, cupped her mouth with her own for a long kiss. "I love you."

"Love you too. And I'll be with you on Monday, hold your hand. Everything will be all right."

"I hope so."

"Honey, we made it once, there's no reason why it shouldn't work out the second time."

"I'm older now."

"Not even two years. And like you said, if it doesn't work out, we have two kids. Two wonderful kids."

"Yes. If it doesn't work out, we blame it on Don."

"I'm sure he'll do and give his best." Sara chuckled.

"Yeah...interesting sentence. Oh, I saw a nice cup today, I want to give it to him for Christmas, he can take it over to Tanya's place."

"Why? What does it say?"

"I'm hot, blow me."

## Saturday, December 14th

When her cell phone rang Sara thought for a moment it was Sam. Did he find out her number? She changed it after she decided not to have any contact with her family anymore. It was seven in the morning, nobody else would call her at this time of the day. Morning. For some night. A look at the display showed her, it was her boss, who called her this early.

"Good morning George."

"Good morning Sara, how are you?"

"I'm fine. Will you change that?" There couldn't be a good reason why he called her, could it? Her shift started in an hour, they'd meet then. Why call her now unless something happened.

"Now, in fact I'm about to make your day better."

"How? Did the poacher confess?"

"I have no idea, it's not about them. It's about you. Why don't you stay at home today?"

"Today? I asked for Monday and Tuesday."

"And you get them, you can have today too. You worked the last days, the forecast for the day is bad, we don't expect many people. You can stay home today and Shane tomorrow. I was about to offer him today so you can have three days in a row, but he's already on his way. Are you at home?"

"Yes."

"You can't sleep in anymore after you're awake, but you can stay home."

"With a baby in the house you never sleep in. I take your offer and stay home, thank you."

"You're welcome. Does your wife stay home too?"

"No, she has to work, her days off are Monday and Tuesday too."

"Tell her to come home early, have a few hours with you."

"I'm sure if she can arrange that, she'll do it. Thanks George."

"Enjoy your day and I'm sorry I couldn't tell you sooner. The weather wasn't supposed to be this bad today."

"It's freezing down here in Silver Lake."

"Heavy snowfall on the mountains, heavy rain for the city and lower forest areas. A day to stay inside."

"I think I'll do exactly that. See you tomorrow."

"Yes, see you tomorrow."

Sara ended the call and smiled. A day off. What a nice surprise. So much for when somebody called you this early, it had to be something bad. She was wrong and in this case, she liked being wrong.

"Mommy looks happy." Sofia said to Susan. They had listened to the phone call while Sofia fed their daughter.

"Mommy can stay at home today. The weather is too bad. A whole day for her baby daughter. We can cuddle up on the couch, listen to Christmas songs and bake cookies."

"While the other mommy has to work."

"The only downside." Sara kissed her wife. "When you don't get a new case, let me know. Or when you get a case and see when you'll be in the lab for lunch. Susan and I come over, have lunch with you, we bring you something nice and freshly cooked."

"No, stay away from crime. You had enough of it at work this week and the lab isn't a good place to be for our daughter. Bad karma."

"Yes, the karma isn't the best. Neither is the environment."

"Who's karma is bad?" With sleepy eyes Steve came into the kitchen.

"The one of the lab. You look tired, son."

"I am."

"Did you and Lea stay awake too long?"

"No, we went to bed after she came here. Why does work start early in the morning?"

"Because you want the afternoon and evening off."

"Right."

"Your mother can stay at home today. Her boss called and told her due to the bad weather he doesn't need her help. Isn't she lucky? She'll stay on the couch, listen to Christmas songs, watch a movie, play with your sister, make some cookies."

"Or start the Christmas cleaning, work on the papers we ignored for a while, check if we need anything else for Christmas and take care of the dogs and the baby."

"The tax folder?" Sofia asked carefully.

"The tax folder. It does need some attention."

"I think work is better than that."

"Which doesn't change the fact, it has to be done. Don't worry, I leave something for you."

"Thank you very much." Sofia made a grimace. That was something her wife could do all by herself if she liked.

"You're welcome. When will you come home, Steve?"

"Around one, I think. Pick Tanya up before I come back, it's Spanish lesson time. Next week I've to write a test and she wants an 'A' as a Christmas gift. Why didn't she ask for something else?"

"Like what? A kiss?"

"For example."

"Her boyfriend does that. You're her student and as her student it's your job to bring home good marks. Your mothers want them too." Sofia grinned.

"Great, Don has the fun part." He checked his watch. "I wake Lea up. Bet, she's still dreaming of the concert."

"How often did you dream about dinner?"

"Not your business, mom." He stuck out his tongue and went back into his room.

"He is cheeky, very cheeky. No Christmas present for him." Sofia decided. "Santa sees everything and remembers everything."

"Santa should remember it's time to go to work." Sara took Susan in her arms. "Mommy has to catch bad guys and we stay home. A lot of work waits for us here."

"Mama."

"Exactly. Mama goes to work."

"Mama."

"And your other mother stays with you. Steve goes to work too."

"Mama."

"I think Steve has to wait a little longer until she says his name."

"When he continues to call her stink bomb he might call him mean brother or meany."

"Meany should be easy to be said." Sofia kissed her wife and daughter. Like Sara mentioned, it was time for her to go to work. Hopefully she could come back home on time and spend some hours with her family.

The tax folder was one point of her agenda. When Susan went back to sleep, Sara gave their paperwork an hour of her time, knowing it took more than that to finish the folder. For some things she needed Sofia and her files, so it made more sense to wait until the blonde was here and they could work on it together. The basic was done, the things she could fill out were

filled out and there was more work waiting for her. A day off could be a day full of pleasure, a day for yourself, she didn't have crossed the couch off her list, there were only a few things between her and the couch. The dogs were off her list, Tony removed them when he took them out for a run. He needed to get in shape for Christmas. Whatever that meant. Since when did he worry about his shape anyway? Well, it saved her time, time she could use on other projects in her mind. Cleaning. Having already the second load of laundry in the washing machine, she took Susan downstairs with her and started cleaning the kitchen. Once a month they washed out the fridge and freezer, she also mopped the floor, washed the fronts of the cabinets and cleaned the windows. When she finished the oven and got herself a coffee for a break, Susan woke up.

"Clever girl, you slept the whole time I cleaned." With her daughter in her arms she sat on the couch. "Now mommy cleaned the kitchen and can spend some time with you, right? Let me have some coffee and we play on the carpet. A few minutes, then I continue with the living room. I wonder if your grandparents use the free day to clean their house too. Or if they come over later because they're bored without you. Say nana."

"Nana."

"You are such a smart baby. How about some walking? Do you want to walk around?" She got up and placed Susan with her feet on the ground. Immediately the girl started walking, being hold by the hands of her mother. Together they walked through the living room and back, Sara always holding Susan up, when her daughter's feet didn't do what they were supposed to do.

"How about you do some jumping exercise?" She sat Susan in her chair. With joy the little girl started jumping up and down, squeaking happily.

"You do this and I clean a little bit more." When she left the living room to get her cleaning utensils Susan started crying.

"Honey, I'm right here, no need to cry." Sara came back and Susan stopped crying. "Even when you can't see me, it doesn't mean you're alone. Somebody is always around."

"What happened to you?" Sally came down the stairs. "Why aren't you at work?"

"My boss called this morning, gave me the day off."

"Nice boss. Don't you have better things to do than clean the house?"

"A lot of things, I gave our tax folder an hour, which is not much better than cleaning and at one point I have to clean anyway. Why not get it out of my way in the morning? Do you want to help me?"

"No, sorry I've got an appointment with three nice people, coffee and a lot of breakfast." Sally gave Susan a stuffed bunny. "Jump with Roger, mommy has to work. I'm sure later she has time for you."

"Of course. Thanks to Tony, who took the dogs out for a walk, I have a few more minutes."

"Will your in-laws pick Susan up later?"

"No, I gave them the day off. Susan and I go over to Jules to see Louise later. When we're done here."

"Baby meeting. Next year there might be another baby around. From zero to three children within three years."

"Yeah...you don't mind them, do you?" Sara asked carefully. It was Sofia's house, they had their own area upstairs, but Sally and Tony had to live with the children. They heard them, they saw them and when Susan cried very loud, Sara was sure, Sally could hear it downstairs.

"No, if I didn't like children, I would have left when Susan was born. They're perfect to practice for my own children later."

"Good."

"Susan is crazy when you put her in this thing. She jumps and runs like somebody is after her." Sally shook her head in amusement, watching the little girl squeaking and jumping.

"Yeah, she loves it. The best way to walk and jump without ending on her diapers."

"A few more weeks and she can do all these thing without help."

"Yes, we keep her in the chair anyway, it's handy for us, she can't get out."

"A modern baby prison."

"For a prisoner she looks very happy." The doorbell rang. "I take it. Can you have an eye on Susan?"

"Sure, I might even share my breakfast cookie with her."

"Breakfast cookie?"

"Sure, it's almost Christmas. My advents calendar is a cookie every morning."

"She'll be addicted to sweets before she has all her teeth." Sara had to get Tanya to make her daughter understand, it was important to brush her teeth frequently and to eat a lot of fruits

and vegetables. Sweets were poison for the teeth...then again, she had mother, who was a chocoholic. How was their poor Susan supposed to love only healthy food?

"William said you could need a hand." Sofia left her car. Her boss sent her to the north area of Hollywood, Beachwood Canyon. From here she had a great view over the city and on the Hollywood Sign. An expensive area, most times they were called for robberies and burglary. Homicides were seldom.

"Yes, the area is big."

"So it the chaos." The blonde took a look around, the garden in front of the villa was as big as her entire property. Various palm trees were plant, roses and fruit trees. The heads of the roses were scattered all over the garden, leaves of the palm trees were on the ground, one tree was half out of the ground and no fruits were left on the trees.

"It continues inside."

"Where are the owner?"

"New Zealand. Escaping the weather."

"Sweet. Looks like somebody knew they weren't at home."

"Yes, when they come home, they won't recognize it anymore. Go ahead, start inside. Wherever you want."

"Okay." Slowly she made her way to the entrance door. Without closer looking there was no sign of forced entry, the door looked like it came freshly from a catalog. The perfect picture changed once she opened the door. To the right was a staircase. The banister wasn't white anymore, it was reddish with green from spray paint, a few poles were missing or broken. On the floor was soil, broken glass, china, paper and other things. It looked the burglars were not only after valuables but also wanted to trash the place.

"They even ripped wallpaper off, I don't believe it." She mumbled.

"Reminds you of the last party you threw as a teenager?" Kyle stepped into the hallway.

"No, if I had had a party like this, mom had grounded me for the rest of my life. And made sure I can sit on my ass for months. This is...vandalism."

"It is. Get what you want and trash the place. Make the work for the police more difficult, shock the owners more. The perfect party for some teenagers."

"How much did they take?"

"I count five bright spots on walls, missing paintings, the jewelry box was empty, a hidden safe was discovered and emptied. I have no idea what was here, the owners are informed, are on their way back home, until they are here, we have no real idea, what is missing. They contact their insurance company, with their list we can start."

"Point of entry? The front door looked like new."

"Back door, a glass door."

"What about security?"

"They jammed the alarm system, used the right pin code. Whoever did this knows a few things about alarm systems and computer."

"And has a temper. This is rage, all the things that were destroyed stood for something or somebody else."

"Rage about the wealth of these people? Something personal? Hire a gang, pay them and tell them to destroy as much as possible. Oh and they can also help themselves to whatever they like and see."

"Ordered by somebody, who knows the security code? No computer genius needed in this case. Definitely an angle you should work, detective."

"I will. Where will you start?"

"Does upstairs look the same?"

"The whole house looks like this. The backyard is better. Except for the pool. They added something to the water, it's blue. Like a lot of ink."

"Nice, blue water. Blue like the ocean. I start upstairs, when Greg continues downstairs we can meet in the middle. Or in the backyard."

"Doesn't your rich movie star friend live in this area?"

"He does. I'm sure if I call him, he sends me lunch over. Or even delivers it himself."

"I'm not sure if Sara likes this."

"My wife got a phone call from her boss this morning, he gave her the day off. Soon she'll have forgotten about me and have fun with another woman." Unless Jules had no time to meet Sara. Which wasn't likely. With three little children the only thing you could plan was look after your kids and this was something, they could do together.

Sara opened the door and closed it right away. A foot was pushed between the door and the doorframe.

"We are going to talk."

"Leave me alone, Sam."

"No, I won't. I will come in and we talk."

"You're not welcome here." She managed to get the security chain on. At least he couldn't burst inside. He could break the whole door, but that would take some effort. "Sally, call the police, we have an intruder!"

"Don't be ridiculous Sara, I'm your brother."

"You are not welcome here." Sara repeated. Meanwhile the dogs arrived and growled at Sam.

"I don't leave, Sara."

"Then the police will arrest you. I don't want to talk to you, you can't force me."

"She's your mother, for Christ's sake."

"How comes she only is my mother when she feels bad, when she needs me? Whenever I need her, she doesn't care. She let me down more than once and her disorder is not an excuse for that. I decided for a reason why I don't want anything to do with her. Same for you. For years you didn't care."

"I was a teenager."

"And later? When you turned yourself into a lawyer? You made sure your life is good, never reached out for your little sister. You didn't care about me for thirty years, now I don't want you in my life anymore."

"Mom is really not good and she asks for you every time I visit her."

"Tell her, I took her advice and keep my past in my past. She and you are my past, I don't want you in my present nor in my future."

"I'm your brother."

"No, you're a stranger, who shares some of my DNA. Genes are not everything, they don't make you family. Not for me. I have a family, I'm happy, you and Laura are no longer a part of my life. Do whatever you want, I don't care, just leave me alone."

"You wouldn't mind if your own mother dies?"

Sara thought about it for a second. "No. I don't have a mother and I don't have a brother. You are not family to me. And if you don't leave, I will call the police again, tell them, you try to force your way in the house and I suspect you to have weapon."

"That's crazy."

"Crazy is that you don't understand you're not welcome."

"I can file a report for your friends, they threaten me with guns."

"Leave our property and our lives and nobody will threaten you."

"Police is on its way." Sally called from the back. "We can also handle him ourselves."

"No, we leave him to the police, he's not even worth me getting my gun. Take your foot out of the door, Sam. Otherwise I will make you take it out." She took an umbrella with a sharp tip.

"That's assault."

"No, it's defending my home. I told you often enough to leave, you refused to do so, I can do this to make you leave. Or I let the dogs out, they'd love to get their teeth in you."

"You're crazy."

"Good, no need to waste your time with a crazy person. Leave." She lifted the umbrella and aimed for Sam's shoe. He pulled the shoe away and Sara closed the door. Done, he was gone. No, not gone, but out of her house. Exhausted she slipped down the door. Luckily it wasn't a glass door, he couldn't see her. The dogs came to her, licked her face to comfort her.

"This isn't over, Sara."

For her it was. He was gone. Out of her sight.

"The cops should be here any minute. I gave them his license plate." Sally came with Susan on her arm into the hallway.

"Are you okay?"

"As okay as I can be with him around." Slowly Sara got up.

"Thanks for looking after her and calling the police."

"You're welcome. He doesn't understand, you don't want him nor your mother in your life. What is wrong with him?"

"Sam never liked it when people told him what to do."

"Will he stay away?"

"No, he'll come back."

"He should be arrested."

"They can't keep him for long."

"One night in the right cell might be enough. When he becomes somebody's girlfriend."

"Nice idea." Sara pushed herself up. Time to get Sam out of her head; although she knew, he'd stay there at least for the rest of the day.

"Sam Sidle, what can you tell me about him?"

Irritated Sofia looked up in surprise when captain Rock stood out of the blue in front of her. What did the captain do here and why did she ask for Sam? Was he a suspect?

"Are you talking about Sara's brother?"

"The one, who caused three times a police call because he was at your house. The last time was today, when a young woman called 911 and told the operator, Sam Sidle was about to enter your house without permission."

"Sara called you?"

"No, a Sally. Your housemate?"

"Yes. Is Sara fine? I have to call her."

"Mister Sidle never entered the house, he was found in front of the door by two officers. He's your brother-in-law, it's unusual to arrest him for trespassing."

"It's what he does. He is not welcome, we told him a few times. How is Sara?" Sofia didn't care much about what happened to Sam, she needed to know how her wife was.

"She's all right."

"I have to call her, she...Sam appeared two days ago, caused a scene and she wasn't fine..."

"I'm aware of the trial against the man, who raped her when she was a child. Is this Sam connected to the case?"

"He never cared what happened to Sara, never helped her, although he knew what Trevor did to her. Seeing Sam brings all the memories back. And the nightmares."

"He's a lawyer."

"Yeah, another reason not to like him."

Captain Rock thought about what Sofia told her. "He can't be held, nothing happened. In the eye of the law. You, or Sara, can file a report for stalking, he does have to explain himself for the trespassing, I'm afraid beside paying a fine nothing happens. He mentioned, he was threaten with a gun on Thursday."

"A water pistol."

"He thought a water pistol is a real gun?"

"Apparently. They don't always look like a toy, when you have a closer look, you always see the difference."

"Does the person, who carried the water pistol, know he's not allowed to threaten people with a toy weapon, that looks real?"

"It's not like he walked around and threatened anybody, he was on my property and I don't mind people with water pistols there."

"This doesn't answer my question, Sofia."

"I'm sure the water pistol won't be used to threaten somebody again. It was the only way to make Sam leave. He doesn't leave when gets told to do so. Why are you asking these things? You're homicide, it's not your area."

"No, it's not. But one of my detectives lives at the same place, I want to make sure, he never did anything, that can get him in trouble,"

"He didn't."

"Does Captain Curtis know about this?"

"Former captain Curtis does know Sam Sidle is in town, I don't think she knows he was over this morning, otherwise you had him not at the department but at the morgue."

"It's where'll be when she finds out, you called her a former captain."

"She's retired. Something I won't say when she's around."

"Better not. Okay, go back to work, CSI Curtis."

"Thanks Captain Rock." She waited until the captain was gone. Yes, she was at work, but she had to call Sara and find out, how her wife was.

"I'm fine." Sara answered the phone. "Don't worry."

"Captain Rock told me about Sam. How did he know you were at home?"

"I don't know, maybe he thought he can give it a try or he watched the house and never saw me leaving. It doesn't matter, he's gone. The police got him." Sara watched them take Sam into their car and drive away.

"Are you alone?"

"No, Susan and Sally are here."

"Good."

"I did all of the work I planned to do today, so Susan and I will go over and see Jules. Which should make you happy."

"I makes me happy because I know you'll be in capable hands until I'm back home. I wouldn't want you home alone."

"I'm never alone, our daughter is with us."

"Right, but she can't talk to you."

"Her smile is a very good medicine."

"True. Did you tell my parents about Sam?"

"No, I don't want to ruin their Saturday. You know how angry your mother would get. Let's keep them out of it."

"Okay. I have to continue with the crime scene. Call me when you need me."

"I will. Love you."

"Love you too." Sofia turned back to the bathroom cabinet. Before the intruder came in here, a collection of expensive eau de toilette and perfumes made a man and a woman very happy. Now there were only broken bottles and the mixtures of the different aromas in the air.

Sara had waited until the two police officers escorted Sam away and breathed a sigh of relief. He was gone. Hopefully forever. She didn't know the officers, it wasn't Kyle nor Lynn this time. With her mind going back to her brother all the time she didn't have to bother with any more paper work. Instead she finished cleaning the living room and packed Susan's stuff to go over to Jules. Then her wife called, of course she heard about Sam and had to know, if Sara was all right. The brunette knew, if she had asked, the blonde had done whatever was possible to go home and be with her. But that wasn't necessary. Sally was gone by now, so were Tony and Don. Tanya left early to the surgery, Steve was at work until noon, she was all by herself with her daughter.

With Susan tucked away in the buggy, Scooby and Rantanplan on their leashes she made a detour to give the dogs the opportunity for a little run at the dog's playground before they all walked to Jules's place.

"Hey, we're a little bit early."

"The best time to have lunch together." Jules greeted and hugged her. "Your dogs look dirty."

"They are. I get them into the garden."

"It's cold and rainy, give them a shower and dry them with one of the old towels and they can stay inside."

"Thanks." She thought about leaving them at home for a while, the problem was, they made her feel safe. In case Sam came back, would try to get to her again. With two angry dogs around, he'd keep his distance.

"What did Sam do?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Oh come Sara, it's written all over your face, he was there."

"Do you always have to read me like an open book?"

"How did you hold up?"

"Good enough to take the dogs out for a walk and come over with Susan."

"You could have called, I had picked you up."

"I'm not a baby."

"No, you're the sister of an idiot, who doesn't care he's not wanted."

"True." Sara handed Susan over to Jules. "I clean the dogs."

"Susan and I will be in the kitchen. Your godson and his sister preparing lunch for us."

"Oh, what are you making?"

"Pizza. Lovely decorated."

"Sounds perfect." She took the dogs by their collar and guided them straight into the bathroom. Not happy about the shower, the dogs looked like they were punished for something, they never committed. The rubbing of the towel on the other hand was fun and when they were clean and dry, they stormed into the living room, rubbing over the carpet.

"Crazy boys." Sara cleaned the wet trace they left before and joined Jules and the children in the kitchen.

"Oh, the master chefs are preparing lunch." She hugged and kissed Eric and Jorja. "It's very kind of you to do all this."

"Love pizza. Sara too?"

"I love pizza too, Jorja."

"One side for Sara." Eric pointed to the half of the pizza, that was without bacon and beef.

"Thank you Eric. Did you wish for pizza or did your mommy wanted it?"

"We."

"No surprise." Sara smiled and got up again. "Hey Louise, you look busy."

"She and Susan were chasing each other crawling before they continued with the pull themselves up competition. Susan tried a step and ended on her diapers. Your daughter has a temper and isn't good with dealing the fact, she can't always get what she wants."

"I know. She wants to walk and falling back on her rear end annoys her. Did Louise also start crying when you leave the room? Susan does that more frequently."

"Which is normal at their age. Like the fact, darkness scares them. We put a sleeping light up, the twins had it too."

"I know. Does Louise try to walk to?"

"No, she's happy with pulling herself up, so she can get things and then crawl away with them. The twins were slower, they started walking with eleven months, your daughter seems to be a little runaway."

"She doesn't try to run away from us, she wants to run into our arms."

"Of course."

"Mama!" Susan called, stretched her arms towards her mother, lost her balance and fell back on her butt. Not happy about this she started crying.

"Oh Honey, it's okay." Sara picked her up and kissed her. "You will get there, don't stop trying. Learning to walk is a hard lesson, once you've learnt it, it makes your life much easier." It was much easier to greet your mother, jump into her arms when she came home. So many things Susan and Sara could do together when the little girl could walk.

There were at least two million dollar in jewelry, paintings and art missing. Probably more. Sofia documented and took photos for over five hours until she was done with the second level.

"How far are you?" Greg called from downstairs.

"Almost done. What about you?"

"About to finish with the library. The backyard is waiting for us."

"How much damage in money is downstairs?"

"Three million. Maybe more. There were very old books, I bet they weren't cheap."

"Too heavy to carry so they destroyed it. I add at least two million to the list. How did the owner get all the money? Showbiz?"

"No, financial business."

"Oh, they work with money, no wonder they have so much. They make in a week what we make in a year. Or two."

"Wrong business. What stopped you from becoming something else? Get into an area of work, you make a million a year?"

"The fact I always wanted to be a cop. My mother didn't force me, I wanted it."

"One day you'll be a cop again." He smiled.

"Unlikely."

"Believe me, one day you will. Rock will make sure of this."

"Rock? What has Rock to do with this?"

"Oh come on, she likes you, she wants you back and I'm sure she'll find a way to get you back. She was here today."

"Yes...Sam was at our place, Sally called the cops and they took him to the department."

"This little fucker, was he arrested? Thrown into a cell?"

"No, they couldn't keep him. I only wonder why she came here to tell me about it. Why not call me?"

"I told you, she likes you. Did she flirt?"

"She's married, Greg! To a man!"

"Some women change their mind...I know two of them."

"Not very likely." Sofia shook her head. What a strange idea, the police captain hitting on her. No, that was Greg's fantasy, that never happened. "Anyway, it doesn't matter. Give me another half an hour and I come down and help you with the library. Or you want to go to the garden first?"

"Yes, before it gets too dark. And it might start raining again."

"True. All right, I come down right away and finish here later."

"We finish the house together, go to the lab, leave the evidence there for the others and go home. It will be late by then and I know two women and four kids, who are waiting for us. At my place."

"I know." And Sofia was glad her wife was with Jules and the kids. After the meeting with her brother, she needed some Jules time. The therapist knew how to make her feel good again. If Sofia wasn't so relieved about this, she'd be jealous.

When the doorbell rang Sara flinched. This was how it started in the morning. The doorbell, she opened the door and saw Sam. Did he dare to come here too? Of course he would. He didn't care she didn't want to see him.

"If that's Sam, I won't open the door." Jules said, reading Sara's mind. "I can check without open the door. Don't worry, you don't have to see him again."

"Thanks." She pulled Eric on her lap and kissed his hair. Her little boy, fifteen years later and he would protect her. Or make sure she was fine after a morning like this. With every day Eric became more and more like his mother, he anticipated when people were sad or felt bad, he knew, with the words he could say what to say and when he didn't have the right words, he used the right actions.

"Sara be fine, mommy is here." He reassured her.

"Yes, your mommy looks after all of us, so we have to look after her."

"Mom loves Sara. Dad loves Sara too."

"I love your mommy and daddy too. And you and Jorja and Louise."

"Love you too." He kissed and hugged her.

"I can see you have a good time here with a young man, kissing you, making one declaration of love after another." Marie walked into the living room.

"Captain?" Her mother-in-law was here, did something happen? Sofia?

"As you can see. Little recruits."

"Mia play?" Jorja ignored Marie's brisk way, held up a toy car and looked at the elderly woman with happy eyes. Instead of Captain or Marie she was for Jorja and Eric Mia, much easy for them to say.

"Give me a minute to talk to Sara darling, then I'm all yours."

"You are supposed to have a child free day."

"Are you telling me what to do?"

"No, of course not."

"Good. Louise and Susan are in bed?"

"Yes, they should wake up soon. These little gamblers slept for half an hour, just enough time for Jules and me to clean the kitchen and dust the living room."

"While Sara entertains the kids I fight with the laundry." Jules said. "It's good she's here, gives me time for the household."

"You get her back in five minutes."

"Sounds like you are in trouble."

"Yeah, I have no idea what I might have done wrong. Call the cops if I'm not back in five minutes. Or you hear strange sounds, like a shot."

"I'm sure the Captain isn't armed."

"You never know." Sara kissed Eric's hair again. "I'll be back in five minutes. Play with Jorja."

"Sara."

"I have to talk to Mia for a few minutes. Don't worry, I won't leave, we're in the kitchen." She tousled his hair, got up and followed Marie in the kitchen. "Did something happen to Sofia?" The biggest fear. Always her wife, her biggest concern.

"No, she's fine."

"Good." Relieved Sara leant onto the counter. "What can I do for you?"

"Sam won't molest you anymore."

"How do you know? What did the police do?" And how did Marie know Sam was at her place again? Who called her? Sofia? Or did Marie find out in any other way? Did she have connection to LAPD? It wouldn't surprise Sara.

"They couldn't do much. He paid a fine and could go. What I'm going to tell you now, is something I won't repeat and never talk about again after we leave this room.

Captain Rock and me went to see him in the motel. We made it very clear, if he appears here one more time, contacts you one more time, the life he knows, will be over. Captain Rock and I have both very powerful friends and people, who own us a favor. Sam pisses us off in any way again, we will make sure, these friends and people make sure he gets checked by traffic cops every day, every tiny thing he does, that is not one hundred percent legal, will be found and the police will investigate. His job as a lawyer will be gone within months, he won't get another one on the west coast.

We also mentioned in his file, he does stalk you, will contact a judge, who makes sure, Sam doesn't get closer to you than one hundred foot. Otherwise he'll end up in jail. That he is a repeated trespasser is another thing we have mentioned in his file and we will also add attempted break and enter, assault and domestic disturbance. Not the best things for a lawyer, who won't get many jury members on his side, when they hear about his file. And the prosecutor will find a way to mention it.

We also mentioned a few other things, I don't want to repeat because it's better you don't know about them. He did leave the motel an hour ago and should be on his way back to San Francisco. Oh and I'm supposed to say hello to you from a lovely lady, who works at the reception. She's very helpful."

"Sofia said different."

"My daughter might have had the wrong intentions. When you mention, you're the mother-in-law of you and the guest from San Francisco molested you, she helps a lot."

"What you did is illegal."

"No prosecutor, no judge."

"Thanks Marie." Sara pulled Marie in her arms and kissed her cheek. "I really hope this is over now."

"I'm sure it is. We were very clear."

"How did you get captain Rock to join you?"

"She heard about the officers at your place, talked to Sofia about Sam, what he did and does to you. Knowing I can't stand the bastard, she contacted me and we decided to end this our way. Captain Rock not only likes Sofia a lot, wants her back as a cop, she also knows you were a great CSI and law enforcement sticks together."

"I really hope he will never come back."

"The chances are good."

"Am I a bad daughter? A bad sister? I sent him away, refuse to contact my mother."

"No, if I did to Sofia, what your mother did to you, I'd understand when Sofia kicked me out of her life. It's what I'd deserve. And your brother...he didn't care for you back then, okay, he was a teenager, but he had plenty of time to make up for that. He didn't. One day he appeared in your life, ignores your request to leave you alone, causes trouble and problems. You don't need them, Sara. They're blood related, yes, when something happen to them, you will feel sad and bad about it, that's normal, but you're not committed to stay in touch with them. They say you can choose friends, not family, I say, you can choose whom you want in your life. No matter if friend or family."

"Thanks."

"You deserve happiness and when somebody makes you sad, gives you nightmares, I will do anything I can to make him go. You're my baby, I take care of you because I love you. Why did you not call me this morning?"

"I was afraid you'd shoot him and I didn't want you in trouble. Your grandchild wants you free and not in jail."

"You really believe I'd let anybody catch me?"

"Your daughter is a very good CSI."

"In this case she'd be blind. Come on, time to get back to your godson, he misses you. I have a look for my little rookie. Half a day without her and I miss her."

"I know this feeling." Sara agreed. She missed Susan all the time when she was at work. So many hours without her little daughter. Sometimes she wished, she could take Susan with her, in a buggy and be with her all the time.

"Mama!" Susan squeaked when she saw Sofia.

"Baby Sue!" Sofia picked her daughter up and kissed her.

"How are you? Did you miss me? Or were you too busy playing with your friends?"

"Mama."

"Okay, you missed me. I missed you too. And you too." She kissed Sara. "Are you okay?" If the blonde had known Sam showed up this morning she would have taken the day off.

"Yes, I'm fine. Unfortunately I didn't feel like doing more paperwork after he showed up. The tax stuff is done what I could do without your help and information."

"Two bad things on one day. The kids and Jules cheered you up?"

"Of course."

"Rock came to me, asked about Sam."

"Marie told me."

"Why does my mother know this?"

"That's a story, I tell you later. Now it's time for dinner, you and Greg are late."

"B&E in a huge villa, the place looked like a hurricane went through, everything was trashed. The owner are on their way back, they planned to stay the winter in New Zealand. Now they have to deal with their insurance company. We guess art, jewelry, money and paintings worth around five million dollar are gone or destroyed. A lot of rage, joy in destroying what is important to other people. We were lucky the rain stopped, so we could work without being in a hurry."

"Was somebody injured?"

"No."

"Good. You can replace things, not people."

"Why don't you come in the kitchen? Dinner is served?" Jules called from the kitchen.

"On our way. Yummy in our tummy, Susy." Sofia kissed her daughter again. "Are you hungry too?"

"Mama."

"Your mama is with you, I have you in my arms."

"Her grandmother was here this afternoon, missed her granddaughter. Half a day without a baby around and the captain gets bored."

"There might be another baby around next year. Keeps her occupied. Wow, you were occupied too, dinner looks nice."

"Things are easier when you have somebody, who looks after the kids." Jules explained. "Sara played with them, I could cook. Mixed vegetables, a red wine garlic sauce with onions, roasted beef and rice."

"Very nice."

"Susan and Louise had already their dinner, Eric and Jorja helped feeding them. They are big now and can help, isn't that right?"

"Yes, big brother." Eric said proudly

"And big sister."

"Have a seat, big sister and brother, time for you to have dinner too. Your sauce is without red wine. We can't have drunken kids around."

"Let me do the serving, you did enough already." Greg pushed Jules gentle on her chair and kissed her. "Time for you to sit for a minute. Would you like some wine with your dinner?"

"The bottle is in the fridge. Thanks."

"You did all the work at home, I have to thank you. Tomorrow I've a day off, why don't you take your crazy cousin and have a nice girls afternoon? Treat yourself a little and I look after the kids."

"Sounds like a great idea. Although there are a few things, we should do here..."

"Jules, give yourself a few hours off. Housework doesn't run away, whatever is important to be done until next week, you can do in the morning. The rest will be here in two, three or four days."

"Listen to your fiancé, he's right." Sara supported her friend. "You deserve a few hours without obligations and you'd give any patient of you the same advice."

"All right, I call Tanya later and ask her, if she has any plans for tomorrow afternoon. Or my mom, I haven't done anything with her in ages."

"That's a good girl." Greg placed all the pots on the table, slapped Eric's hand, when the boy tried to grab the rice. "Son, we start when everybody sits, you know this."

"Sorry. Hungry."

"We are all hungry, these thirty seconds we can all wait." He poured wine in four glasses and juice in two plastic cups before he sat down. "Enjoy your meal, everybody." Before Eric could get the rice himself, he helped his son with the pot.

"This is nice, a huge family and a good dinner. I like that." Sofia took Sara's hand. "Where is our son?"

"With Lea. They stay at her place today. He came over two hours ago, took the dogs for a walk, brought them home, fed them and left."

"Scooby and Rantanplan were here the whole time?"

"Sure, we can't leave them home alone, they're alone a lot when we both work, when we are at home, they should be with their pack."

"You're right. And you changed your plan from inviting Jules, Greg and the kids over to stay here. Which is a nice change."

"Because this way the twins can go to bed, so can Louise and Susan can sleep in her buggy."

"And I had some more time for the housework. Very handy. Sara can come over more often to babysit."

"I'd love to. The problem is, I have to work most times. Otherwise I'm happy to come over for lunch, after I did my own housework."

"How about we meet for breakfast the next time you have a Saturday or Sunday off, take care of your place, then we have lunch, go over to my place and do the same here."

"Perfect idea."

"Our women get domestic." Greg grinned.

"Looks like. Let them do whatever makes them happy. When they're happy, we're happy too." Sofia took Sara's hand and blinked at her wife.

## Monday, December 16th

The whole Monday morning Sara and Sofia tried to get their mind off the doctor appointment later. Most times they tried it with housework, the blonde had no idea when her house had been this clean the last time. They'd meet Don at the clinic, together with Tanya, who - as Sofia had thought - liked the idea of joining her boyfriend in the cabin.

"Honey, what if I'm not able going to get pregnant?"

"Then we'll be happy with two children, two wonderful children." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her.

"I want more children."

"Me too. Today is the surgery, in a few days you get the embryos back."

"The more I take, the higher the chance to get pregnant."

"Do you want to be pregnant with five babies?"

"No...how many should we take? Doctor Blumfield can extract up to fourteen eggs, you want to try it three times..."

"I or we?"

"We. Sorry."

"You're the one, who is pregnant."

"With our babies. Don't give me the crap it's my DNA." DNA didn't matter, Susan was their daughter, no matter if she didn't have Sofia's DNA. Same for Steve.

"It's our baby." Sara smiled. "Three times, two or three eggs. Or do you want four?"

"No, three is the limit. Gosh, imagine me pregnant with three babies. My parents can open their own kindergarten."

"And you will be off work for more than six weeks."

"I might need a week or two more. My body and I don't get younger, a pregnancy is hard work. Harder than I expected it to. The reward, on the other had, is priceless."

"Like marrying you." The brunette kissed the throat of her wife.

"You have to stop right there because if you don't, I can't stop and we might mess up with our chances for the baby. Worst part, today will be also the first day of the fourteen days period of no sex."

"A high price."

"Tell me about it. We have to make up for it when I'm pregnant. Or will you give me this shit about no sex during pregnancy again?"

"You wouldn't believe me anyway." Sara laughed.

"True." The blonde pushed her lover with sad eyes away. "No sex. Means, I have to have chocolate whenever I feel like sex."

"Poor you feel like sex every day a couple of times."

"Whenever I see you. It's your fault, you make me horny. How am I supposed to be surrounded by you, hot and sexy woman, and not get horny?"

"You did that for years."

"If I had tried anything in Vegas...you would have killed me with your bare hands."

"Maybe."

"Not maybe. Even when you came here, you didn't like me."

"Your cops treated me like criminal, kicked my dignity and human rights with feet..."

"Not my cops."

"You were with them, you let me wait for hours, I wasn't allowed to put on clothes, I didn't get anything to drink or eat..."

"I got you a coffee."

"Hours later."

"I took you back to the motel, bought you food and you acted like a teenager."

"For that day I had enough police company and didn't want any more."

"You made that clear. Like you made it clear you don't want to see me when you left the station without talking to me. Although I asked you to see me first."

"There was no need to it. It was an option not a duty."

Sofia shook her head. "No wonder everybody was surprised we fell in love. It surprises myself very often. Like right now."

"Because we're meant for each other. It only took some time for us to realize."

"Especially for you."

"How could I know this annoying and smug bitch could be the best thing ever happened to me?"

"Bite me, Sidle."

"No, you'd enjoy that too much. Unless." Sara grinned meanly.

"Unless I sink my teeth in your ass!" Slowly she stepped toward the blonde.

"No! Go away!"

"Too late. You put a thought in my head."

"Leave me alone." Sofia squeaked and fled upstairs, Sara right behind her. If somebody saw them, this person had to believe, children or teenager were running around like lunatics.

"How exactly did you make me do this?" Sara asked very annoyed.

"I told you, I'd like to go here and you refused to let me go alone. Pretty easy." The blonde grinned and got her arm around Sara. Both stood on Hollywood Boulevard, arms linked to keep themselves warm. What made Sofia want to come here was the celebration if Lou Lee's star on the walk of fame. Their son was at school, he'd love to be here and watch it, so they took their camera with them.

"Steve is the one, who wants to see this."

"As his mothers have to be here, record it for him. Plus we might get some lunch later."

"Might?"

"We stand in the front row, Lou will see us, invite us for lunch."

"Wonderful, lunch with a show-off and a lot of oh-so-important-people."

"A friend."

"Whatever."

"Grumpy smurf."

"Teeny fanatic."

"I love you too." Sofia kissed Sara. "Look, there he is."

"The screaming of all the pubescent girls makes this obvious to a blind person. Why do they scream like this? I love you, Lou. How ridiculous. They never exchanged a word with him, don't know him and get crazy only because he grins foolishly."

"Did you never adore a star?"

"No."

"Of course not. Imagine it's...a science geek."

"Very funny." Sara grumbled. "Shut up, your hero wants to talk to you."

"First others speak, he only has to look handsome; which he does. All the time. Handsome and sexy."

"I think I feel sick." Sara mumbled. If it wasn't for Steve, she wouldn't be here. What a crazy idea to record the walk of fame celebration, it was on the internet, their son could watch it there.

"You've gotta love that man, don't you?"

Sara turned saw a familiar face next to her. "Hi Felix, what are you doing here?"

"Steve told me to come by, bring my guitar and play for the rich and famous guy."

"Feeling lucky?"

"The last time a woman asked me this...you don't want to hear this. The asshole is gone?"

"Yes."

"For good?"

"I hope so."

"Let me know when you need help."

"Thanks. Do me a favor and leave your whiskey pistol at home the next time you show up. Some cops are not amused about it."

"When will you say hello to me, Felix?" Sofia complained.

"Hello Sofia, you're looking gorgeous."

"Thanks."

"Steve told me, Lou has a soft spot for you."

"He does."

"When you stand next to me when I sing, I'll get his attention. Do you want to be my lucky charm?"

"You saved my wife, I do almost everything for you."

"So many things I could do with these words...or not because the look Sara gives me tell me, when I say one more word, she'll kill me. Let's watch the ceremony, shall we?"

"Might be better for you." Sara said and got her arm around Sofia. Why did everybody hit on her wife? Yes, she was damn sexy and hot, but she was taken and would never be available again.

"Hi moms, bye moms." Steve passed through the kitchen, barely waving at his mothers and vanished into his bedroom.

"What was that?" Sara asked surprised.

"That was a son, who barely looked at us, was cranky and didn't want to talk to us. As a concerned mother I wonder what happened, if I should follow him, ask what is wrong. Then again I remember I was like this when I was a teenager and the last thing I wanted, was my mother poking around in my business."

"Do you think he has some problems in school? That somebody bullied him?"

"I don't hope so. We could...but we shouldn't..."

"...Ask Lea." Sofia completed the sentence of her wife.

"Yes."

"I hate knowing something is wrong and not do anything."

"Me too. We have to wait...can show him, we're here for him, but don't ask too much." Sara put the dishcloth away.

"Okay, we stay here and wait until he comes out of his room...was he all right this morning?"

"I didn't see him, he must have left while I took care of Susan. You?"

"No, while you were with Susan I took the dogs out for a walk."

"Yesterday he was out with Lea, Zoe and Marlene. Maybe something went wrong there."

"Like what? They were only shopping."

"I know." Sara sighed. "But when you're a teenager a lot of things can upset you. Maybe Marlene did or say something, he didn't like. Or she found out what he feels for her and told him, she's not interested in him."

"Gosh, I find myself hoping it is something like that and anything worse. Criminal stuff, drugs. Our son wouldn't do these things, would he?"

"Of course not."

"It has to be something with Marlene."

"We can't ask Lea, it would be wrong."

"I know, I know." The blonde looked at the closed door. What was going on in the room? What was their son doing? Did he know his mothers worried about him?

The door to Steve's room was opened, he appeared, wearing his jacket, a baseball cap in his face. "I'm off to Lea, see you later."

"Everything okay?" Sara asked.

"Yeah, everything is fine. Bye." He barely looked at them and was gone.

"Everything is so wrong." Sofia took Sara's hand, pulled her into the bedroom, opened the door to the balcony and waited until Steve appeared in front of the house. Hands in his pockets, head down, he walked briskly down the street.

"This is the first time he shot us out."

"Yeah, he lied to us."

"Normal, all normal, we did the same. It drove mom crazy...it must be a girl thing."

"He'll talk to Lea and I'm sure, if something really bad was going on, she'd tell us."

"I hope so. He forgot about our appointment today."

"Yeah. Got other things on his mind." The brunette kissed her lover. "We didn't get the chance to tell him about the video. Or Felix."

"We tell him later."

"If he wants to talk to us."

"Yes. This time we have to wait for him...I hate that." Sofia was sure, Susan wouldn't do such things later. She'd come straight to her mommies and tell them everything...okay, she was dreaming.

"Hey Doc, here we are again. I didn't think we'd see each other this fast." Sofia greeted doctor Blumfield.

"Your cycle brought us back together this fast. How do you feel?"

"I'm scared as hell."

"You know the procedure."

"Yes, but I don't know if it works out the way it should. What if you can't get enough eggs? I didn't take the pills for a long time, what if my body isn't ready?"

"Then we give it another month. You told me, you want to have the first IV injection ASAP, this is ASAP. We always have time for more, when you're willing to wait."

"We'd rather have our baby right away."

"Sorry, overnight delivery isn't possible. Not without carrying your baby for forty weeks inside you."

"Yeah, so I've heard and experienced. Sara can stay with me?"

"Of course, like the last time. Your friend is here too?"

"Don is already sent into a cabin. Do you believe there's a difference between a human, who is made with sex and one, who is made...in a lab?"

"No, I believe what counts is the time in the womb and the love a child gets. Or do you see differences between Susan and other babies?"

"She's smarter and more beautiful." Sofia beamed with pride.

"The most beautiful baby ever born."

"Nothing bad."

"No. Okay, Honey are you fine?"

Sara nodded. She felt sick. Like a teenager before a test. This time, all she had to do was sit and hold her wife's hand, nobody wanted anything of her. No reason to be nervous.

"Mrs. Sidle, you are pale."

"I'm scared."

"Why is that?"

"It's a small surgery, a surgery is always a risk and I hate it when my wife is at risk. I'm aware of the fact without this little risk we won't have another baby, but...I'm glad when this is all over."

"I promise I take good care of your wife."

"Thanks." Sara took Sofia's hand. Her highest priority was Sofia.

"You know the procedure, you have a look over my shoulder and tell me if I do everything right."

"I'm not a doctor."

"You and Sofia have read everything about in vitro, you watched every step I took last time, I bet you remember them all."

"Doctor, if we didn't trust you, we wouldn't be here. You take care of the medical stuff, I take care of the rest of Sofia." Sara kissed her lover. "A few moments and this will all over."

"Or a few moments later." The blonde sighed. Plus a lot of pain later. Not to mention the pain, she'd expect after the surgery. All for their baby. She'd put up with much more pain for another baby. Another little Susan.

Two hours later Sara, Sofia, Don and Tanya were in a pizzeria, waiting for their dinner.

"Did you have a feeling of fullness or pressure the last time you did this?" Tanya asked Sofia.

"For a couple of days, yes. At the moment I don't feel anything thanks to the meds."

"When do you have to be back?"

"In three days. They're doing whatever they have to prepare everything."

"Insemination."

"A complicated word to say sperm and eggs get mixed together." Sara rolled her eyes.

"You mean the sperm and eggs are placed in incubators. The incubators enable fertilization to occur. In some cases where there is a lower probability of fertilization, intracytoplasmic sperm injection may be used. Through this procedure, a single sperm is injected directly into the egg in an attempt to achieve fertilization. The eggs are monitored to confirm that fertilization and cell division are taking place. Once this occurs,

the fertilized eggs are considered embryos and you can have your eggs back, Sofia."

"For a dentist you're quite up to date."

"I read about it. My man is involved, I want to know what's going on with his DNA."

"You had fun in the cabin."

"Enough to get what you needed." Tanya grinned. "Although I have to say, I prefer other places for sex. There is not much to do in a tiny cabin. They don't even have exciting toys."

"Way too many information." Sofia covered her ears. "Poor baby."

"You're not pregnant yet. The baby is in the lab."

"In three days it's in me. Or they. Three of them. The more embryos, the bigger the chance. Eleven thousand dollar are a lot of money, we have to work for this money a lot. Or rent the room out for a while."

"How much is Susan worth?"

"What a stupid question, she's priceless. Eleven thousand dollar for a baby, for our baby, is a lot of money, but worth every cent."

"If you weren't this stubborn money wouldn't be the problem." Don said. "I told you, I pay half of it, I want kids, my girlfriend doesn't, without you I wouldn't be a dad. You refused my offer. More than once."

"We told you, you don't have any responsibilities. That includes financial areas too."

"And I sign this lawyer shit again, that doesn't change the fact, I am the father and don't plan to ignore the baby. The same with Susan, you know how much I love her and I don't want to be without her. She's my daughter, my parents see in her their granddaughter and it will be the same with the next child. I am the father, she calls me daddy."

"I know. You do more than you have to."

"I do what I want to do."

"Do you want to argue? Just after you created a baby?" Tanya cocked her head.

"Created a baby?" Sara asked.

"How else do you want to describe what they did? Her DNA and his DNA, creating a baby. Not making, that would have been sex."

"So you helped creating the baby." The brunette chuckled.

"Kind of, it should qualify me to be a godmother."

"Deal."

"Thanks. Who will be the godfather?"

"We think about this when I'm pregnant. With a baby with deep blue eyes."

"The most beautiful blue eyes in the world." Don smiled.

"What has Dusty to do with our kid's eyes?" Sara asked amused.

"Who is Dusty?" Tanya looked irritated.

"A Husky with wonderful blue eyes. When I came here, Sofia and Don were in a competition, who has the most beautiful blue eyes. It's Dusty."

"As a married woman, you should say it's Sofia."

"I love her, she's the most wonderful woman in the world, which doesn't change the fact, Dusty's blue eyes are nicer." The brunette smirked. She didn't believe this, but it was fun to tease her wife a little bit.

"I gave up on this topic." Sofia rolled her eyes.

"Me too. Our child's eyes will beat Dusty anyway."

The waiter came with the first two pizzas, vegetable for Sara and Tanya. When he left after bringing meat lover for Don and Sofia, the blonde looked at their food. "When I look at the pizzas, my wife fits better to your girlfriend, Donald. While we are the perfect match."

"There's a reason why we're the ones, who were involved in making the baby today. Our women were only support."

"You enjoyed my support a lot, macho."

"Yeah, you can do that more often."

"Dream on, after the last comments you can sleep alone in your bed."

"It's this time of the month? Again?"

"Asshole. Are you sure you want him as the father?"

"We are. Men are all the same, why do you think we changed to women?" Sara laughed.

"I might have to consider this change. Idiot." She bopped him hard and turned her attention then to her dinner.

"Talking about men and women, you don't happen to know what's wrong with Steve? He barely talked to us today, forgot the IV appointment and acted weird." Sofia asked Tanya. Maybe he talked to her.

"I know a lot of things. Some of them I can't tell other people."

"So he talked to you?"

"Not today."

"Yesterday? Something was wrong yesterday? Already? Why don't we know about this?"

"Probably because he didn't tell you and told me not to tell you when I bumped into him last night in front of the house."

"Okay, yesterday means, it's not school. Did something happen when he was shopping?"

"Which part of I can't tell you, did you not understand, Sofia?"

"Every part, I'm his mother."

"I'm sorry, I promised not to tell anybody, that includes his mothers. You have to wait until he talks to you."

"Is it bad?"

"No comment."

"Tanya!"

"I can promise you, I take care of him. But if I tell you now what's going on and he finds out, he'll never trust me again. Which means, when there's something really bad going on, he won't tell me."

"I hate being without a clue." The blonde sipped on her juice. A surgery, a son with a secret, no sex for over two weeks, this wasn't a perfect day. In fact, it qualified for one of the worst days of the year.

## Tuesday, December 24th

Christmas meant a lot of work in the lab and on crime scenes, for reason unknown, people liked to harm each other on these days. At least it felt like this to Sofia when she had a look at all the crimes and crime scenes around Christmas. The most wonderful time of the year, the time when people loved and cared for each other. Or should. To her it was a world with two faces. On one side the people doing deeds to others, from collecting money for poor people, working at soup kitchen, donating clothes and gift and then there were the other side, people killing each other, break into houses to steal all Christmas presents and the old Santa Claus at the corner of the street, collecting money, was robbed and assaulted. Sometimes it felt for every good there was an evil outside.

Away from all these things seemed to be her home. Decorated like a Christmas wonderland (Tony and Sally did all this), the smell of cookies and food in the air, Christmas music playing in the background and love was all around. These were the things she noticed when she opened the front door on Christmas Eve.

"Hello guys, how are you?" She greeted the dogs and gave them each a treat. "Are you excited too? Yes, we're having Christmas again. Your presents are packed and I'm sure you get some really nice dinner today." Was it wrong to spoil her dogs while people were starving all over the world? To some people it was, to Sofia the dogs were family members and she wanted all family members happy. No matter how many legs they had.

"Vrolijke Kerstmis."

"I beg you pardon?" Sofia looked irritated at Kim, who came with a huge smile on her face out of her room. She arrived just in time to spend with them, like she did last year. Their favorite frequent guest.

"Merry Christmas."

"Oh, thanks. Merry Christmas to you too. I won't try to say what you said."

"It's not that difficult."

"You Dutch people have this throat thing going on, something I can't do. How can you talk without coughing all the time?"

"It's a question of practice. You can say the 'th' without spitting into each others eyes. How was work?"

"People like hurting each other these days."

"They do. I went shopping earlier, it was like war."

"It is war. Tomorrow the shops are closed, you need at least one full trolley per person otherwise you starve."

"Like home. Crazy. Tony called, he arrived safe in Miami, deep blue sky, sunshine and he thinks about swimming. I hate him."

"Oh come on, let him have his fun." Sofia hang her jacket on the coat hook. Tony told them five days ago, he was invited to Miami. He never mentioned by whom, but he told them last year, he knew an actress, who lived there and with whom he kept in contact. Apparently this year she asked him to come over. From today until Sunday he would be in Miami, celebrating Christmas with her in the sun.

"I'm jealous, it's cold, it's raining, it's like home."

"No need to get homesick."

"Very funny. I come here for better weather."

"In this case, Los Angeles is the wrong place for your Christmas holidays. Florida is better. Or more south, Mexico, Brasilia."

"Unfortunately I like you guys and it's fun to be with you over the holidays. So I have to ignore the weather, stay the whole morning in bed, take my warm clothes for hikes and watch all the movies, I missed because of work."

"Sounds not too bad either." Especially the stay in bed and watch movie part. It sounded like a real vacation, something Sofia wouldn't mind to have too.

"It isn't. Plus nothing can beat the Christmas food of your father. Alone the stuff he made today is amazing. I bet people would pay a lot of money for food like this."

"You get more of his food tomorrow for dinner, he works from ten to two in a soup kitchen, together with my mother."

"The place where they met, how sweet."

"Not the soup kitchen here, but yes, in a soup kitchen. It's their tradition, whenever they have the time, they help at one."

"And tomorrow they have the time? You have to work."

"Sara is at home and can take care of the Susan."

"What about Steve? He seems...not like the last time I saw him."

"Yeah, tell me about it. He hasn't talked to us, we're guessing it's about a girl." And it bothered both that their son hadn't talked to them. Worse, he kind of avoided talking to them. It was a nightmare.

"Oh dear, a broken heart for Christmas. Not nice."

"No. I hope he talks to us. He talks to Tanya, which is good." Or better than nothing. To be honest Sara and Sofia were quite jealous their son trusted somebody else with his feelings and emotions and not them.

"His old crush. Interesting person to talk to."

"They're close."

"Looks like. Don't worry, your son talks to somebody, a broken heart belongs to every teenager's life."

"True. But I hate to see my baby suffer."

"So did your mother when you were young. It's a part of the lesson of life."

"It is." Sofia sighed. And she was sure when her heart was broken the first time, her mother was happy about it in one way because she couldn't stand the boy Sofia was in love with.

Sara pulled her wife in her arms and kissed her. "I love you."

"I love you too."

"You look tired."

"Side effects of the pregnancy and work. Don't worry, I took a few breaks, I do exactly what the doctor told me to do."

"Good." Carefully Sara caressed the belly of her wife. Maybe there were was their child inside. They could be the parents of an unborn child.

"We were lucky about Susan, it worked out the first time, I want to hope we're this lucky again, that I'm pregnant but...I don't know..."

"We can only hope."

"I'd love to say we have nothing to lose, but we do. We have a child to lose." Sofia said.

"No, we have a child to win."

The blonde smiled. Her lover looked on the bright side of life. That was nice.

"Last year, we were here, we had the envelopes with the possible names of our child, next year we might have our child in our arms. What is your favorite name for a son? For a daughter?"

"Shouldn't we wait until we know what we're going to have?"

"No, let's play. Pick a name."

"If we do this, we can't do the envelope thing."

"I know. So? What are your favorites?"

"No, this time it's you first." Sara said.

"Okay." Sofia thought about it. "For a boy Sandy...well, it fits for a girl too. So yes, I like Sandy. What about you?"

"Actually I like this name. Very handy, especially because we can use it before we know if we're having a boy or a girl and don't have to change it later."

"Okay, but what were your favorite names?"

"I should leave you hanging on, like you did to me, when you destroyed the envelopes."

"You're not this mean."

"I am mean, you should know it better than other people. Or shall I remember you of the Las Vegas time?"

"You've changed. So?"

"I had Slater in mind. Remember, the old TV show 'Saved by the bell'? Slater was a real hottie. He still is. For a girl I thought about Stella."

"Also very nice names."

"Yes, but I prefer Sandy. Let us keep it."

"Okay, whatever makes you happy."

"You make me happy. More than happy. I love you."

"I love you too." Sofia kissed Sara softly. "Every day with you is like a miracle. Like I gift I am allowed to unwrap on a daily base."

"You are my gift, the greatest gift I ever got." The brunette pulled the blonde closer and whispered in her ear: "I want to marry you again next year. When you're pregnant. I want a wedding photo of us with you being pregnant."

"I won't fit in my wedding gown then."

"Doesn't matter. We both were something else. Like a bikini."

"Are you crazy? I'll be fat!"

"No, you'll be pregnant and you're very, very beautiful pregnant."

"I'm not sure I like this idea, let me think about it. The bikini photos, the wedding I like. How about we get married in snow? Wear thick clothes."

"Nobody will see your belly, you are very sexy when you're pregnant. Believe me." Sara took Sofia's hand and smiled. "We talk about this when you're pregnant. On the second of January we know more."

"Such a long time to wait." Sofia's thoughts spun around her possible pregnancy all the time. Was she pregnant? Did it not work? Would she have to go through all the procedure again? If so, how many times? She said she wanted to try it three time.

Would she really give up after the third time? Or continue? They wanted and a baby and when they stopped trying, there wouldn't be a baby. Wasn't it better to keep trying until they had what they wished for? Unless doctor Blumfield had concerns about Sofia's health. It didn't matter at the moment, they could think and talk about these things when it was the right time. Right now all they could do was wait.

## Wednesday, December 25th

Christmas. The first Christmas for Susan. Not that the little girl really understood what was going on, she did love the Christmas tree, looked at all the lights and the decoration for hours, she liked having all the people she knew around, but she had no idea what this was all about. No idea about the history of the holiday, no idea of the presents.

"I'd like Christmas more when all the people I love were here."

Sara complained and continued stirring the soup.

"Sofia will be back soon."

"Greg, Jules, the twins, Louise."

"Are with Alison. Christmas is a family day."

"We are family."

"You know what I mean." Marc put the roast beef in the oven.

"They have Greg's family over, you see them tomorrow because you are invited for lunch. They want their daughter over."

"I'm happy to appear."

"You realize, you've been adopted by Greg's parents and us?"

"Yes, people, I'm not blood related to, love me more than my own parents did. Could get me back to therapy."

"You see your former therapist at least three times a week, you don't need another therapist."

"True. I'll see her tomorrow too."

"One day your wife will get very jealous."

"No, she knows she's my big love." A loud bang made both leave the kitchen and rush into the living room. The Christmas tree lay on the floor, Susan sat next to it, crying. Steve, who ran from the table to the tree picked his sister up.

"Oh Susi, what did you do?"

"What happened?"

"She was crawling, I was setting the table, she must have tried to pull herself up on the tree. You were lucky it didn't crash on you. I'm sorry I didn't pay enough attention to you." He rocked her and kissed her tears away.

"It doesn't look like she's harmed, only got a shock." Marc looked closer at Susan.

"Are you sure?"

"Let me have a look." Marc took Susan. "I'm going to check on her, you try to save the tree. We can't have a Christmas dinner without Christmas tree."

"Okay, thanks."

"No problem. Come with granddaddy Susi, we have a look if the nasty tree did something to you." He left the room with Susan. Steve pulled the tree carefully up. The chain of lights was ripped down at one area, tinsel was on the floor, Christmas baubles were broken and rolled over the carpet.

"I'm sorry I didn't watch her better." Steve apologized again.

"Hey, nothing happened. Susan is fine, a few broken Christmas baubles don't matter. The cats might have done the same." She put her arm around him. "We rearrange the tree."

"Some of the decoration is broken."

"We fill the void with cookies. The ones with the hole in the middle. Means, day by day we'll eat a part of the decoration and your mother will be the one, who eats most of them."

"Not if I can beat her to it."

"You have all chances, she has to work, you're at home."

"Yeah..." He put the chain of lights back on the tree. "Mom, I'm sorry for the way I acted lately."

"What do you mean?" Sara a good idea what he meant, but wanted him to continue, didn't want to put something in his mouth

"You know, all acting weird, barely talking to you and mom."

"We realized, you kept something from us."

"Yes."

"There is no rule in the this house, that you're not allowed to have secrets, you can decide what you want us to know. Which doesn't change the fact we think about it anyway and want to know it right away. As your mothers we worry when you don't act the way you usually do. You shut us out. There are lot of bad things in a mother's mind, when her baby son keeps secrets. Yes, I know, you're not a baby." She added before he complained.

"It has nothing to do with you or mom and I'm not in trouble. Nor did I take drugs or got involved in illegal things."

"We were quite sure you weren't. Which doesn't change the fact we worry. And wanted to ask you what's going on. It took all our willpower not to do so. Whenever I got weak, Sofia stopped me and the other way around. The thing that helped was, we knew you talked to Tanya."

Steve looked surprised. "She told you?"

"She didn't tell you what you talked about, she only told us, the two of you talked. You told her not to tell us, so she doesn't."

"Okay." He put the last Christmas bauble on the tree. "It's about Marlene."

"Did she do something stupid last Sunday?"

He took a deep breath. "Zoe met a guy last Saturday, he has a club in WeHo. They talked, he promised, when he likes their music, they can play in his club. He also has a twin brother, who studies medicine at UCLA. Marlene and Zoe had a date with them Sunday after shopping and it was the only topic, they talked about. Lea and me excused ourselves after two hours. From what Lea heard, the date went more than good, they met Monday again. We're out."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Well, I can't hold a candle to a medicine student."

"He can't be as good as you are."

"Marlene thinks different."

"And Zoe...I thought she likes girls."

"Apparently she likes whoever helps her with her music."

"Yeah...his own club? How old is he? Are they?"

"Twenty-one. Adults. Not children."

"You're not a child neither."

"She thinks different. Don't be surprised when you won't see her around anymore. Lea and me don't want to see them."

"I can understand you."

"Mom, I'm afraid your son is unlovable. No girl likes me."

"You're very lovable." She pulled him in her arms. "Your mom and I love you a lot, so do your grandparents and your sister. The girls are stupid and blind. I mean, do you really want to be with a girl, who wants to date medicine students?"

"I'd love to date her...well, not anymore."

"You deserve better."

"It feels like I deserve nothing."

"Life was easier when girls were stupid, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Let me tell you, they will continue to make your life difficult."

"Mom makes your life difficult?"

"Yes. I love her, which means, I worry about her when she is away. I worry that something might happen to her, at work, while she drives, when she shops. The pregnancy means a possible threat to her health, so I worry about this too. Then when you argue, you argue with more heat, the more you love each other, that leads towards stupid actions and words. You

feel bad afterwards because you hurt the person you love, who loves you."

"Nevertheless you love her."

"I love her and I don't want to be without her. Love brings joy, happiness, a lot of work and pain. Nothing has only bright sides."

"The good sides are worth putting up with the bad sides."

"Yes."

"I want the same."

"You'll get it."

"One day...in a few years. Maybe. Until then I have to look at the bright side of being a single?"

"Until then you don't have anybody next to you, who turns around and smacks her arm right into your face, knocks you out before you're really awake."

"Ouch. Mom did that?"

"This morning. Not the first time. She wants to hit the alarm clock, doesn't realize it's on the other side of the bed and hits me."

"Okay, that's something I don't want!"

"All part of the packet."

"Great. Hopefully I get something better for Christmas."

"A new pair of sneakers so you can take Susan and the dogs out."

"Thanks mom, you know what I want." He finished the tree.

"I knew you'd be over the moon." She pulled him in her arms and kissed his cheek. "I love you, Steve and I'm very happy you're here and we can celebrate our second Christmas together. Please let there be a lot of more to come."

"Love you too, mom, and as long as I'm welcome here, I come home for Christmas."

"Good. That's the best gift for me. Having you here with us is all your mother and I want." What else could they wish for than having their family around? Christmas wasn't about presents, it was about being with the people you loved most.

Very seldom a day seemed to have hours that were longer than today. When she opened the front door to her house, the dogs greeted her, Christmas music played, she smelled cookies, dinner and saw the light of the Christmas tree in the living room, Sofia felt more at home than ever before.

"You can't see it, but believe me, Sandy, this looks great. You'll love it." Two babies around the Christmas tree, one walking, one in the crib...didn't this sound like the Christmas story?

"Hey, there you are." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her. "I missed you."

"Ditto. The day felt like it never wanted to end."

"Did you have many cases?"

"Too many and they're not a topic today. How was your day?"

"Our daughter crashed the Christmas tree. She tried to pull herself up."

"What?" Shocked Sofia pushed Sara a little bit away. "Is she okay? Is she injured? Did you take her to the doctor?"

"She's fine, your father checked on her. It was only a shock."

"How could that happen? Did nobody look after her?" Sofia decided not to rush into the living room and search for her daughter, as the incident happened a while ago. Instead she and Sara walked upstairs, it was time to change for dinner and get the Christmas presents downstairs.

"Steve set the table, he turned his back at her for a second, she was crawling and decided, the shiny thing is a nice way to get up. It wasn't. Poor Steve was shocked too and apologized half a dozen times. He feels guilty."

"There's a reason why they say never take your eyes off a baby or toddler."

"Yes and the same thing could have happened to us. We got the fence back into the living room, Susan can crawl again without getting too close to the Christmas tree."

"Good. She loves looking at it."

"She does." Sara watched her lover change. What a lovely chance to take more clothes off the blonde instead of letting her take on some. Unfortunately there was these two weeks no sex rule.

"Don't think about it, I try not to think about it neither." The blonde read the thoughts of her wife.

"How am I not supposed to think about it when you're half naked?"

"Baby." Sofia pointed on her belly. "Hopefully."

"Yes...I know what is wrong with Steve, it's Marlene, he told me when we fixed the Christmas tree. He apologizes for being distant the last days, I'm sure he talks to you too."

"He always talks to you first, you're his favorite mom. I'm only second best." The blonde pouted.

"I don't think he has a favorite mom. Maybe it's the shared past. I was home, you at work."

"So what did Marlene do to make him this angry?"

"She dates somebody else."

"Seriously?"

"Yes. Zoe met a club owner on Saturday, who wants to let her and the others play in his club. On Sunday, when they were shopping, Zoe and Marlene were only talking about their dates with the club owner and his twin brother. Twenty-one, men, not boys, a medicine student for Marlene. Our son feels unloved, ugly and not worth having a girlfriend."

"Until five seconds ago I liked Marlene."

"You can't decide who you like and who not."

"No, but this medicine idiot can't be better than our son."

"I'm with you."

"And why dates Zoe this guy? I thought she's a lesbian."

"Not when there is somebody, who can help her with the band."

"Sounds like Ellen. Lea deserves better too."

"Yes. Steve asked if it's okay when he spends tomorrow at Lea's place. Her parents don't want to let her come over because her grandmother is over. The one, who calls Steve Lea's boyfriend all the time."

"Oh, the one, who wants him to call her grandma? And told them to show her first their university degree before they show her her great-grandchild?"

"Yes." Sara laughed.

"I like her. From my side he can go."

"From my too. He saw Greg's parents already and they'll stay a few more days."

"And be with us New Years Eve."

Sara only grinned widely as an answer. A big party with people she liked. Perfect. Just like tonight was supposed to be.

Susan was the only one, who didn't wait anxious for the gift giving. She was sound asleep in the crib next to the Christmas tree. The group was smaller than last year, so they all fit on the couch and armchairs. Steve between his mothers, who insisted to have him in the middle, Marc as Santa Claus.

"Why isn't Tanya the angel?"

"In a short skirt? Dream on, Steve boy, it's too cold for that."

"Oh come on, it's warm in here."

"And you will feel hot when I come down dressed in a hint of nothing."

"I wouldn't be the only one."

"Sorry, that's something for my boyfriend." Tanya blinked at Steve. "Some things don't get shared."

"We share gifts. The first one does to my wonderful wife. Here you are, Honey." He gave a little box to Marie.

"Judged by the size of the box she wasn't a good girl." Sofia whispered into Steve's ears. The boy grinned.

"I heard that!"

"The ears of a lynx."

"It matters what is in the box." Marie opened it. A little golden pendant fell in her hands. A pistol.

"A police gift." Marc rolled his eyes. "As usual."

"Of course a police gift, whoever gave it to me knows what I want. What else am I supposed to get? A grandma gift?"

"A wig?" Don asked and got the evil eyes. "Hey, I'd never give you a wig. I like the pistol, makes you a hot shot."

"Hot shot?"

"In a good way."

"Be careful with your words, detective."

"Yes, captain."

"The next one, the big one, goes to Steve. You must have been a good boy."

"Always." He took the box, sat on the floor and opened it.

"Wow! The new Playstation! Moms, you're crazy!" He hugged and kissed Sara and Sofia. "You're not supposed to pay so much money!"

"We didn't buy it, Santa brought it." Sofia corrected.

"Yeah sure, two angels brought it. You're crazy. I hope you got it Black Friday."

"We got it, you're happy, that's important. But I hope we do see you the next days every now and then. Not that you sit the whole day in your room and play."

"Not alone."

"Lea's parents won't like it when her daughter is the whole time here."

"You can join us playing. I'm sure Tanya and Don be there too."

"Absolutely. I am going to kick your sorry a...rms." Tanya laughed. "We get two more controller as soon as the shops are open again. And a few games."

"The kids are happy." Marc observed. "All of them, no matter which age."

"One present makes them all happy."

"Let's see if this makes you happy, Sofia." He gave her a box.

"I'm already happy." She opened it. "Oranges?" One after another she put a dozen oranges out of the box.

"A box of health, a nice idea." Sara chuckled.

"You?"

"No, we had an agreement, I hope you kept your promise and didn't buy anything for me. This isn't a gift I bought you."

"Lea told me her parents did something like this to her a few years ago. A huge box, she imagined all kind of great surprises in it, unwrapped it and found four dozen oranges, mandarins and lemons in it. Not what she expected. Disappointed she thanked her parents and went to look at another box. Her mother then told her, she should have a closer look. They put a DVD collection in the box, hidden under a cardboard, she took as the bottom of the box."

"You think somebody played with me too?" Sofia got her hands in the box. There were a lot of newspaper left in it, but she could feel, the bottom felt strange. With her head half in the box she got to the ground and pulled it up. "Nothing." There was nothing under the cardboard.

"There's something glued to the cardboard." Sara said.

The blonde turned the bottom and saw an envelope. "You really want to make it hard for me, don't you?"

"It wasn't me!"

"I meant whoever did this and I'll find out. I look for fingerprints."

"Forget your job, tell us what's in the envelope."

"Yes, yes." Sofia pulled a greeting card out, opened it and started smiling. "Wow, thanks. Mom, dad, I know it was you!"

"You mean, it was Santa." Steve corrected her. "Like with my Playstation. What did you get?"

"Sara and me got something. A long weekend in New Orleans. Three nights, four days, plane tickets. Honey, we get a mini vacation."

"Wow, thanks mom and dad." Sara said. It was obvious this present was made by Marc and Marie.

"You need a few days away, your son won't notice you're gone, he has his Playstation and Susan can stay with us."

"They bought is the trip to have Susan for themselves." Sofia shook her head. "Mom, you can look after her without buying us trips. But if you do, we take them. Why did you not write Sara's name on the box?"

"Maybe she gets her own box and flies somewhere else? Same date."

"You wouldn't do that!"

"If she did, we decide what we want, New Orleans or the other place and give one to Don and Tanya."

"Sara, you're the best." Don cheered. "I love you."

"You better do."

"Love shouldn't depend on gifts." Marc gave Tanya a box.

"Feels heavy, a real drill?"

"My patients would be delighted when I appear with a real drill in my hands."

"No, we wouldn't." Sara answered back. "The ones you have are scary enough and cause a lot of pain."

"Then it better is something else. Can't be the diamond ring I wished for." She opened the box and found a stone in the box.

"What is this supposed to mean?"

"You told me, you want a big shiny rock. It's big, I polished it, so it shines, you got what you asked for." Don grinned. "Merry Christmas, Honey."

Except for Tanya everybody laughed.

"You better have a hidden diamond in there, otherwise you are single."

"Nothing hidden in the box, all you see is what you get."

"I feel like smacking the rock into your face. Which isn't a bad idea. Besides the satisfaction I'll have when I see you bleed like a pig, you also need a lot of dental work, I can charge you double, make you suffer more."

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

"It's in your hands to end the fury."

"Why do you say you want a big shiny rock when you don't?"

"Every moron knows a diamond is a big shiny rock."

"I'm not a moron."

"No, you're worse."

"I thought Christmas wasn't about gifts." Marie said.

"Of course it is. You make up for this right away or you can sleep alone in your bed for a long, long time."

"As handsome man never stays alone for a long time."

She lifted the rock over his head.

"Woo, hey, Captain, she threatens to assault a detective."

"I'm a woman and if Marc gave me an ugly rock I'd do the same."

"Okay, okay, I surrender." He pulled a golden ring with a real diamond out of his pocket and placed it on Tanya's finger.

"Better?"

"You saved yourself a lot of pain."

"To me, it looks like he got himself engaged." Sofia's eyes stuck on the ring. It looked like an engagement ring, Don didn't tell her about this.

"After the rock thing he can be glad I don't kick him out of my life." Tanya stroke softly over the ring. "You are a beauty. Very shiny."

"No blood, no shattered teeth, no split-up. Christmas stays peaceful. Sara, here is a parcel for you."

"Oh, the trip is enough, I don't want more."

"Santa had other plans with you."

"Apparently." She unwrapped the parcel and found two books.

"No science or nature books? Somebody wants me to forget about work. Bob the street cat? Something I can read with my four tigers. And one sappy novel? I haven't read one of these in ages."

"Perfect for our vacation." Sofia said. "And no, I didn't get them."

"You are not supposed to get me anything and I really hope, you didn't."

"No, I didn't. I promised."

"Good. Maybe the books are from Steve."

"Me? Buying books? Mom, please, I'm sure there's a movie of these things. Why read it?"

"Shock your parents, read a book." Sara shook her head.

"Comics are books too."

"I give up." For his birthday, Sara would buy her son a book. Although it felt like cast pearls before swine.

"They never answered the question." Sofia sat when they she and Sara were alone in the bedroom. It was after midnight, everybody had their presents and was in bed. Or in front of the Playstation. She was sure her son wouldn't go to bed any time soon.

"Who? Which question?" Sara sat on the bed and pulled off her socks.

"Don and Tanya. Are they engaged now?"

"The ring says so."

"It does, doesn't it? You think the same, right? A man doesn't give such a ring to a woman without a reason. And in this case it can't be sex, he gets it without such a ring."

"You never know what he gets for the ring. Plus she wanted a diamond ring, if he had come up with something else, I'm not sure he'd get lucky tonight. Now he will. Very lucky."

"I didn't give you a ring and I won't get lucky tonight."

"Not because of the missing ring. Because of the hopefully developing baby inside me." The blonde placed her prosthesis next to the bed and lay down. It was good to lay down after all these hours at work and later sitting downstairs.

"We can go to New Orleans when we can have sex."

"Believe me, I don't plan to fly to one of the most romantic cities in the world and don't have sex with my wife."

"Good." Sara threw her shirt away and pulled her sleep shirt over. "How about we go there in May? Or April? During spring time."

"The French Quarter Festival is in April. That could be very interesting."

"Yes, we should see if we get an accommodation and flight for that weekend. Your parents really like to give us trips. First they paid for this amazing trip to the Dominican Republic and now to New Orleans."

"They know we need some time alone and can't afford the trips ourselves. Or, we prefer to use our money for the money and our kids."

"They are more important than vacation trips for ourselves. I do feel bad for not taking Susan and Steve with us in April. What if he wants to see New Orleans too?"

"Then he'll go there with Lea. I'm sure he understands we want a few days for ourselves."

"Yeah...still...he liked Hawaii."

"Who didn't?" The blonde pulled her lover into her arms. "It was a great time and we all enjoyed it. Steve does know if we had more money we'd take him and Susan to more places like that, but we can't afford it. Not when we want to give him nice presents like the Playstation, he really likes a lot. And will enjoy for longer than a week or two."

"We'll find a nice place for the summer we can take him and Susan to." Sara kissed Sofia.

"Yes. If he wants to come with us. A sixteen year old boy might have other ideas of his summer vacation than being with his mothers and his baby sister."

"We'll ask him. When he can take Lea with him I'm sure he agrees."

"Unless they're both in relationships by then and want to go away with their girlfriends...would we allow him to do that?"

"Yes, if they stay in California or Nevada. We're cool mothers, who trust their son."

"Right." The blonde sighed. Being cool could suck sometimes.

## Thursday, January 2nd

"Aren't you supposed to stay at home today?" Juana asked when Sofia came into the break room.

"No. Why?"

"Baby?"

"The appointment is this afternoon, I work in the morning. Takes my head off the topic and keeps me sane." Sofia sat down. Like it was possible not to think about the appointment this afternoon. What would she do when doctor Blumfield told her, she wasn't pregnant? Wait another month? Or two? Would she have to take a lot of pills before she got another treatment?

"I'm sure everything is fine."

"We were more than lucky the last time, we beat the odds. The chances to get pregnant were at twenty-five percent, I got pregnant anyway. Now I'm two years older, the chances went down and beating the odds twice is...not very likely. The chances are at ten percent."

"This isn't like gambling in a casino."

"No, I know."

"How often do you want to try in case it doesn't work?"

"Three times. It's expensive and Sara fears health risks for me. Which is realistic to a certain degree."

"She loves you, of course she worries."

"We want a baby, it won't come without any effort."

"No."

"Probably it's the best not to think all the time about it, not to hope for too much, the odds are absolutely against us, whenever I tried gambling in Vegas, I lost."

"Luckily this is not roulette, it's a baby."

"When I bet on red or black my chances are almost fifty percent, much better than getting pregnant."

"Stop being negative." Juana protested.

"Sorry...you don't look to happy yourself." The last days her colleague didn't laugh as much as she used to. Now that Sofia thought about it, Juana looked tired for at least two weeks. It couldn't be the Christmas stress anymore, could it?

"Short night."

"Do I have to tell your BF off?"

"More the couple in the next room. They were loud. Not sex loud, fight loud."

"Why didn't you go over and tell them to shut up?"

"Because I have no idea who they are and I didn't feel like getting attacked by an angry couple."

"You don't know your neighbors? You live there for a few months."

"No, I live there since one week...I moved into a motel."

"A motel? Why?"

"Because we had a big fight, very nasty. It wasn't perfect the last weeks, Christmas it exploded and it was better when I move out. Do you have any idea how difficult it is to find an apartment in this area without paying a fortune? Or when they're cheap, they're dirty, old and full with things, you see at the worst crime scenes. Another problem is to find a place after work. And the motel starts get very expensive, the weekly rates are not exactly cheap.

Anyway, enough of crying and whining, I'm going to find a solution. Back to work, did William give you a new case?"

"Not yet. You know, we have our spare room downstairs empty again, Kim leaves this afternoon. It's only one room, the bathroom is shared, but it's clean and I'm sure we can find a price, that's better than a motel."

"Seriously?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Don't you have to ask Sara first?"

"No, it's the room we offer on the internet. It's free until the middle of February. All I have to do is take it off until then and you can stay as long as you need. No permission needed."

"Cool, thanks, I take it. Everything is better than the room I live in now. Thank you very much, Sofia, I really appreciate it."

"You're welcome. Let me take the room off the internet and call Steve to prepare it for you."

"Poor boy, he has holidays."

"Yes, that's why he doesn't work for Mel. If he's up already, he and Lea are stuck in front of the Playstation. Since Christmas they are addicted to their new toy. I'm not sure if I should be happy to pick the perfect gift or worry about his eyesight."

"Be happy. Most teenagers are not easy to please. Your son and his friend are different. You give them a video game and they're happy."

"Teenagers." Sofia pulled her cell phone out of her pocket. Time to get the room off the internet page and contact her son. When her colleague needed a place to stay, it was no question

she'd offer her a room. After all, that was what their room was for and it was better to have somebody around, you knew, than a stranger.

"Nervous?"

"No, absolutely relaxed.. Why?"

"You're such a huge liar." Shane laid back and watched Sara, who shovel her food from the left to the right side of the plate. Spinach lasagne, Steve made it last night and packed her as a leftover lunch for today. Her son took care of her, made sure she had food at work. The thing she had to do as her mother when he left for school.

"In a few hours you've your answer."

"I didn't ask a question."

"You know what I mean. A new baby or more sleep."

"Your decision would be sleep."

"Children are not my cup of tea. They're fine for two or three hours, when they want to see the forest. That's enough."

"Like you sent Steve away."

"I sent him to his mother."

"Of course you knew it before we other knew."

"Aren't you impressed by my smartness?"

"No." She ate a little bit of the spinach lasagne. "I'm shocked how much a child you are yourself. Unable to keep a relationship, afraid of taking responsibilities."

"I did not break up before Christmas."

"This time not, no."

"Last time I was the one, who was left."

"How did that feel?"

"Miserable, you saw me."

"Then you know what not to do. You got yourself a very nice girlfriend."

"That's why I got her a very nice present and hope, I can celebrate with her this year again. She is special."

"I'm glad you see it too."

"Of course. So, when will you leave to find out if Sofia is pregnant?"

"Two hours."

"Boy or girl?"

"Doesn't matter, the only thing that is important, is that the baby is healthy. It will have blue eyes and dark hair."

"Yeah, your wife is a brunette too. Although the blonde suits her very good. Did you ever see her with brown hair?"

"No, as long as I know her, she's a blonde."

"Any old photos?"

"Yes, I did see some. She's a sexy brunette."

"I bet she is. Do you prefer blond or brunette?"

"Doesn't matter, Sofia is always beautiful."

"Did you every try another hair color?"

"No. I liked mine."

"Isn't it a liked now?" He grinned.

"Now I'm quite grayish without dying it, I like the brunette more than the gray."

"Barely thirty-five and gray hair? Seriously?"

"Suck it up. You were at my fortieth birthday party."

"It's called being nice. Women like it when you tell them, they look younger."

"Unless you're too obviously lying."

"I'm charming."

"Sure." Sara finished her spinach lasagne. "Get ready for work, we have some more tracks to check."

"Worse than our boss."

"Because I know how lazy you are." She slapped the backside of his head. Dyed hair and thirty-five.

"Hey mom, the room is prepared." Steve hugged Sofia when she came home.

"Thanks, you're a big help."

"Your colleague will move in?"

"Not move in, she'll stay in the room until she finds a place of her own."

"Sounds like a bad relationship ending."

"Smart boy."

"Inherited that from my mothers. When do we expect her?"

"She works until five, goes back to her motel to pack and then comes over. I'm not sure if Sara and I will be back by then..."

"Don't worry, I'll be here and let her in."

"Thanks." She kissed his cheek. "Did you and Lea play the whole day Playstation?"

"No, we also took the dogs for a walk, visited the Captain and granddad, played with the little stinker and prepared dinner. We'll have pancakes."

"Pancakes?"

"With bananas, Nutella, apples, blueberries or bacon. Whatever you want."

"The sweet version, thanks." She sat down. "Hello Tiger." Jim walked over the couch and stopped at her to let her pick him up and rub his back. "How are you? Are you hunting?"

"They hate being inside the house all the time."

"The weather is miserable and they're safer here."

"We need leashes for them, take them out with the dogs and will look very interesting."

"Yeah." Sofia laughed.

"How do you feel? Do you feel pregnant?"

"I'm anxious to find out if I'm pregnant. The chances are ten percent, logically we need ten treatments so I get pregnant. Which we can't afford."

"You did it once."

"Yes. I'm sure you can live without another baby crying all night long."

"Mom, I've got earplugs. You and mom want another baby, you're wonderful mothers, I hope you're pregnant. Although it will give us more work. You can't carry heavy things anymore, we have to take over your housework and empty the trash more often. Diapers need a lot of space."

"They do. You also have to carry Susan around."

"We give her a saddle and she ride on the dogs."

"Her big brother takes care of her. You wanted a baby sister."

"I had no idea how annoying she could be."

"Hey!" She bopped him. Susan wasn't annoying, she was a baby. "It's the best training for your own children later."

"I could become a professional babysitter. Take care of Lou's kid and travel the world."

"After college."

"By then he has a babysitter, sorry mom, I have to leave high school."

"Forget it, Sara and I will not agree. You stay here with us, finish high school and go to college."

"You're not cool anymore."

"Bad luck for us, it doesn't change the facts. You don't go traveling with Lou and his children. I'm sure he'll find another babysitter. When he's at home, Marian looks after the children, when he's filming, she might come with him."

"What a life, travel with a cool movie star, meet important people, stay in expensive hotels. Get all the girls."

"Who want the movie star and only look at you because they hope, you get them closer to the one, they really want. They'd use you."

"Great. Don't they all do?"

"No."

"The last one did. Marlene used me as a stop gap until she found somebody else. Until she found a medicine student."

"Her loss."

"I'm not sure she thinks the same."

"Have you spoken to her lately?"

"No, Tanya told me she asked about me once or twice. Wondered why I don't come along and told her, my text messages weren't very long anymore."

"She didn't make the connection?"

"Maybe she does now, I don't know and I don't care."

"What about the girl, who was here last week?"

"Jenny? She's nice and according to Lea, she likes me."

"Sounds pretty good."

"Yeah..."

"But?"

"But...I haven't pushed Marlene off my mind. She sticks like chewing gum to a shoe."

"You liked her a lot, maybe you need some more time."

"Looks like. Will I hurt Jenny by...not doing anything?"

"You'd hurt her when you do things, that make her believe, you want to be with her and then push her away. Did you tell her what's going on with you? Does she know about Marlene?"

"She knows there was somebody. Lea says, she hopes she gets my attention by spending time with me. The same I did with Marlene... I hate understanding you can't decide to whom you give your feelings. What if Marlene knew about my feelings and didn't do anything because she doesn't feel the same for me? I can't be mad at her anymore."

"It's hard to be mad when you understand the situation." She caressed his back. "Breaking up is hard, no matter if you're the one, who leaves or get left. Same goes for you can't choose who you fall in love with and how long it takes."

"Feelings make the life difficult."

"Or worth living." Sofia was sure, without her love for Sara and Sara's love for her, her own life would be not worth living.

\*\*\*

Sofia's hand squeezed Sara's hard. Time of truth. The whole day was about this appointment, the whole time a part of their mind was always here, waiting for an answer.

"Ten percent." Sofia mumbled.

"When I played roulette, black or red, most times I chose the wrong color. The chances were higher there, not totally fifty percent because of the zero, but much better than ten percent."

"I won't send you to a casino when we need money."

"No, you better don't." Sara kissed her lover. "And this is not a roulette game, we're not gambling, we want a baby. A little Sofia."

"Or a little Don."

"No, I want a Sofia."

"So you want a daughter."

"I want a baby, who looks like you."

"A daughter. A son can't look like me...okay, Eric is Jules in a boy's body."

"Exactly."

The door was opened and doctor Blumfield entered the room.

"Good afternoon, ladies, how are you?"

"On the edge of going crazy or start crying."

"Sofia, you don't have to cry."

"I know I will. It's up to you, doc, if there'll happy or sad tears."

"Unfortunately I can't control if you're pregnant or not."

"You can tell me."

"I will. Did you take your medication?"

"Of course."

"Did you also try home pregnancy tests?"

"We thought about it, decided not to do them. They're not as good as a blood test. Would be bad if the tests says I'm pregnant and you say the opposite. We don't want false hope or fear."

"Then we'll have a look if you're pregnant."

"The odds are against us."

"We're not in Vegas."

"I'd rather play roulette, the chances are better there."

"Think positive."

"I try. Ouch."

"Sorry." Doctor Blumfield put a band aid on the little wound. "I get your blood to the lab, you can have a juice and be back in..."

"Ten minutes?"

"An hour."

"One hour?" Sofia looked shocked. The last time it took thirty minutes.

"There are other tests too, you have to wait a little longer. Sorry."

"One hour...we try not to get crazy." Sofia got up. "Café?"

"Yes." Sara offered her wife her hand. "Orange juice."

"With a splash of lemon. Vitamins are good for the baby... if it's there."

"We'll see. See you in an hour, doc."

"Enjoy your juice."

"Thanks." Hand in hand they went to the little café and ordered two orange juices with a splash of lemon.

"One hour." Sara sighed. They expected half an hour and thought, that was a long time. Now the waiting time was doubled and felt like eternity.

"We're the lucky ones, most women have to wait much longer. If we didn't have the lab around the corner, we could go home and come back next week." A nightmare. For a week they wouldn't be able to think about anything else than the blood test and the results.

"I know." The brunette checked her watch. "It feels like an hour and it's only ten minutes."

"Tell me about it. I feel like walking home and back only to pass time."

"Is Juana at our place?"

"Not yet. Thanks for agreeing giving her the room."

"It's what we have it for and it's nice to have somebody over, who stays longer, who we know. I like the times when Kim is there, it's better to have a familiar face around than a stranger. Although we were very lucky so far when it came to our guests. None of them was a disaster."

"No, they were nice. How many minutes are left?"

"Too many."

"Maybe she calls us like she did the last time."

"She seemed rather busy today. Many patients."

"First official work day of the year for everybody, a lot of patients."

"We should have made the home pregnancy test."

"To get a wrong answer?"

"I love your positive attitude."

"I love you, with or without positive attitude."

The waitress brought them their juices. So many minutes to kill before they got their answer. And they weren't the only ones. Other couples sat in the café too, looked at their watches, trying to get not crazy. All together and yet all alone.

"Susan almost made her first step today." Sara said.

"Yes, mom told me. She's pretty good walking while somebody holds her, the first step alone ... I want to be with her when she does it."

"Then you should take a week off, I expect her to walk this week."

"I'd love to, unfortunately we have two colleagues at home with a flu. When they're back, I can take a few days off, the overtime I accumulated so far gives me three. What about you?"

"My overtime decreases with every week since I don't work forty hours anymore."

"You might see her do her first step."

"If not, your parents hopefully take a video of it."

"And many photos...gosh, I go crazy, can we go back to doctor Blumfield?"

"We can, she won't be there."

"I hate waiting! I hate waiting! I hate waiting!" The blonde buried her face in her hands. Why didn't they get an appointment in the morning? They'd have their answer already if they had an early appointment.

One hour was over. Sara and Sofia were there, doctor Blumfield wasn't. A minute passed by, another one, five minutes.

"Where the hell is she? The hour is long over." Sofia bit on her fingernails. Waiting. She didn't want to wait any longer.

"It's a doctor appointment, you know they always involve waiting."

"Don't pretend you're cool."

"As cool as hell fire."

"I know you're hot." Sofia pulled Sara in her arms and kissed her. "No matter what doctor Blumfield will tell us, I'm happy. We have two great kids, we have wonderful friends, who are like family, my parents aren't that bad and most important, we have ourselves."

"We have all we need and still want more. Like every human being. Life is never perfect, it always gets better."

"I think when you think you're life is perfect and can't get better, you have nothing to work for and you lose everything. In my opinion our relationship is perfect, to keep it perfect, I have to work for it, there are things, that could be better. I'd love to spend more time with you, travel with you, surprise you with little presents, make you happy. Our perfect relationship is supposed to get better. Better than perfect."

"A lot of pressure."

"No, a challenge. I love challenges. It's why I married you."

"Very funny." Sara slapped her lover softly.

"Your humor is sexy too. Oh, I forgot to tell you, I had a conversation with our son this afternoon. He's still not over Marlene."

"I didn't expect him to forget her within two weeks. What about the girl, who was over last week?"

"Jenny? She likes him, he doesn't want to do anything as long as he has Marlene on his mind. As much as he wants a girlfriend, he doesn't jump at the first chance because he doesn't want to hurt her feelings. His parents, whoever they were, gave him some pretty good DNA and he must have had a good childhood the first years. Otherwise I have no explanation why he is this great."

"You could give us credit for it."

"We did reinstall his trust in people, showed him, there are people, who believe in him. If his parents hadn't done the basics years ago, it would not have worked out. I'd have liked to meet them."

"Yes. Does he talk about them with you?"

"No. You?"

"No. Shall we ask him if he wants to talk about them? About the things he can remember?"

"I think we should wait until he comes to us. Or not? I'm not sure. How would you have liked it best when you were his age?"

"Leave me alone, my past isn't your business." Sara sighed.

"Then we should leave him alone too, let him do the first step."

"We always have to wait."

"True." Sofia checked her watch. Ten minutes. What the...? The door was opened and doctor Blumfield rushed in.

"I'm sorry you had to wait, there was an incident."

"Something serious?" Whenever Sofia had an incident at work, it meant somebody was dead, injured or robbed of all

valuables. In a hospital it was almost the same. An incident was most likely something bad.

"No, actually it's something positive. One woman, who was supposed to have her last check-up before delivery, came in with what she thought false contractions. They were real and she gave birth to a baby girl."

"Wow, that is a good incident. Will I do the same?"

"Give birth to a baby girl here while we think, you're not due? Unlikely."

"So the test was negative. Damn it." Sad the blonde sighed and pulled Sara more in her arms. Not pregnant. Not a surprise. It was, what they expected. Nevertheless, it made her sad. There had been a small chance and every small chance was better than no chance at all.

"I didn't say that. I said, it's unlikely you will have a baby girl while you're here for a check-up or false contractions. You are pregnant Sofia."

"I am?" Shocked she looked at the doctor. Did she really say the blonde was pregnant? Or was it an imagination?

"The test says so. I have no idea how you did it, I have no idea how big the chances are to get pregnant twice in a row using IVF, especially in your age."

"I am pregnant? I am pregnant!"

"You are!" Sara kissed her wife passionately. Sofia was pregnant. They'd be parents. Again. Another baby.

"Congratulation. Your body seems to be made to get pregnant. I'm surprised you haven't been pregnant before, given the fact, you slept with men for twenty years." Doctor Blumfield said.

"I made sure of that. Most times double. Pregnant. Wham."

"We'll have another baby."

"Ladies, I know you're happy, you have all reasons for it, but please keep in mind, you're only two weeks pregnant, Sofia, a lot of things can happen. I told you all the do and don't the last time, they haven't changed, in fact, I want you to be more careful, as you are older now. Not a lot, which doesn't mean a thing. Especially the next three months I want you to be very careful. Get a lot of rest, healthy food, no heavy lifting, no sports."

"Okay."

"No more overtime, Honey."

"I heard the doctor."

"Good. When shall I come back?"

"I want to see you ASAP when you feel something is wrong, otherwise we'll see each other in two weeks. I'll have a close look on you, Sofia."

"Thanks. Or does it mean, the baby and I are at risk?"

"You are, you're over forty, you're two weeks pregnant. Stay away from the chemicals in the lab, don't lift heavy evidence, no more carrying Susan around. She can sit on your lap, you can play with her, but the whole time I want you to imagine, you carry around very fragile china or eggs."

"You start to scare me, doc. The last time you didn't give me so many warnings."

"The last time you ignored some warnings, you were lucky everything went out the way it was supposed to be."

"My wife will make sure I'm better this time."

"You bet. From today on, I'll dictate what you eat and when you're not back after nine hours, I come to the lab and drag you back home, chain you to the bed and let you wait there until our baby is born."

"Interesting thought, but I know, it's not meant to be good. I promise I do whatever the two of you tell me."

"Good." Sara smiled. Her wife was pregnant. They beat all odds again. Who wanted to be lucky in Vegas? Who wanted to win at roulette when you were lucky with getting pregnant? A baby was worth much more than a money win.

When they came back Juana sat on the couch, together with Steve and Susan.

"Mama!" The girl cheered when she saw her mothers.

"Hello baby girl." Sara took Susan in her arms and kissed her.

"How are you?"

"Curious. What did the doctor say?" Steve asked.

"Yes, what did the doctor say? Hi Sofia, hello Sara."

"Hi Juana, did Steve show you everything?"

"Yes, he did."

"Good. Thanks for that."

"Yeah, yeah, what did the doctor say? Will we have more stinky diapers and nights without sleep?"

"The words of a boy, who can't think of anything better than having a little sibling." Sofia sat down.

"Mo-om!"

"You can change a few more diapers in ten months, I am pregnant."

"Wow, you did it again! Congratulation." He hugged Sofia and kissed her. "I knew you're better than the odds."

"Thanks."

"Now you have to cut back work. Does William know?"

"He will know tomorrow. You can have all my work, I take your breaks." Sofia took Susan on her lap. "For you, my cute baby daughter, it means, I can't carry you around anymore. The doctor doesn't want me to do it."

"Mama."

"Yes, your mama will be more often at home, she needs to rest more. The two of us can play and go out for walks. Do you like walks?"

"Ya." Susan tried to get off Sofia's lap. Carefully the blonde let her daughter down on her feet and walked a few steps with her.

"You're great, soon you will walk all by yourself."

"We need to celebrate your pregnancy." Steve suggested.

"It's too early, we should wait another three months. A lot of things can happen, I'm in a critical state."

"Then we celebrate with a juice here. Does Don know about your pregnancy?"

"I sent him a text as soon as we were out of the clinic. He's over the moon."

"Means, he's out shopping, buying something for you. A late Christmas gift."

"The late Christmas gift will be the baby. Brother or sister?"

"Doesn't matter as long as he or she doesn't cry at night."

"Babies don't get delivered with this feature, they all cry at night."

"I move in with grandma and granddad. The next two years."

"No way, you stay with us, in two years you move out to go to college anyway. Unless we can find something to keep you here." Sara pulled her son into her arms. "We need you here."

"As a babysitter."

"No, we love you and don't want you away."

"And your sister needs her hero around, who protects her from all danger. As her big brother, you are the hero and are the one, she wants to chase ghosts away."

"Isn't that the job of the father?"

"A hero brother is better than a father. A father tells you off, a brother doesn't. He steals the chocolate with you."

"Oh, when it comes to stealing chocolate, she has to stick to her mom, she's the best. Unfortunately she eats it all by herself."

"Not true!" Sofia protested. "The next months I'll have a lot of fruits and only a little bit of chocolate." Or what she called a little bit and Sara called a huge amount. Opinions were different when it came to certain food.

"Yeah, sure." Sara laughed. She knew her wife. When it came to chocolate the blonde could barely resist and it was up to Sara to make sure, the blonde did not only look at fruits but also ate it.

## Tuesday, January 28th

You know how much you miss somebody, when this person was gone. Sara realized how true this was after the fourth day of Greg and Jules being away in Acapulco. She wanted her friends to be happy, but she missed them. A lot. They didn't meet every day when they were in Los Angeles, none of them had the time for that, but she knew, they were only a few yards away when she needed them.

"Mom? Are you awake?" Steve asked carefully.

"Huh? Sorry." Sara looked up. She hadn't heard her son.

"Where have you been with your thoughts? It looked like you were far, far away. Was it a nice place?"

"Acapulco."

"Oh." He sat down next to her, Susan on his lap, who was asleep and held on to his shirt. "Do you miss Greg or Jules more?"

"I miss both of them. Greg as my best friend and Jules as my...I need her for my mental health. With her around I'm more stable."

"What does mom say about this?"

"She told me to call them tonight."

"You have a very understanding wife."

"I know, I'm very lucky. A wonderful wife and a perfect son. You and Susan are so cute. She holds on to you so you can't leave her. The heroic brother has to stay close to her, be with her."

"We played hide and seek, when it was my last turn to hide it took her a while before she found me. I had to give her some clues, she called out for me, almost anxious that I was gone. When she found me, she jumped into my arms and refused to let go off me. It must have made her very tired, after a minute or so she fell asleep."

"She loves it when you play with her."

"In a few months she has to share the attention with the new baby. How was mom's last check-up?"

"Good. Everything goes the way it's supposed to. I'm glad Sofia does look more after herself and the baby than she did the last time. Less hours, more sleep, more healthy food."

"More workout."

"Yes, gentle workout." The blonde took the dogs around the reservoir twice a day and three times a week, she and Sara went

to a swimming pool for an hour. With their children, who enjoyed the water as much as they did.

"We profit from the workout too, I like swimming. Maybe we can go to these big water parks when Susan and the new baby are bigger."

"If you want to be with us and not with your friends. It will take a few more years for your siblings to enjoy the water. But what we can do when the weather is better, we can go to Six Flags."

"Yes, that would be great. Both parks are worth a visit. It's a shame it's too cold over my birthday, I'd love to go there."

"You can go to the other Six Flags Park if you want."

"Maybe. We'll see how the forecast is."

"Eve." Susan had opened her eyes and looked at her brother.

"Hi Susi Sunshine, how are you? Ready to play again? Or are you hungry? Shall we get you some berries?"

"Ya."

"Okay, then we go and hunt berries down."

"Mama." The eyes of the girl fell on her mother.

"I'm here, darling. Go with your brother, playing makes hungry."

"After you had a few berries we'll play again. You can get in your chair and race me."

Susan cheered and said a couple of words nobody understood. When her brother played with her, spent his afternoon with her, she was a happy girl.

Sara stopped reading the letter when she heard footsteps coming her way. Fast footsteps. Made my the shoes of a child. Not Susan, that was...

"Eric!"

"Sara!" Her godson flew into her arms and covered her face with kisses. His longish brown hair tousled from the wind and a little bit wet from the rain outside.

"What are you doing here? Did you miss me?"

"Yeah. Sara." He snuggled into her arms.

"Surprise." Sofia leant at the doorframe and smiled. Her wife and her godson were a cute couple and obviously very happy they were together. Eric and his sisters spent the week with their grandparents while their parents were in Mexico.

"Is Alison here?"

"No, I drove by on my way home and asked Eric, if he wants to stay here tonight. His godmother misses him and Alison agreed on him staying over."

"You'll stay with me? That's great."

"Yeah."

"Then we have to prepare a bed for you. Or, do you want to sleep in a cave?"

"Yeah!" His eyes brightened.

"Okay, then let's build a cave for you." Sara got up, took Eric's hand and when she passed Sofia, she stopped to kiss her wife.

"Thanks. Do you want to join us?"

"If you don't want to be alone with your godson."

"No, we can use your help."

"Okay. I saw our daughter in Steve's room."

"They're playing with blocks." Sara got a few blankets out of the cabinet in the guest room, that soon would be Susan's new room. When Sofia was over the first trimester and it was likely she'd keep the baby, they'd start to prepare Susan's room for the new baby and the guestroom for the little girl. She could pick her own wallpaper and decoration.

"We can build a case with this. How about in the corner over there?" The brunette pointed to the table."

Eric nodded and took a blanket. He unfolded it and placed it over the table. Sara and Sofia used the chairs to make the cave bigger and put some books on the blankets, so they stayed, where they were supposed to be. Using the guest bed mattress they made it nice and comfortable for the boy.

"Perfect, very cozy." Sofia said.

"Yes. Here's the flashlight and a pillow. What else do you need, Eric?"

"His teddy and some more blankets. Get your bag, Honey."

"Yeah." The boy left the room to get his bag with his teddy.

"I thought I get you a part of Jules so you don't have to miss her all the time." Sofia teased her lover.

"Eric is also Greg's son."

"I know and he makes you smile."

"So do you."

"As much as Eric?"

"More." Sara kissed her wife. "What did his sisters say when you took only him with you?"

"They were fine with it. Louise was asleep and Jorja had plans with her grandmother. She'll become a real doctor today. Like her grandmother."

"Reminds me of your mother, only she wants her granddaughter to be a cop."

"They're a lot alike. Look, there is our cave man with his teddy. Would you like Sara and me to read you a story later? Here in the cave, so you can fall asleep better?"

"Yeah."

"Good, we'll do that. Now we should prepare some dinner. Spinach, potatoes and eggs. And when you finish all your spinach you get some ice cream as dessert." Sofia saw from the look on Eric's face he wasn't a big fan of spinach, with the ice cream she should have the best arguments for the boys to eat it.

"Eric can help us preparing dinner. You're a big boy, right?"

"Yeah."

"Good."

Sara got up and offered her wife her hand. When Sofia stood next to her, Sara pulled her into her arms and kissed her gently.

"You're the best." She caressed the belly of her wife. "How is our baby feeling?"

"No complains. He or she should be fine."

"Good. Why don't you sit down and help Eric with the potatoes while I do the rest?"

"We can do that. And later we take the dogs for a walk. Eric, can you protect Sara and me? It will be dark, we need a big boy, who looks after us."

The boy nodded seriously. Of course he could protect them.

"Thanks. Maybe Steve joins us too. Or Don and Tanya. We take Susan with us too and when we're back, we're all tired and ready to go to bed. Or to go into the cave, read a story and then sleep."

"And tomorrow morning I take you to daycare and you can tell your friends about your night in the case." Sara smiled at Eric. She wished they could keep the boy for a few more days. Alison had the girls, she didn't need Eric as well, did she?

## Thursday, February 13th

The fourth appointment with doctor Blumfield since Sofia knew she was pregnant. Her doctor really kept an eye on her, she was eight weeks pregnant and had to come here every two weeks for a check-up. Not that she was mad, she was glad her doctor took so good care of her, it was only a little bit stressful arranging doctor appointments and work.

"How do you feel?" Doctor Blumfield asked when she came into the room.

"Good. The breast pain is almost gone, morning sickness is still there, which annoys me, I crave for food, try to make it healthy stuff, but to be honest, I want chocolate, cookies, ice cream and all those things, that are fun. So I top my ice cream with fruits. And according to my wife and son, I have mood swings."

"Which you don't have?"

"No, of course not. It's not my fault when they piss me off all the time!"

"Yes, you're having mood swing, which is normal."

"Wouldn't you be mad when you have an important doctor appointment and your wife isn't here? Work is more important than our baby."

"Is it?"

"Do you see Sara? I don't. She called half an hour ago, she's stuck in traffic after she left work late. Instead of going home an hour earlier, make sure she'll be on time, I have to be here alone."

"I'm sure she hates it as much as you do."

"Are you on her side?"

"It's not about sides and you know it. Chocolate?"

"You said I have to eat healthy."

"It's dark chocolate and I give you a mandarin when you leave."

"Deal." Sofia took the piece of chocolate out of the little box the doctor offered her. "Thanks."

"Now that we have taken care of your chocolate level, why don't you sit back, relax and pull up your shirt so we can do the ultrasound."

"I am still pregnant, right?"

"We'll see in a few seconds, but I don't know any reasons why you shouldn't."

"Maybe I lost the baby within the last two weeks."

"Did you have any bleedings?"

"No."

"Then I doubt you lost your baby."

"Good." Sofia had been very anxious the last weeks. Had it been difficult to her to do what her doctor told her to do when she was pregnant with Susan, this time she stuck to it. She was too afraid to lose her baby, too afraid, she was not careful enough. If she had miscarriage she knew, she'd not try to have another baby. Too dangerous. Sara worried about her already all the time.

A knock on the door got her out of her thoughts. The door was opened and Sara rushed inside.

"I'm so sorry I'm late, traffic caught me."

"You made it."

"Hello doctor Blumfield. Yes, I parked in a stopping restriction, but I don't care about the fine, I want to be with Sofia. We get through all appointments together, it's the deal." The brunette sat down and kissed her wife. "No need to cry. Or did anything happen?"

"You're here." Sofia hugged her wife. Why was she crying? Must be the hormones. She wasn't sad, she was happy to see Sara.

"Hello Sara, it's good you're here, we were about to start. Nothing happened, I assume, it's the hormones."

"Yes, they play me. I'm fine. I hope."

"Good." Her hand still linked to Sofia's, Sara sat down.

"It's getting cold."

"Yuck!" The cold gel wasn't one of Sofia's favorite activities here. Actually, she didn't like anything here a lot. It was always about taking her blood, sitting on the horrible chair, getting tested for whatever and too many medication.

"Only a few seconds. Gosh, you're still skinny."

"Skinny? I haven't been skinny since the accident."

"Yes you are."

"I put on some weight."

"Before the accident you were very skinny, Honey." Sara said and stroke over the blonde's hand. "Now you're normal and I like it more."

"You never told me you thought I was too skinny."

"Not too skinny, very skinny. And as long as you felt good it wasn't mine to tell you to put on some weight."

"You look healthy, which is much better for the baby." Doctor Blumfield prepared the ultrasound and started to run it over Sofia's belly. "There we are."

"Snowflakes."

"Don't start it again, our baby is not a snowflake...something looks different from last time..." Sofia furrowed her brows.

"What do you mean?"

"Look at it, it's..."

"You're pregnant with twins, Sofia." The happy voice of the doctor was calm, like it wasn't a surprise for her.

"Twins? Seriously?"

"Yes. You got three eggs, being pregnant with more than one baby was something, you knew could happen."

"I was so happy when you said I'm pregnant, I never thought I'm pregnant with more than one child. The last time I was pregnant with one child."

"This time you had your eggs and like I said six weeks ago, I think your body is made to be pregnant. Your womb kept two eggs, you are a lucky woman. Didn't you say last December you want twins?"

"I was joking, wanted to shock Sara, see how she reacts and now ...we'll have twins... Honey, you're pale. Are you okay?" It wasn't a joke anymore, it was reality.

"Y-yes." Twins. They would have twins. Somehow Sara felt like the world was spinning and then everything went black.

When Sara woke up again she was on a stretcher, Sofia next to her, holding her hand, looking worried at her wife.

"Hey, you scared me."

"What happened?"

"You lost consciousness."

"Why? Did I have a bout again?" This couldn't be true, she wasn't scared, there was no reason for her to have a bout. She was over that. She was stronger.

"No, you were in shock. Honey, anything you want to tell me about you not want to have twins?"

"I...you're pregnant with twins." It was a mix between a question and a statement. Sara remembered how the doctor told them, Sofia was pregnant with twins. That was the last thing she remembered.

"Yes I am. And you seem not to be very happy about it."

"I am happy, I'm only...can I get up?"

"I'd rather seen you resting another five minutes." Doctor Blumfield said. "You might experience some headache as you fell and hit your head on the ground."

"Why?"

"Joy? At least we hope it's joy."

"So do I. You'll have twins."

"We will have twins." The blonde kissed the knuckles of her wife. "Or do you plan to leave me because I'm pregnant with twins?"

"No! Why do you say such a stupid thing?"

"Makes sense, after you passed out."

"You heard the doctor, it was joy."

"The next time I'd prefer when you show your joy and happiness with a kiss."

"Okay." Sara pulled Sofia's head down and kissed her.

"Better?"

"Much better."

"Are you done with your examination?"

"Yes."

"Okay, then let's get out of here." Sara sat up. She didn't want to wait another five minutes, she was fine.

"Slowly!"

"I'm fine."

"Your five minutes are not over."

"Don't be a nitpicker."

"Doctor?"

"You both should rest, Sofia is the one, who can drive."

"Because I'm pregnant and not sick."

"And need to be careful. Everything looked fine today, I want the same when I see you in two weeks."

"For how much longer do I have to come here every two weeks?"

"Two more, when you're thirteen weeks pregnant and the tests tell us, everything is fine with you and the baby, you can come back once a month."

"Other women get send back to their gynecologist."

"You're in the lucky position to have your gynecologist and doctor in one person, that's why you got your test result back so fast."

"It's why I chose you, handy and fast. The best. I like to have the best around me."

"Thanks for the compliment and congratulation to your twins."

"Thanks you for the twins, you made it possible."

"Sofia, you are the one, who are pregnant. Your body kept the embryos, all I did was attacking you with a needle. Something you didn't like."

"No and I don't want you to do it ever again. Twins, Susan and Steve are enough kids. Or do you want more children, Sara?"

"No!" The brunette looked shocked. Four children were more than she ever dreamed of. More than she expected they'd ever have. Sofia was pregnant with twins.

Back home Sofia made sure Sara sat down first. Her lover wasn't pale anymore, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

"Hi moms." Lea came down the stairs. "How are you? Did you bring a photo of my new sister or brother? Jeez, Sara, you look like you saw the devil. Did the doctor tell you bad news?"

"No, she had only good news. More than one."

"Means?"

"Means Sofia is pregnant with twins."

"Wow! Seriously?"

"Seriously."

"Cool. Congratulation." Lea hugged Sofia. "That's so cool. I mean, it was awesome you were pregnant at all, being pregnant with twins is even better. You'll have two little babies, one looks like you, one like Don. Isn't that great? Show me the ultrasound picture."

"See, this is how happiness looks like." Sofia blinked at her lover and gave the photo to Lea.

"Oh look how cute. Two babies. Everything is fine with you and them?"

"Yes, we're all three fine."

"Good."

"You've got the photo already? How does the new stink bomb look?" Steve came into the room, sat next to Lea and took the photo. "Hey, there are two!"

"Such a smart boy, he realizes it immediately, not like us." Sara smiled. "Yes, Sofia is pregnant with twins."

"Twice the amount of diapers and cries. Precious."

"Oh come on, you're as happy as we are."

"Give me a few more years to show my happiness. When I go to college and have my own place, I'm fine. Why does mom get us the drinks? Don't you hover over her all the time?"

"Your mother lost consciousness. The joy of hearing about becoming a double mother."

"You dropped? Why? Are you okay?" Steve's eyes were filled with fear and concern.

"Yes, I'm fine."

"The twins shocked you."

"A little bit."

"We'll lose the living room."

"Is that the first thing you think about?" Lea slapped Steve.

"No, the first think I thought about was all the stinky diapers and nights, we can't sleep because one of them decides to be in a bad mood. Then the second one will start to cry, joined by Susan and we have an orchestra of babies crying."

"You're a jerk."

"I love you too."

"No, you love Jenny."

"Who told you this?"

"I can see it. What do you think, surrogate mothers? They had a date."

"We went to see a movie."

"All alone."

"No, there were around two hundred other people."

"Did you enjoy it?" Sofia asked.

"It was nice, a good movie."

"And?"

"Beside the fact it's not your business, that's it. Back to the twins. Do we really have to give up our living room?"

"No." Sofia sighed. "No, we don't. We can let the twins stay in one room for a while. Susan's room is the biggest, we should really relocate our daughter and keep the twins there. Puts your room right in the middle, isn't that great?"

"Can I move in with you, Lea?"

"Your and my parents will be delighted. Two years and we're off or own place anyway. Unless you dump me for another chick."

"Ditto."

"Me? Will never happen. Remember the last girl I liked? She dates a guy."

"Stupid bitch."

"Language please." Sara reprinted her son.

"Susan is not around. So, what are our plans?"

"Your mother has to rest even more, she has to stop working sooner."

"I am not..."

"You will." Sara stopped her lover. "Remember Jules? How she felt when she was pregnant with the twins? You won't be able to work when you're nine months pregnant."

"We'll see about this when it's time. Twins. We need to go shopping."

"Not yet."

"Honey, you said yourself, I won't be very active later, we have to prepare everything as soon as possible. Including Susan's move into another room."

"Why don't you let Steve and me take care of this?" Lea offered. "We get the room prepared and for the twins' room I'm sure Jules and Greg have some leftovers. Like a bed. Eric and Jorja have real beds, they can borrow you a bed. Same for baby stuff. No need for a huge shopping trip."

"You're a wonderful daughter."

"Thanks. What did Don say about the news?"

"He doesn't know about the twins yet, we want to tell him when he's here. Child number two and three, I wonder if he's fine now or if he wants even more children."

"When Tanya changes her mind..."

"She won't."

"Otherwise he'll have another kid. Maybe he should ask his boss for a boost in money. Children are expensive."

"Lea, he has no responsibilities. Also no money to pay."

"I know about this contract, which doesn't mean, he's not about to buy a million things for the twins. Like he does for Susan. No strings attached officially. Doesn't stop him from taking your daughter to New York. Unfortunately not the older daughter."

"Or the son."

"You poor things. I'm sure you can stay with his parents when you want to go to New York. Keep it in mind for your summer holidays."

"You'd allow me to go there? Alone?"

"No, with Lea." Sara said. "And you have to stay with Don's parents. Then yes, you can go there, right Honey?"

"Yes."

"Cool, we have to think about that. A few days New York. If we get a cheap flight, we should do that, what do you think, Lea?"

"I'm all in."

"Perfect."

"How far are you with the birthday plans?"

"No birthday plan."

"You'll turn sixteen." Sofia didn't understand why her son didn't want to celebrate his birthday. There were so many things she wanted to do when she turned sixteen. So many parties she wanted to have, so many places she wanted to go.

"So?"

"Huge party time!"

"No, thanks. Pizza and movies are enough."

"Anybody you want to invite for that?"

"Lea."

"Darling, I'm here anyway. Or do you really believe I'd stay away for your b-day?"

"Nope."

"Good. Who else? Jenny?"

"Peter and Paul."

"Who are Peter and Paul?" As far as Sara remembered, these were the names of some saints.

"Lea's new BBF forever."

"BBF? What stands that for?"

"Best boyfriends forever."

"Boyfriends?"

"They're a couple, much for the amusement of the football team. Our high school is not a place with tolerant people. Another reason why I will stay in the closet. It's nice, warm and safe in there."

"You're all out of the closet here, Baby." Steve pulled Lea in his arms and kissed her cheek.

"It's nice, warm and safe here too. In my hero's arms. Do you really want to invite Peter and Paul? The guys talk already because we spend time with them, when they find out, my BBF were here, you are going to be the gay guy too."

"If that's the worst that ever happens to me, I'm a hell of a lucky person. Besides, did you forget we're having a relationship?"

"Right, I forgot. You won the bet."

"Absolutely. I am the man."

"You are the big brother with three baby siblings." Lea grinned and hugged Steve. How could her friend be more a man than taking care of three babies?

"So, are you used to the thought of becoming a mother of twins?" Sofia kissed Sara's collarbone. Bringing the twin news to Don and celebrating them made both very tired, but not too tired to have some energy left for sweet loving sex.

"I am. I'm sorry I shocked you."

"You were the one in shock."

"Okay, then I'm sorry I scared you."

"It's not like you did it on purpose. I was shocked myself. Twins. Doctor Blumfield must be right, my body seems to like pregnancy. Knowing this, I'm really happy I didn't get pregnant twenty years ago."

"That's why they always say you're supposed to have safe sex."

"That's why I always doubled the safety. Some boyfriends called me paranoid, looks like I just knew in my subconscious it's better. None of them would be a good father."

"Otherwise you might have a whole football team by now."

"And you had never given me a chance."

"What makes you say this?"

"The old Sara would have been scared of a bunch of kids."

"Maybe. Plus you would have never have the time to go to Malibu with me. Or spend all the time with me, take care of me during therapy. Nor would you have a shared house, a room for me."

"My bed would be crowded with you and a couple of kids."

"We have this in two years, three kids cuddling up on a Sunday morning. No more sleep in, no more good morning sex, before we open our eyes, one, two or three children will be here and occupy us."

"You have a way to point out the bright side of life and love."

The blonde complained.

"I am realistic." Sara kissed her wife. "I love you anyway. Even when we won't have sex anymore."

"We'll always have sex. My parents can look after their grandchildren, give us more trips for Christmas so we have some time alone."

"Like the trip to New Orleans. We should prepare everything for it? Spring time, warm sunsets, a room with a view, a sun lounger and...you can do the math for the rest."

"A lot of sex."

"Absolutely. Just what we want most. For us."

"You don't get pregnant when you have sex with me."

"I don't get pregnant when I have sex with anybody at the moment. I am already pregnant."

"With twins." Sara smiled. "We have to come up with another name. Sandy isn't alone."

"Got an idea?"

"No, but you have."

"Who says so?"

"I can see it in your eyes."

"You know me too well."

"I can't know you too well. I can try to know you very well, examine very inch of you."

"Oh, you want to play doctor? Again? Can I have five more minutes?"

"You get more than five minutes." The brunette laughed. "So, what is the name you have on your mind?"

"A girl's name."

"Okay. Which one?"

"Solora."

"Interesting name. How did you come up with it?"

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, it's not like most other names and yet not strange like the name of a fruit or a city. What does it mean?"

"I've no idea where the meaning comes from in general, to me it's short for Sofia loves Sara. My first two letters, the first two letters of loves and your last two letters. Solora."

"Wow, that's...I think that's the best meaning of a name."

"When we have two boys, we can name one Saloso, it's Native American for Wild Goose Cry. Or for Sara loves Sofia. Or do you want these two names for both kids in case we have a boy and a girl?"

"Tempting, but I think, we stick with Sandy and one of the other names. I'm not a fan of giving children almost identical names. Even when their meanings are wonderful."

"Sandy and Solora. Or Sandy and Saloso. We are good with the name this time."

"It's the last time we choose a name. No more babies after the twins."

"Which doesn't mean we won't have sex. We'll have a lot of sex."

"What a wonderful idea." Sara pulled the brunette on top of her. "Honey, I think your five minutes are over."  
"Didn't you say..." Sofia gasped when Sara's hand slipped between her legs. "Never mind." Who cared about what Sara or didn't say? What mattered was, what she did right now and that was more than good.

## Friday, February 14th

"Hello Sara, how are you?"

"Hi Julie, I'm fine, how are you?"

"Also fine. Do you miss Sofia?"

"Always. But I'm here because she forgot her lunch and I know her, she'll get some fast food instead. Not what the doctor ordered her to have. Where is she?"

"Conference room five. Shall I take you there?"

"I know my way, all I need is the visitor card."

"Here you are."

"Thanks. I'll be back in five minutes."

"Oh, I don't worry about you."

"My boss will when I'm not on time. See you soon." With the lunch box Sara walked down the corridor. Her wife forgot her lunch when she rushed out of the kitchen this morning. An urgent call. When Sara saw the lunch box on the counter, it was too late to call the blonde, so she decided to leave a few minutes earlier and get her wife the lunch box. It was a chance to visit the lab again. Not that she missed working in a lab...a lot...sometimes...at all...okay, she missed it. Sometimes she did wonder how it would be to work with Sofia again, which didn't mean, she didn't like her job anymore. It was just...a nice idea to see her wife more often. Working cases with her, exchanging ideas, watching how her brilliant mind wrapped itself around a case and solve it. Sexy. Intelligence was very, very sexy. Packed into a beautiful body with a sexy swagger it was irresistible.

The door to the conference room was open, Sofia sat at the table, reading something.

"Hello gorgeous, didn't you forget something?" She let her hand run over her lover's shoulder and frozen when Sofia turned.

"And you are?"

"Uhm...I'm...I'm sorry." Not Sofia. Another woman. Also blonde, also blue eyes and...at least she didn't look like she was about to arrest Sofia for sexual harassment. This was so embarrassing.

"Hello Sorry, I'm agent Jareau. I assume you mistook me for somebody."

"Yes, my wife..." Hello Sorry? Right, she didn't managed to give this woman her name, all she could do was stutter an

apology. She made a fool out of herself and when this woman heard she was Sofia's wife, she'd embarrass her wife too.

"CSI Curtis."

"Yes. I'm really sorry...I mean, my name is Sara and I am sorry."

Agent Jareau laughed. "It's okay. I sat here with my back to you, having long, blonde hair like your wife, who you expect to be here, it's not a surprise you mistook me for her."

"Thanks. Where is she?"

"She should be back any second. Are you working the case too?"

"What case? Oh, no, I'm not a CSI or cop, I'm a ranger. A visitor." She held up her visitor card.

"So you are here to deliver lunch?"

"Yes."

"My husband never brings lunch to me."

"Maybe he knows you're responsible enough to get your own lunch. Healthy lunch."

"And your wife isn't?"

"Not always." Why did she tell this agent Jareau? It wasn't her business and it surely didn't wasn't from any interest to her what Sofia did or didn't eat.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, I've got...Sara? What are you doing here?" There she was, busy, with a folder in her arms and followed by a young man. Her wife. She looked definitely more beautiful than the agent. Besides, weren't agents always the enemy?

"You forgot your lunch."

"Oh."

"Yeah. I thought I get it to you before I go to work. Agent Jareau kept me entertained and...I think I should go." She handed Sofia the box. "Take care of the three of you, will you?"

"Always. Take care of my ranger."

"I will. See you tonight. Agent Jareau, once again I'm sorry and thanks for your understanding. Goodbye."

"Goodbye Sara."

Puzzled Sofia followed her lover with her eyes. What was the brunette sorry for? What did the agent understand? She must have missed something special while she was getting the folder.

"Okay, you asked for the information about the first two cases, here they are. The first victim was killed in Hollywood, the second in Lynwood." She gave the case files to Agent Jareau and doctor Reid, who came into the room when Sara. "I understood you have a case in San Francisco, that is similar."

"It's the same and there are two cases since last night." Agent Jareau said. "The rest of our team is already up there. Who worked the cases here?"

"Detective Flack and I the Hollywood case, the Lynwood case was first worked by lieutenant Baxter before we found out, it's the same perpetrator and detective Flack took the lead. You talked to him?"

"Briefly on the phone, he's on his way to here. Tell me, what do you know about the perpetrator?"

"Male, mid-to early thirties, well educated, has transportation. He lures his way into the victims apartment, ties them up and kills them with a single GSR. Both times with a .45 caliber.

Did he do the same in San Francisco?"

"Yes."

The cell phone of doctor Reid rang and he answered it while Agent Jareau kept talking. "He did the same two days ago, the crime scene of last night is still active, we don't know all details yet."

"I want to be in the team."

"That was Hotch, he wants us up north ASAP. The flight is at noon."

"I want to come with you, I worked the cases here."

"Not possible." Doctor Reid took the folder. "We keep you informed."

"Yeah, like always. I read about it in the newspaper. You can't just shut me out."

"Sofia." The voice of agent Jareau was soft. "You're pregnant."

"How do you know and what does it have to do with the case?"

"Your wife said, take care of the three of you. You're pregnant with twins. Judged by your figure, it's an early stage, first trimester. I've a child myself, I know it's important to have enough rest. Going to San Francisco isn't resting, it's stressful. I do understand you want to be a part of this, you deserve to be a part of it and you are, but for your own health and the safety of your babies, it's better you stay here. I promise I keep you informed and you don't have to read the newspaper to know what's going on."

Sofia swallowed. The agent had a pretty good point here. The safety of her babies and the fact, her wife wouldn't like it when Sofia took off to San Francisco to chase a killer.

"Okay. I trust you on the vivid information flood."

"A promise from mother to mother." The other woman smiled.

"You look...mad." Don got his arm around Sofia.

"I am."

"At whom?"

"Myself. The FBI. The guy, who kills people and moved to another city."

"Did you hear something?"

"No, they took off two hours ago."

"Do you think they keep you in the loop?"

"I hope so."

"I'm about to fly there, don't trust them, all I need is the official invitation of SFPD."

"Will you get it?"

"One of them owes me a favor, so yes. I expect to be on the four o'clock flight. Want to join?"

"I do..."

"But?"

"Agent Jareau had a pretty good point why I can't."

"What? Not your business? It's Federal business?"

"No, I'm pregnant with twins and it's not the best idea to have too much stress."

"How does she know? Do they have personal files about us? About our health?"

"Sara was here and she mistook agent Jareau with me. Both blonde, sitting with her back to the door, she expected me to be in the room."

"Oh-ho." Don grinned. "Did she greet the agent too friendly?"

"I have no idea what exactly happened, but I know she was a little bit...confused. Do I really look like agent Jareau?"

"From the back? Yes. You're both sexy."

"Since when are you into blondes?"

"I'm not, they're only a snack"

"Honey, you are in love with a Tanya, I don't believe your macho words."

"I'm the man."

"She's the woman and without her permission you do nothing. Without her permission I wouldn't be pregnant with twins."

"I made the decision, she was fine with it and I would have made the same decision if she was against it. I want children, she doesn't want any, so you are the only one, who can make my dreams come true. Of course I could donate sperm but I had no idea who my child was. I prefer this way. I can be a daddy. Although you don't want me involved."

"Honey, I don't want you responsible in front of the law, you know you're Susan's father, she loves you, she knows you're her big daddy and the twins will love you too. You're the perfect father."

"Thanks."

"I mean it." Sofia pulled him into her arms. "You're the perfect father. Tanya is a lucky woman to have you. I love you."

"I love you too. And our babies." He caressed her belly. His children. Only a few more months and he'd have his babies in his arms. "Thanks for thinking of them. I know you want to be up north, want to investigate and hell, they could need you, but the twins are more important."

"Yes, they are. "

"Did you come up with names?"

"We have no idea what gender they are."

"So? Any ideas?"

"Actually we do. Sandy and Solora. Or Saloso."

"Interesting names."

"Sara loves Sofia. Sofia love Sara. That's what the names stand for."

"What about Don? Doesn't Sofia love Don? Solodo? Or Doloso? Dolosa?"

"You're cute."

"You're the gorgeous mother of my twins."

"I love you, detective."

"Love you too." His cell phone rang. "Gimme a second. Flack."

Sofia leant back and watched him on the phone. Would one or both of her children look like Don? Be like him? Susan did look like Sara and act like Don. A great combination. Would the twins look like him and be like her? Or the other way around? Or one of both?

"SFPD called. I'm in."

"That's good."

"Yes, I've to see Rock. Are you fine here?"

"I am. Go and get the bastard."

"Thanks, I will. Is there any message I should get to your back doppelganger?"

"Very funny."

"Maybe Sara wants to pass on a message. Her wife in ten years younger."

"Ten years younger? I hate you, it can't be more than five."

"Who counts the years? You look better. Much better. Your blue eyes are nicer. Our babies will be the most beautiful babies in hospital."

"Absolutely."

He kissed her. "I see you soon, take care of our babies and our chicks."

"I will. Catch a killer, Donald. Make me proud."

"You are already proud of me." He grinned and left the room, leaving her slightly frustrated. He could fly to San Francisco while she had to stay here.

Sara watched Sofia come home from the balcony. The look on the face of her wife told her, she had a lot on her mind. From the way she walked Sara knew she was in pain, it was her left leg. And the fact that Sofia came back on time told her, she didn't have a new case. So the FBI agent had solved the case or left town. With the FBI still in town it would have been a long day.

Would her lover tell her all these things she just saw? Or did she have to make her talk? Especially about the pain in the leg. Yes, she had to make her talk, knowing this annoyed her already and she decided, when the blonde didn't tell her tonight, she'd call doctor Bendler and let her know. Alison would make Sofia come to see her and give her a hard time for not taking care of herself.

"Your mama is coming home, Susan, did you miss her?"

"Mama." The girl said. "Mama." With more or less steady steps the girl walked to the door. With her eleven months she walked a lot and got every day better. Whenever Sara and Sofia didn't pay attention, their daughter was gone. By now they had rearranged the doorknobs, they were all up and not horizontal anymore so the girl couldn't open doors when she could reach the doorknob in a few months.

"Yes, mama is home. Did you miss her?"

"Mama."

"Your daddy is in San Francisco. Do you miss him?"

"Dada."

"Dada is away but he will come back, he loves and misses you."

"Nana."

"Your nana will come over and pick you up tomorrow. You can play with her or grandpa."

"Papa."

"Well papa is in San Francisco."

"Iso?"

"San Francisco."

"Iso. Mama."

"Mama is on her way to us. We can hide in bed and wait for her to find us. How is that. Want to play hide and seek? Peek-a-boo?"

"Boo?"

"Yes, let's play boo." She pulled away the sheets and climbed under it with her daughter. Snuggling and giggling they were not only visible but also impossible not to hear for Sofia when she walked into the bedroom.

"I wonder where my sweethearts are." The blonde called out when she entered the room. "Hello? Anybody here? Susan? Sara? Hello? Where are you, Honies? Hello? Am I all alone? Susan?"

"Mama!" The girl said. "Boo." Susan pulled the blanket away.

"Oh! There you are. Both of you." Sofia climbed into the bed and hugged Susan and Sara. "I missed you."

"We missed you too." Sara kissed Sofia softly. "How are you?"

"Again the only sexy blonde at the department and lab."

"You have always been the only sexy blonde in town."

"What about my back doppelganger?"

"Her back looked nice, yours looks better. I love you." Sara stroke softly over Sofia's hair. Her beautiful wife, the woman she loved.

"I love you too. And you, my little daughter. Your mommy loves you a lot." Sofia pulled her daughter into her arms. "I missed you sooo much. Say mama."

"Mama."

"Can you say Sara?"

"Mama."

"Smart girl. Sara is your mama."

"Mama."

"Oh, you are so cute, I want to eat you. Can I eat her?" Sofia looked at Sara. It was impossible to resist such a cute girl.

"No, she isn't chocolate and if you eat her, she's gone. You can eat me. Later."

"You won't be gone then?"

"No, I'll come."

"Now, that sounds more than promising."

"Mama."

"There is the little thing between sex and us: Susi. Did you have dinner already?"

"Yes, I fed her and had the rest of her dinner. Some of it ended in her face, some in mine, some in the kitchen and luckily most of it ended in Susan's stomach. Carrots are not her favorite food. Interestingly she likes spinach most."

"Must be your DNA."

"You like spinach too."

"Yes, on a pizza with extra cheese and garlic."

"Susan will like that too - once she has enough teeth." Sara kissed her daughter. "How about we have a little bath."

"Define we? Do you want to have a bath with her?"

"With her and you. You can wash our backs, would you like that?"

"Honey, I love everything that includes you naked."

"Our daughter is around, so keep your thoughts clean. We have to have our attention on her."

"Of course. Susan will be the little mermaid. One day you'll swim like a fish. Come on, let's get water into the bathtub. Time for a swim."

"Im." Susan cheered, not knowing what her mother planned, but their voices sounded happy, so she was happy too. It had to be something good.

"You were right." Exhausted Sofia broke down next to her wife, heavy breathing, covered in sweat.

"About what?"

"When I eat you, you come."

"When I remember correctly - and I could be wrong because there are some things I can't remember because I came - you came too. Sex is such a wonderful way to end the day."

"It is. Healthy way to satisfy yourself and the one you love."

"Who do you love?"

"I kind of have a crush on the this doctor Reid. He is the smartest person I have ever met. He reads a book within minutes and remembers every word. Him on paperwork and the work is done within minutes."

"You like younger men?"

"And older women. Apparently."

Sara decided to ignore the last comment. Older women. Did her wife tell her, she was old? "Don is in Frisco, isn't he? Maybe he can get me the number of the sexy blonde agent."

"Married, a mother."

"I know another blonde married mother. Only ten years older. She has like a Grand Canyon in her face."

"Now you're more than mean!" Sofia stabbed her lover with her index finger. "A Grand Canyon in the face? Crowfeet are bad, a Grand Canyon is worse. I'm not sure I want to celebrate an anniversary with you. Half a year of being married seemed to be more than enough. Bitch."

"You want me to be your bitch? What do I get in return?" The brunette pulled the blonde on top of her. "I could make you my bitch within seconds and you'd love it."

"Not after the Grand Canyon thing."

"Consider it as a punishment."

"What for?"

"Not telling me everything."

"It started hurting this afternoon." Sofia knew exactly what her wife was talking about. "Not bad. I think the prosthesis needs to be checked."

"Why did you not tell me?"

"I didn't want you to worry. Which was stupid because I should have known you find it out anyway. I'm sorry."

"Did you call your doctor?"

"No."

"You call him tomorrow or I call Alison."

"Honey..."

"No! Your or my call."

"My call."

"Good. What about the other things you haven't told me?"

"Like I love you?"

"Do you want me to lay it out or will you save yourself the trouble?" Sara was fishing, she had no idea if there was anything else Sofia was hiding, but she was sure, this way she

could find it out. Sometimes she had to play her wife in order to get information.

"I...I'm fine. Besides the foot. No bad case and...okay, one more confession. I have a surprise for you and...I'd rather not tell you because than it's not a surprise anymore. My plan was to make Shane take you Monday and Tuesday off..."

"He made that possible."

"Perfect and...can I keep my surprise, please? Pretty please."

"Yes."

"Thanks."

"Does it have something to do with Steve's birthday?"

"If I tell you it's not a surprise anymore. I promise you, it's something good, doesn't hurt and doesn't endanger anybody."

"I could torture you in a very mean and slow way to get these information." Sara let her hand ran over Sofia's skin. "My finger could circle a little bit." She let her index finger circle the blonde's nipple, that rose. "Oh look, I get some reactions." Sara bent over and sucked on the nipple softly, which made Sofia moan. "I could go on like this and stop one second before you come, leave you unfinished and sleep on the couch."

"Honey, that would make you very unhappy."

"Are you daring me?"

"Yes."

"No, you don't."

Sofia turned and slipped on Sara. "You don't want to see me suffer and you want to come with me."

"I love you."

"I love you too. The twins love you too."

"Four children, did you ever dream of having so many children?"

"Actually I wanted more than four." The blonde pulled the blanket over them and snuggled into the arms of her lover. A little break before they could continue what her wife only briefly started. "When I dreamed about a family, I pictured myself with six kids, in a huge house, a picket fence and a garden full of flowers."

"How old were you then?"

"Twelve."

"And who was your husband?"

"Who says I dreamed of a husband?"

"You are not allowed to lie to your wife."

"Evidence?"

"You liked guys at this time. Who was it?"

"Probably an actor or a musician. I can't really remember."

"When was the first time you fell in love with a woman?"

"When I met you."

"You lied again. True answer, please."

"High school. I was seventeen and she was...a cheerleader. Very sexy, not a lot of brain, but nice to look at. A good dancer."

"Your taste changed...most times."

"Don't start with Ellen again."

"Sorry, she's still...so much what I not expected you to be interested in. The opposite of the women you married."

"No, you're both very sexy. Were. She was, you are. You are sexy, very sexy, very smart and a wonderful person. All I ever wanted. Plus, you're perfect with children."

"Thanks. You're not too bad yourself."

"Not too bad? Thank you."

"Perfect."

"And so not like Grissom." They talked about her past love interests, now it was Sara's turn. The brunette barely shared any information. Not even about the man, they both knew. Or especially not about him.

Sara laughed. "After all these years you're still not over that? Or are you still jealous?"

"Just wonder about the change. Every now and then."

"I don't take complains after hours."

"What do you take after hours?"

"You." Sara pinned Sofia down. "Grissom is past, he doesn't matter anymore. You are the present and the future. You and our children. Whoever was before you in my life doesn't matter and whoever was in your life before I entered it, doesn't matter. We are the ones who matter. I love you and nobody else."

"How convenience that I love you too. Only you." Sofia kissed her wife. Sara was right, it didn't matter what was before they met, what mattered was what was now and what would be in the future. Their future.

## Monday, February 16th

"Is he still asleep?"

"There's no light in his room."

"Perfect." Sara took Sofia's hand and checked the watch. It was quarter to six in the morning and they had the birthday cake for their son in their hands. His sixteenth birthday. For a moment both women played with the idea to let their son skip school today, but decided to let Steve make the final decision.

"Come on, let's wake him up."

"Singing."

"Poor boy."

"Lucky boy, he has us." Sofia grinned and opened the door.

"Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday dear Stephen, happy birthday to you!" They switched on the lights and found the bed empty.

"Uhm..."

"That was not the plan..."

"Our son is gone!" Sofia noticed the panic in her voice.

"Where? What?"

"Gosh, for law enforcement you guy suck!" Steve stepped out of the closet. "I knew you'd come in here to surprise me. Surprise, I am awake. You did notice the bed in unmake, I slept in it. For a CSI and a cop not difficult to spot, right?"

"You tricked us!" Sara pulled Steve in her arms. "Why?"

"I want the surprise on my side. Nice cake."

"Right now I feel like smashing it into your face." Sofia put the cake down and hugged her son.

"Can I get a few hot chicks licking it off my face?"

"You get your mothers kissing it off your face."

"Yuck!"

"We love you too." Sara kissed his cheek. "Do you want to stay here or go to school?"

"You let me choose? Everybody will know I'm skipping school because of my birthday and that I'm not sick in bed."

"We could get you write off sick by a nice dentist. Don't you have toothache?"

"Now that you mention it...no! Sorry moms, I'm grateful for your offer, but I have two girls and two boys waiting for me at

school with another surprise. It would be very unkind to stay away. I'll be back at three, ready for my cake."

"No cake for breakfast?" Sofia asked.

"No, I want eggs and bacon, real breakfast. Oh and the keys to my car."

"Your car?"

"Didn't you buy a car for me? As my real big birthday present?" He cocked his head. His birthday list had been short, in fact, there was only one thing written on: a car. His first car. How could they miss this wish?

"No."

"Why not?"

"Unfortunately you weren't adopted by two rich Bel Air ladies, you were adopted by two Silver Lake ladies, who manage to get by, buy a few nice things, but not a nice and shiny car for your birthday. Sorry. We'd have loved to buy you a nice car, but it's not possible."

"I'll survive. Can I drive your car?"

"Not to school."

"How am I supposed to look cool without a car?"

"Put on your cute smile."

"Mom, cool not cute."

"I love you cute much more." Sara pulled Steve in her arms.

"Sixteen years. Gosh, you're already growing up so fast."

"Mom!"

"Sorry, you're a grown up man now."

"You're not having any cartoon characters placed all over the house, do you? Or plan a trip to Disney Land so I can sit on Mickey's lap?"

"If, it would be Minnie Mouse's lap, you prefer girls. Or she has to sit on your lap. But no, no secret trips to Disney Land. I think." Sara looked at Sofia.

"No."

"Did you not talk to each other about my birthday party, moms?"

"Well, Sofia has a surprise, she didn't tell me about. So I can't really tell you what will happen today."

"Is it cool?" Steve looked at Sofia.

"Am I anything else than cool?"

"Pregnant."

"What is not cool about being pregnant?" The blonde watched her son with her hands on her hips.

"Vomiting, getting fat, mood swings, short of breath. Any other side effects you forgot?"

"Aren't you a charm? All your mother. The brunette one." Sofia kissed Steve. "Okay, we prepare your eggs and bacon breakfast and then you can take the car to school."

"Seriously?"

"Yes." Sofia smiled. It was part of her surprise.

"Okay, ready for school?"

"Yes mom." Steve kissed Susan and gave his sister to his mother. "Bye Susi, I see you later. We are going to have cake. You like cake, don't you?"

"Yaya."

"I knew it. Moms, whatever you plan to surprise me, please don't make it embarrassing. There are people over."

"Our oldest daughter."

"Yes, she knows how embarrassing you can be, the other three don't. Please keep it this way."

"We love you too."

"And I." Tanya left the house. "Not only love you, my new adult friend, I am also part of your surprise."

"Are you? The hot chick part? Why didn't you jump naked out of my cake?"

"Well, thank you for that offer, but no, that's not my style."

"No, thank you. I heard you are willing to let me stay out of school."

"If that makes you happy. It's your birthday."

"Maybe tomorrow. I can feel toothache coming. Let me first try to cure it with cake and chocolate."

"And a car ride."

"Mom said I can take her car."

"Your mom's car is kind of boring, I have a nice car here for you." She pulled car keys out of her pocket and handed them over to him.

"What's that?"

"The car you drive to school. With me as your hot chick next to you." She opened the garage and a shiny red Ferrari appeared.

"Oh. My. God."

"Nice, isn't it?" Sofia cocked her head. "Very sexy."

"Absolutely." He starred at the car. "I..."

"Before you pee your pants, it's not a present. You can drive it to school and then it will leave you. But you get me back."

"You rent a car for me?"

"I borrowed it."

"Who borrows you a Ferrari?"

"Not your business. Want to drive?"

"My first drive in a Ferrari. My first drive with my new license.

Wow. I'm going to be the star."

"You are already the star." Tanya smiled. "Let's go, wave goodbye to your sister and moms."

"I am going to drive a Ferrari. Wow. Mom, I want a photo of this baby and me."

"Are you talking about Tanya?"

"For once I'm not talking about Tanya. Sorry Gorgeous."

"I forgive you." She jumped into the car. "Come on."

"Yes." Carefully he opened the door and sat behind the steering wheel, stroke it softly. It felt like a dream. A red Ferrari, leather seats, a sound system more worth than his entire room and the sound of the engine...Stephen felt like a racer.

"Oh my god. Do you hear that?"

"What is it with guys and cars?"

"You have to agree, this car is sexy."

"The driver is sexier."

"You put me down!"

"Honey, unfortunately you are ten years too young. I wouldn't mind five, six or even seven years, but eighteen is a little bit too much for me."

"Now it's legal."

"Now you focus on the car, how does it feel? Control all this energy? The power."

"Amazing." He stopped the car. "What if I crash it?"

"It's insured and you won't. I drove with you a couple of times, I taught you myself, don't worry."

"Does the company you rent this car from, know a sixteen year old boy drives it? Don't you have to be twenty-one?"

"It's not a rental car, I borrowed it."

"From whom?"

"My boss."

"Marlene's father?"

"Yes."

"Does she know?"

"Yes."

"Great, now I owe her."

"No, it's your birthday present. Come on, let the horses run - in a legal speed."

"Want to hold my hand?"

"I'm going to kiss you when you get us to school on time. Come on, be a part of The Fast & Furious and make me feel like one of the hot racer chicks."

"You are a hot racer chick." He smiled and accelerated. Driving to school in a Ferrari. Wasn't it like he was a disgustingly rich kid? For the next days nobody would talk about anything else than him and his Ferrari. And the sexy woman next to him.

"Our son in a Ferrari. Proud like hell." Sara smiled.

"He was very surprised."

"Did you know about it?"

"Why do you think my car was parked outside? Of course I was involved."

"Was it your surprise?"

"No."

"Am I still not allowed to know what you have planned?"

"No."

"I hate that."

"And I love you." Sofia kissed Sara. "Now, why don't we prepare the party for our son?"

"First we should take our daughter to daycare."

"No grandparents this morning." She kissed her daughter. "You go and meet other kids. Can race Louise while Eric and Jorja watch over you. After lunch your grandmother will take you back here and we celebrate your brother's birthday."

"Eve!"

"Yes, it's Eve's birthday. Your mamas and you will celebrate. You heard, we will have cake."

"Your mama likes cake more than you do." Sara smiled.

"Maybe she tells us about her surprise over cake."

"Sara, Sara, Sara, you are so nosy."

"I don't like surprises."

"You don't like bad surprises. Lucky for you my surprises are always good."

"Not sure about that." Sara took Susan in her arms. "Come, we get you all dressed up and your mommy can prepare her surprise."

"Why don't we take a few minutes for ourselves after we took Susan to daycare?"

"I'm not satisfied with a few minutes."  
"How about an hour?"  
"Barely better."  
"I'm the pregnant one, the hungry one."  
"Chocolate is in the kitchen."  
"Not chocolate hungry."  
"Sex hungry. You are also sex hungry when you're not pregnant."  
"Because of you. You're delicious, I can't resist you, even less than chocolate."  
"You are not going to jump me this morning. We have a party to organize."  
"No, I won't jump you, I'm going to make you jump me. Twice. Before the party starts."  
"Is this a challenge?"  
"No, it's a promise." Sofia whispered into her wife's ear, her lips barely touching the other woman's skin. And she was sure, she'd win this challenge

Seven hours later there were half a dozen burger in the oven to stay hot, next to a tray of pizza, French fries and a few steaks. Salad was on two bowls, potato chips bags on the counter, a dozen cola bottles in the fridge and ice cream in the freezer. Everything a bunch of teenager needed to celebrate.

"Ten more minutes and we have to be in the living room downstairs." Sofia nibbled on the earlobe of her wife, letting her hand ran over Sara's naked skin.

"I think I heard the front door, your parents are here."

"Great, then they can add the final touch."

"Don't you think we should help them?"

"No, in fact, I have to rearrange my last sentence. Let me have a few final touches on you. I love you and I like the cute little hickey you have on your shoulder."

"Can't remember how it got there."

"Oh, I know. I placed it there while embraced you from behind, you moved your ass so sexy and hot that I came on it. Oh and did I mention, you not only jumped me twice, you jumped me three times."

"Actually, you jumped me the last time."

"You made me. It's our son's birthday and we're having sex the whole time."

"Our present to...ourselves."

"On his sixteenth birthday he should have sex." Sofia slapped her hands in front of her mouth. "Did I just say that?"

"You did."

"Maybe he got laid already after he came to school in a Ferrari."

"Quick sex on the school toilette?"

"With a guy?"

"Honey, I'm pretty sure our son wants sex with a girl."

"Nothing wrong with that."

"No, not at all. I like sex with a woman."

"Just any one?"

"If nobody else is avail....ouch! You pinched me."

"You deserved it."

Sara sat up. "Time to get dressed. I want to greet our son when he comes home. Dressed."

"Okay, you're right." Sofia pulled out her bra from under the bed. "Should we have picked up Steve from school?"

"No, we're embarrassing, it's best when he gets a ride with his sexy blonde girlfriend. Friend."

"The blonde, who sleeps in his bed without them having sex? We should get her a girlfriend, one who doesn't turn her back when there's a man with connections."

"You heard what they said about these two boys at high school."

"Who says we get her a GF from high school?"

"What are we going to do? Take her to a club? She isn't old enough. The only place she can meet girls is...a café. We have to get her a job in a café."

"So smart...I could..."

"No!" Sara got out of bed and put on her pants. "No more sex today."

"Only nine more hours until midnight. Although, nine hours are a very long time."

"You were hungry for sex when you were pregnant with Susan, now that you're pregnant with the twins you seem to be starving."

"I am. I'm a slave of my hormones."

"You are. I like to be enslaved. Later. We give our son the perfect party and tomorrow I'm going to get our oldest daughter a job. No, we will. You know more scene cafés than I do. One of them will look for a young cute waitress and we all know, when the waitress gives you a nice smile, you not only like to

give her more tip but also think about dating her. Lea will meet a lot of nice girls and...you put your shirt on inside out."

"Oh." Sofia changed her shirt.

"Better. Are we having a deal?"

"Yes, we hit the scene tomorrow. With Lea."

"Perfect. I love you and will kiss you later, when your parents are around so you can't jump me. See you downstairs."

"I love your sexy ass in tight jeans." Sofia sighed. She was such a slave of her hormones and instead of feeling guilty, which she should, she felt horny again. Just by looking at Sara's ass.

"Teenager are an amazing species of human." Marie shook her head. All over the living room table were crumbs while the five teenager saw in front of the TV and played a video game. "They ate the amount of food you can feed a football with and still their hands end up in the potato chips bags every minute, pulling out an amount of chips normal people need a digger for."

"It's crazy, I've never seen anything like that before."

"Your wife was the same when she was younger."

"I'm not surprised."

"She's the same at the moment. Graving for everything she likes without getting enough. As you have found out."

Sara's face turned deep red. "I've no idea what you mean."

"You're a lousy liar. I know why you came downstairs the last second. Lucky for the two of you, I believe sex is very healthy; especially when you're pregnant."

"She's more beautiful when she pregnant, although you can barely see anything."

"Her leg is fine again?"

"Yes, she saw her doctor."

"How did you threat her?"

"Alison."

"Almost as good in threatening people as I am."

"The two of you together could crack anybody."

"Bear that in mind."

"When Alison decides she doesn't want to work anymore, you and her should open a daycare center."

"With our grandchildren?"

"Nice idea." Sara looked at her wife, who sat on the couch, feet up, leant onto Jules's shoulder, who read a story to the twins,

Louise and Susan. A peaceful picture. Don and Greg sat with the teenagers, watched the video game.

"Anybody up for triple chocolate cookies and self-made potato chips?" Marc came with a big tray out of the kitchen.

"Self-made potato chips?" Lea looked up.

"With curry or salsa dip. Also self-made."

"Gosh, I'd kill for a grandfather like you." She jumped up and took a potato chip. "Wow, perfect. I take them all."

"You eat them all and I make you some more, Darling."

"Thanks, you're great."

"He buys them with fast food." Marie snorted.

"He knows what they want. The hero of the day for the kids."

"The queen of the day is missing. Where is Mrs. Ferrari?"

"Apparently she has something important to get. I'm sure your daughter is involved."

"She involved Tanya in her plans and not you? Why?"

"Because she keeps a secret from me. I love her anyway."

"And your son likes the girl."

"Jenny? Yes."

"Of course Jenny, he loves Lea. Not the way you love a lover, which is good because she doesn't love him. This Jenny, they sit together very closely, see the smile they give each other, the random touches? Love is in the air. Like between the two boys. Cuties."

"Peter and Paul? They are. I heard they have some problems in school."

"I'm afraid that happens in high school. Kids are cruel idiots sometimes."

"You weren't all too happy when Sofia told you, she wants to date women."

"Because I thought I'll never have grandchildren. And some of the girls weren't exactly what I wanted for my daughter. She dated male idiots too, I chased them away too. When you came to Las Vegas to meet us as her girlfriend, I could see and feel you did it out of love to her. That was, what was important. Then you decided to have children and my life became perfect. Without them I'm sure I'd go crazy at home."

"In a few months there'll be three children to look after."

"And their names are? Or are you playing this envelope game again?"

"Sandy and Solora or Saloso. They might get a Marie and Marc as a second name."

"You stick to the S names."

"Of course."

"Why aren't you with her? In her arms?"

"She has a doctor and four kids with her, she looks more than happy."

"Your doctor."

"She isn't my doctor."

"Oh yes, she is yours. Like you're hers. A very strong love. My daughter knows about this love, like she knows, you love nobody more than her. Go, sit with her. Marc and me make sure you have all you need. All the teenagers need is fatty, sweet and full of caffeine, they look very happy."

"Are you? Happy?"

"My family is here, yes, I am happy. And my oldest grandchild turned sixteen. A perfect day for a proud captain."

"Grandmother."

"That sounds very old."

"No, it sounds very loving and caring." Sara smiled, walked over to Sofia, Jules and the kids. Softly she stroke Jules's cheek, kissed her hair and sat next to her wife, pulling her into her left arm while Eric climbed into her right arm.

"You're okay?" Sofia kissed her wife.

"Yes."

"Silent, we're coming to the important part of the story." Jules reprinted them.

"Sorry. Please continue." Sara closed her eyes and concentrated on Jules's voice. A voice, she became to love a long time ago. A voice, that always make her feel like everything was perfect. Together with Sofia by her side, with her lover in her arm and her lips resting on her cheek, this made it more than perfect.

"...and they lived happily ever after. The end."

"One more." Jorja cheered.

"Yes one more." Sara agreed. "I love listen to your voice."

"Want to come to reverse psychoanalyses?"

"What is that?"

"You're on the couch and I talk, you listen."

"Perfect. I take a session once a week. Or twice. With my wife in my arms."

"Don't forget your godchild. A huge cuddle and snuggle session."

"Family therapy? For the first time in my life it sounds good to me. Want to be in my arms and listen to Jules's voice, Honey?"

"Yes, I do." Sofia kissed Sara. "I do, I do, I do."  
"Moms, you're embarrassing. Again!" Steve called over. "Stop acting like teenagers."  
"It's called love."  
"Go upstairs."  
"He's not nice. Are we embarrassing, daughter? The oldest one."  
"No, I love you." Lea smiled.  
"Thanks. How about we go out for some coke tomorrow? Without the boy?"  
"Girl's night out?"  
"More girl's afternoon out. Or evening, when we end it with pizza."  
"Sounds great. Want to team up with me, mommy Sofia? We are about to play a new game, two against two."  
"Sure." Sofia checked her watch. "We have ten more minutes."  
"Before what?"  
"A surprise."  
"What kind of surprise?"  
"A nice one. For the birthday boy."  
"Stripers in their birthday suits?"  
"Naughty girl." Sofia kissed Sara one more time, got up and walked to Lea. "What are we playing?"  
"Well, for ten minutes it doesn't make sense to start the game. Do you think your father makes some more potato chips?"  
"As long as we keep eating, he keeps making them."  
"The perfect father. Want to trade?"  
"No. Your father isn't that bad."  
"Not as good as yours. He loves you."  
"Your father loves you too."  
"We'll see about that when...he knows more."  
"You don't have to hurry, you tell them when you're ready and no matter what happens, we are here for you."  
"When the twins are born my room is gone."  
"You can share a room with the twins, we keep the couch in the room, the living room has a nice couch too and if you're very desperate, I'm sure Stevie lets you sleep in his room."  
"If she brings me breakfast in the morning."  
"Dream on."  
"Come on, you can be useful."  
"I take the room here. Jerk."  
"He is lovely, isn't he."

"Like toothache."

"Speaking of toothache...I think your surprise arrived."

"Tanya?"

"She arrived too, not as the surprise. This morning was her surprise time."

"The Ferrari. Really cool. He felt like a movie star..." Lea stopped. "Is..."

"Don't ruin the surprise." Sofia hissed.

Lea grinned. "This is so cool, you really got..."

"Hello fans, did you miss me?" Lou walked into the room, his best movie star smile on his face, shades on his hair. "Who wants the first hug?"

"Oh my god! I thought you are in Australia!" Steve jumped up and hugged Lou. "You sent me a text yesterday that you can't make it."

"I wrote, I can't make it to cake, I am late for cake. Chips are fine too." He shoveled some potato chips into his mouth. "Oh, surprise!"

"You came back for my party?"

"For your party and a little trip tomorrow. After your doctor's appointment in the morning we're taking off to Santa Cruz Islands."

"Santa Cruz Islands?"

"On our private boat, inclusive whale watching, snorkeling and swimming with dolphins. How does that sound? Oh, we take your moms too."

"What about Lea?"

"He's so sweet, always thinks of his girlfriend."

"Suck it up, movie star." Lea slapped Lou's shoulder. "You're only jealous nobody loves you."

"Since when are you this mean?"

"Since you didn't get me any tickets for the premiere."

"Women. You have to go to school or will your parents give you a day off?"

"Do they have to know?"

"Yes."

"Wow, Mister Superhero became responsible, what happened?" Sara asked sarcastic.

"As a father I have to care about these things. I hope you like the trip too. It's also your surprise."

"My surprise?"

"A late Christmas present. From your wife. No money involved. What the deal was."

"Is her serious?" Sara looked at Sofia.

"A boat trip, whale watching, dolphins, time on a beach. I was sure you'd like it. The Channel Islands National Park is supposed to be very beautiful this time of the year. You said, the present is not supposed to cost any money, it's for free. Our son will have fun with action part, you with the animals. Mad?"

"No, absolutely in love with you." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms kissed her passionately.

"Not again, so embarrassing." Steve moaned.

"Keep cool, man, your mothers love each other and show it, that's cool. I wish we could do the same." Peter said. "If more parents were like them, there would be less idiots at school and we had less problems. Love is never embarrassing."

"Great." Steve rolled his eyes.

"He is right...who are you?" Lou asked. "One of the cool football guys?"

"I used to be one of them."

"And then?"

"Then I fell in love with a chess nerd." Peter blinked at Paul.

"The guys weren't happy, kicked me out of the team and... haven't stopped kicking me since. Or us."

"Cool high school kids are assholes."

"Tell me about it."

"Why don't use your image as a superman to do something useful? Make it obvious that it's not wrong to be gay." Sara leant onto Sofia's shoulder. "Imagine one or both of your children are gay and get beaten up for it."

"I go to school and beat the crap out of them. beat some sense in them."

"Before you kill half of the city, try to it without violence."

"Would it impress you?"

"You, being in a gay movie, kissing a man, open some minds, that would impress me. And my wife."

"I like impressing her. So, we go on a trip tomorrow?"

"Sure. How much time do you have for me before you go back to OZ?"

"A week. You want to come over on Wednesday?"

"As a babysitter?"

"You can bring your baby sister - and your moms."

"How are your babies?"

"They were much more relaxed on the flight than their daddy." Since one month Lou was the father of two twin boys, his old high school friend, who was the surrogate mother, gave birth to. They flew with him to Australia so he could be with them all the time. "Must be because the flight assistants looked only after them."

"So they don't look like their father?"

"Sara, you are...I'm not surprised Sofia loves you. It's better to be on your side than have you as an enemy."

"Her charm is what attracted me." The blonde put her head on the brunette's shoulder. "Are you going to put on a uniform for our boat trip?"

"Only if you are my little mermaid."

"Mom!" Steve shook his head. "You are gross! Come on Lou, we were about to fight on the Playstation, you can join. This way we can leave mom out."

"What? No way, I want to team up with her." Lea protested.

"No problem, I team up with him." Marie said.

"You?"

"What? Am I too old to play one of these games? Rookie Steve."

"Of course not, Captain."

"Good. Movie star, are you up for a fight?"

"With a captain by my side I can't lose."

"And we take the kids into bed." Jules said.

"Are we talking about you staying over?" Sara cocked her head.

"No, we are talking about me going home and put my three children into bed."

"You want to leave me?"

"Yes, you have to comfort yourself with your wife." Jules kissed Sara. "Have fun tomorrow, take some photos. I want a new photo of you on the beach with a happy smile."

"Why not one with me in your arms?"

"We'll take one of them too. Until then, give me your nicest smile."

"Sorry, the nicest smile is reserved for my wife." Sara blinked at the therapist. The best was always reserved for Sofia. Everybody else had to live with second best or worse.

"Did Susan go back to sleep?" Sara whispered when she stepped next to her lover, who watched their daughter from the

door. A few minutes ago they heard the crying of their daughter in bed, so Sofia went upstairs to check on her.

"Yes, I picked her up, carried her for a minute or two, put her back down and she went back to sleep, telling me something, I didn't understand. It sounded happy and tired."

"Walking, talking, eating, drinking. She learnt so many things the last weeks. It's amazing. Well, I mean, it's not like she's perfect at any of it, but she started it, does it, likes it. She learns fast. Or it feels fast to me."

"From the books we read, she is not overly smart, but I'd put her higher average. What she has to learn is, it's not nice pulling on the dog's tails. She knows what 'no' means, the problem is, she is headstrong and doesn't listen all the time. I wonder whose DNA this it."

"Very funny." Sara bopped her lover and closed the door. "The party downstairs is over. Peter and Paul left, Lea was about to leave too when I went upstairs and also Jenny packed her things."

"A nice party for our son." Hand in hand they stepped onto their balcony. It was ten in the evening, Silver Lake lay in front of them, the reservoir, hidden in the darkness, but the lights on Silver Lake and West Silver Lake told them, where the little lake was. The sound of passing by cars, every now and then a horn. In a few weeks birds would be more active and the days longer.

The front door got their attention and they saw Steve and Jenny walk out of the house and towards her car.

"They're holding hands." Sofia whispered.

"Come on, Honey, we go inside."

"But..."

"Now." Sara pushed her wife into the bedroom.

"But..."

"No, they deserve some privacy. How would you have felt when your mother watched you go to the car with your first boyfriend, maybe watched your first kiss?"

"Exactly, we're missing the first kiss."

"It's a private moment."

"Can I look from the inside?"

"No."

"You're such a spoilsport."

"I'm the good mother." Sara pushed Sofia on the bed. "Why don't you undress yourself? It's time to go to bed."

"Will you strip for me?"

"No. I will kiss you when you're in bed."

"Kiss..."

"Don't you dare going back to the balcony. For today it's off limit for you. Same for the window."

"Are you going to tell him we watched him? Almost watched him?"

"No, and neither will you." Sara switched off the big lights and started to undress herself. "Stop watching me and undress yourself. We need some sleep, the boat leaves early."

"Sex on the beach."

"No sex for you unless you're ready for bed within one minute and only today or very early tomorrow morning. Your choice."

"How about today and tomorrow morning?"

"Fifty seconds left."

"I take that as a yes." Sofia pulled off her shirt and pants, kicked her underwear away and pulled the blanket over herself.

"Wow, sex works better than chocolate. At least at the moment." Sara chuckled and pulled the blanket aside to take off Sofia's prosthesis. her wife couldn't sleep with it on.

"When I have to decide between sex and chocolate, I always choose sex. The problem is, I can't just walk into the kitchen and have you there whenever I feel like it. Or the living room. Or in the lab. Did I mention the beach?"

"You want chocolate everywhere and at any time." Sara slipped into bed and switched off the little lamp.

"And sex."

"Since you're pregnant, yes."

"Also before, but I was able to hide it better when I wasn't pregnant. My hormones drive me crazy." Sofia slipped onto Sara and started kissing the brunette's throat.

"You do realize I'm not pregnant?"

"Does that mean I've to get off you and stop doing what I'm doing?"

"I'm afraid so. You finished me this afternoon. Sorry."

"What a pity. Luckily, I love you even when we don't have sex." The blonde snuggled into the other woman's arms. "No sex, only cuddling. Which is nice too."

"Nice is the little sister of shitty." Sara laughed.

"I didn't mean it this way."

"I know. Otherwise you were in trouble now."

"Being in your arms is great. Listen to your heart beat is the most wonderful sound...of a sex free evening. Did you hear the front door?"

"No."

"Me neither. Steve is still outside. He and Jenny might be kissing."

"Not our business."

"Do you think they're kissing?"

"Yes, I think they are and I hope they are. It would make our son very happy and we both want him happy."

"Me too. The first kiss on his sixteenth birthday. The best gift he could get. Better than the Ferrari."

"Lasts longer than the Ferrari too. I hope."

"When they kiss now, they'll be a couple. Definitely longer than the drive to school."

"He's a lucky boy," The heard the front door. "And now he's back in the house, which means, we can relax and sleep. I love you."

"And I, my sweet lovely wife, adore you."

## Tuesday, February 17th

A day off wasn't supposed to begin before late morning or early noon. With a toddler in the house this rule didn't apply to Sara and Sofia, Susan wanted her breakfast on time, which was not later than eight in the morning. Usually around seven. Today, she picked six o'clock for her breakfast time and her mothers were awake - although they didn't have to work.

"Lou said we can have breakfast on the boat." Steve came with his packed backpack into the kitchen.

"Yes, we'll have breakfast there, your sister wants her breakfast now. She doesn't understand why she should wait and I rather have her stick to her usual times. It's not a good idea to have a hungry child, they have to learn there are regularly times for food." Sara answered. In a few years Susan was old enough to understand, sometimes you had breakfast later because of an event. Right now all the girl understood that when she was hungry, her mothers made sure she got something to eat.

"Where's mom?"

"She packs our things."

"The dogs?"

"Asleep."

"Lea sent me a text, she'd rather come with us than go to school."

"What do her parents say about her wish?"

"Not granted. School is important, fun has to wait until the afternoon. The movie could take us to Santa Cruz Island on Saturday or Sunday, it doesn't have to be Tuesday."

"I do agree with her, but the weather forecast for today is perfect. With the rain last night we'll have an astonishing view over the bay and the ocean. The air should be clear and you will rework you miss today, won't you?"

"Are my marks good or are they good?"

"They could be better. Except in Spanish. Tanya should study with you more often."

"Yeah, some private biology lessons would be nice. About the female anatomy." He grinned widely.

"Don't you have a girlfriend for that?" Sara shot back dryly, enjoying the stunned and surprised look on her son's face. Bull's eye. Without standing on the balcony and spying on her son she knew what was going on.

"I...I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Jenny. The kiss. Or kisses."

"Did you spy on me?"

"No. Sofia and I were on the balcony when you walked her out, holding her hand. We went inside to give you your privacy, but we're not stupid. It took you five minutes to come back in, that wasn't because you had a long goodbye text. We were sixteen too, so we know what takes so long. Not only when you're sixteen."

His face had to color of a cherry. "She's nice."

"She's very nice and I'm glad she makes you happy."

"It's...new."

"We know and you don't have to tell us about it, it's your private life. When you want to share it with us, we're more than happy to listen. If you want to keep it to yourself, we'll accept and respect it."

"Thanks."

"Does Lea know?"

"I called her last night. Am I a chatterbox?"

"No, you're a teenager, who's happy and wants his best friend to know about his happiness. I'm sure Lea is happy for you too."

"She got Jenny and me together."

"Well, if somebody knows which girl is good for you, it's Lea. Now you have to find a girlfriend for her."

"It's the plan."

"Sofia and I wanted to take Lea to some scene cafes and restaurants today, see if she can get a job there. It would make it easier for her to meet girls. With the trip to Santa Cruz Island we have to do that tomorrow."

"Which is okay for her too. How many scene cafes and restaurants to you know?"

"Not many, there are two clubs Sofia and I went to a while ago, I'm not the biggest fan of women only clubs. You can't ask for equality and then create places, where you keep to yourself and don't want people around, who are not like you."

"Are these clubs really strictly women only?"

"Some are. The mixed ones are better."

"One day I'll find out. Like in five years. Or three, when I do look more like twenty one and can go into clubs with my faked ID."

"Why do you tell your mother of your idea to get a faked ID?"

"Because she'll find out anyway and I don't want to lie to her. You did the same when you were young, didn't you?"

"I'm sure there's a parent rule, that says I've to forbid you to go there and must ground you for planning it. Unfortunately I can't find the teenager manual."

"You're doing perfect without it." Steve hugged his mother.

"Why don't you get dressed and I take care of the rest here? We have to leave in fifteen minutes, the limousine will pick us up."

"Like we could not have taken our own car." Sara rolled her eyes. What a waste of time and money to send an expensive car.

"This is more fun and part of the present." It was much cooler to step out of a limousine to get to the yacht, that was waiting for you, than getting out of an ordinary car. This was a little bit like the life of a star.

The limousine took them to Ventura, where the yacht waited for them. With Sofia, Sara, Steve, Lou, his twins and Marian the yacht still offered space for more people. Two captains came aboard and the trip started after they checked the electronic; watched by Steve, who was also allowed to maneuver the vessel after they left the harbor.

"Breakfast is served." Lou came with a big tray from the lower deck. "Sandwiches, fruits, yogurt, pancakes. There's coffee in the thermo, as well as tea. Juice and soft drinks are in the fridge downstairs."

"Since when do you serve breakfast and don't have somebody, who does it for you?" Sara asked and took a sandwich. "Thanks."

"For good friends I become the servant. You are a vegetarian, aren't you?"

"Yes, why?"

"Why we're on Santa Cruz Island the two captains will enjoy a day of fishing. If wanted, we can have freshly caught fish on our way back. Some vegetarians do eat fish, so I wonder if you one of them or if you don't eat any animal at all."

"I don't eat any animal at all."

"Good, then we'll get you something else. Any wishes?"

"Surprise me."

"I will. Oh look, there are gorgeous boys." Lou smiled when Marian came with his sons out. His pride. Dean and Gabriel.

"Do you like being on a boat?"

"Dean seems to like it a look. He fell asleep as soon as I put him into his crib, while Gabriel doesn't look too happy about this ever moving place. I gave him some ginger that should make his stomach feel better."

"Thanks, you're an angel."

"You should increase her money, she has not only to look after you but also after the twins." Sara smiled. "If they're like you, she has three times more work to do."

"Don't worry Sara, I'm very happy with the money I get, the place I live and the nice trips I can do; get paid to do. Which nanny can say, she gets paid to fly first class to Australia, stay on a yacht and dine in a five star restaurant."

"All things that take you away from your husband."

"Oh, Lou took care of that, he employed him." Marian laughed.

"I've got a big place to look after, Ronald does it pretty good. But I know, nothing I'll ever do will be good enough for you because I hit on your wife."

"You got that right." Sara smirked. "It's one of the deadly sins."

"The good thing is I know you like, otherwise you wouldn't be here. You don't spend your day off with people you can't stand."

"It's all for Steve."

"Yeah, sure." He blinked at her. It was okay when she pretended she couldn't stand him, he knew it wasn't true and he kind of liked this game.

Prisoner's Harbor was their destination.

"Let's go anchor." Lou called. "Anybody up for a swim?"

"I think I take the pier." Sofia looked at the water Crystal clear, she could see from the boat right down to the ground, a stony ground with small fishes swimming around. In summer, this would be a lovely place to swim and snorkel. They had to come back to this place in four months, with the summer sun and a few more degrees. Like twenty to thirty.

"There's the perfect place for our lunch." Steve jumped off the boat and ran towards the beach.

"I can't see a junk food restaurant, can you?" Sara asked her wife.

"No. Why?"

"He talked about the perfect lunch place, it has to be a fast food restaurant. It can't be a place with a lovely view."

"Give him some credit." The blonde smiled and kissed her daughter, who looked around very interested. A new place, a place she didn't know. "Do you like what you see? A beautiful island, a place a lot of people would love to go once in their life. You're not even a year old and have the possibility to see this wonderful place."

"She's a lucky girl. Not only for the trip but also to have you as her mother." Sara kissed her wife. "I love you. Thanks for the nice surprise, for the trip. I always wanted to go here."

"We can come back in summer, stay for a night or two. See the other islands."

"Sounds like a wonderful idea."

"I can't promise you we'll come here on a yacht again."

"Doesn't matter."

"Good. Look, our son found a nice picnic area...in the middle of nowhere. Why did we stop here?"

"Because we need a pier to get on the island." Lou answered.

"Nobody wants to swim. Not even my hero Gabriel." He held on to his son. "A few more steps and you're back on solid ground."

"A hero, who gets seasick. Nobody is perfect." Marian said, having Dean in her arms.

"Hey Lou, your boat is leaving!" Steve called from the beach.

"They have to, other boats want to use the pier too. Don't worry, when we want to leave, they'll pick us up. With dinner." Lou answered. "Did you find the perfect place for our lunch break?"

"Yes. Although, when there are other people coming, we should go a little bit farther away from the pier. I don't want everybody staring at us."

"Are you sure this is a good place for your twins? We have no building around, what are we doing here?" Sofia asked.

"Having a quiet day on a nice island." Steve enrolled his blanket. "The perfect place." He put up the sunshade he carried with him. The sunshine was nice, it made them feel warm, but for the babies it was better to have some shade and here were no trees around.

"So what are we supposed to do here?" Marian placed Dean next to Steve and got the backpack off.

"Rewind, breathe fresh air, read a book, walk. It's a day off...you get paid for." Lou let the backpack slip off his back.

"It's a great place." Sara added another blanket to the first one and kicked off her shoes. "The sand is cold, but I'll have a walk into the water. Can't stay on a beach without touching the water with my toes."

"You're a crazy water rat."

"Which doesn't change the fact you love me." The brunette smirked.

"I'm going to jump into the water." Steve started to undress.

"Are you nuts? It's cold, it's winter and you're..."

"...I'm about to do something crazy, it's what I want to do." He interrupted Sofia. "One dive."

"Like his mother." The blonde sighed. "Both crazy."

"Crazy or not, here we come!" Steve jumped up, let out a howl and ran straight to the water, jumped in and when his head popped out of the water, he screamed again. "This is fricking cold!"

"Your mother told you so."

"You didn't listen to her neither." He started to splash water at Sara.

"Stop it!"

"Are you wimp?"

"Son!"

"What?"

"Stop it."

"Spoilsport." He dove one more time before he got out of the water. "Cold, cold, cold."

Sara shook her head and watched Steve wrapping a towel around him. Her son was crazy. He jumped into the Pacific ocean in the middle of February. Without a wetsuit. Or a dry suit. But if that was what he wanted for his birthday trip, he should have it.

## Saturday, February 21st

Three days off in one week was a treat. A special one. One, Sara got most times in winter. That was why she was a little bit irritated to sit at a pool. It was warm for February, not warm enough to jump into the pool, but warm enough to feel spring wasn't too far away.

"One day, we'll have a place like this. A villa, a garden, the size of a football field, a pool, tennis and basketball court and a view over the city." Sofia let her lips run over Sara's throat.

"How will we pay for it?"

"We take this one, kill the owner, make his body disappear and live here happily ever after."

"Lieutenant, lieutenant, you go to prison for these thoughts."

"Not if you not rat on me. Or do you want to see me in prison? Without being allowed to touch me."

"I'd rather run away with you. There are a few countries without extradition agreement."

"Hot countries? Where I can see almost naked all day long?"

"Honey, we are not at home, not alone."

"Don't ruin my fantasy." Sofia pulled her wife into her arms. "I love you."

"I love you too. Where is Susan?"

"In a running competition with Louise. Lou prepared a whole room for them, perfect for running, crawling, playing. His boys will be so happy when they're old enough."

"I wonder who enjoys all the toys most. He or his sons."

"Both. He's a great father."

"He is. I hate to admit it."

"Stop pretending being grumpy smurf. You're here, if you didn't like him, you wouldn't be here."

"I'm here because you are here. Because we can play tennis, basketball...and you can watch us. Or I stay here with you."

"Stay with me, the one you love. I need your arms."

"Deal." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms. It was nice to be with her, alone. Steve and Lea were on the tennis court, Susan in the playroom with Louise, Eric and Jorja, watched by Jules, Lou and Tanya.

"The photo of you and the dolphins looks gorgeous, I want it on our photo wall." Sofia kissed her lover's cheek.

"It was a wonderful experience, we should go there more often."

"Yes. I felt right like a feather, swimming is a wonderful thing; especially when you're pregnant and feel like you're an elephant the rest of the time."

"You don't look like an elephant, there's barely a belly visible. You're a beautiful woman, who is pregnant. Shall we go swimming tomorrow? With our daughter, who will enjoy the water too."

"A treat for all of us? Good idea."

"Maybe even Stephen comes with us."

"With his embarrassing mothers. I wonder where Jenny is."

"Not here and it's not because of us." Sara kissed her wife.

"They're together. I know it. You saw his face, he was like on drugs, heavy love drugs."

Sara smiled. Yes, they were together, Steve more or less told her. "What makes me very proud of our son, he is here with Lea. He doesn't forget his best friend over his first girlfriend."

"We taught him well." The blonde closed her eyes. Yes, their son was in a relationship with a nice girl. At least as far as they could tell. The few times they met Jenny, the girl was exactly what they wanted for their son.

"Are you falling asleep during the day?"

Surprised the women opened their eyes.

"Only resting our eyes." Sara said.

"Now that they're rested, how about you put your eyes on this wonderful lady?" Lou stepped aside and a blonde woman came into sight.

"Hi."

"Wow, Cori Ambush." Sofia said.

"You know her?" Sara asked surprised. Did they met this woman and she forgot about it?

"Not know like know, I read a few things about her in the magazines. I'm Sofia." She offered her hand to the other woman.

"Pleasure to meet you. Don't believe everything you read in the papers."

"Me? Never. There was no word about you and Lou."

"We kept it low. The unimpressed lady is Sara, Sofia's wife. She doesn't like me, or pretends she doesn't like me, which amuses me a lot because it's obvious she does."

"And you are not into celebrity magazines."

"I don't read gossip magazines. Are you the dish of the month?"

"Gosh, you are charming."

"I know. So? Are you?"

"He better keeps me for longer than a month or I will kick his sorry ass."

"Believe her, she's not only a TV star, she also pretty good at kickboxing." Sofia told Sara with a grin. "He makes her angry, she gets him into hospital. Horizontal. Didn't you do that with your ex?"

"He tripped." Cori smiled.

"Of course."

"You punched the crap out of your ex?" Sara cocked her head. An interesting thought when it came to Lou Lee. Action hero punched into hospital by girlfriend. What a headline for the paparazzi. "Have fun with him."

"I won't do anything to piss her off."

"So she likes it when you hit on other women."

"He did? Again?"

"He always does when he sees my wife."

"Really?" Cori grabbed Lou's arm and a second later he was on his knees, pain on his face.

"Ouch, Darling you..."

"I think I have to explain the rules to you again. You get your hands on another woman, I'm going to break it. You get something else on or into a woman, I rip it off, stick it into a blender and make you drink it. Am I clear?"

"Ouch, yes."

"Repeat it."

"I keep my hands off other women or I lose them and when I sleep with one, you kill me slowly and painful."

"Good." She let go of him. "Close enough. Remember it or you'll lose your brain in your pants and afterwards your life."

"Wow, I like you!" Sara said impressed. "Can you make him suffer more?"

"Believe me, I will when he gives me a reason."

"I could tell you about all the times he hit on my wife...tell me since when you're together and I tell you, how often he betrayed you."

"Sofia, is there nothing you can do to make Sara shut up?"

"I could kiss her for the rest of the day...and it wouldn't be punishment. But, what do I get when I make her shut up?"

"What do you want?"

"Don't you have a house at Lake Tahoe?"

"Yes."

"We want it for a week. In summer."

"Deal."

"Perfect. Honey." Sofia kissed Sara. "Why don't you and me get inside and have a look what our daughter is doing?"

"You want to play me?"

"No, I want to go with you to Lake Tahoe and the way I know Lou, he has a very nice house up there. We can take Jules, Greg and the kids with us, have a week together. Please. Do it for me."

"I'd do anything for you." Sara smiled and kissed Sofia. "Sorry Cori, my wife asked me not to give you any more information, her wishes are my command."

"See, this is what I want." Cori poked her finger into Lou's chest. "Love unconditional. No other one. Make it happen or rearrange your bones, Loverboy."

"Sometimes I feel threatened in my relationship."

"Good, because you are."

"Your son is a loser." Lea pushed Steve onto a mattress. "I beat him. Again."

"Only because you play tennis for years."

"Poor excuses." Lea dropped next to Sara. "I've never been a good player."

"Be nice to my baby, he likes you. When you're mean, you break his heart."

"No, that's the job of somebody else. Not that it looks like she'll do that."

"Shut up!" Steve called.

"We know about you and Jenny, And we're proud you took Lea with you and not her."

"Oh, don't be too proud, Jenny is away this weekend, she couldn't come here. Sorry to ruin your fantasy of your noble son."

"The next time I don't invite you."

"You will, you can't be without me."

"Watch me."

"You fight like lovers." Sara took Lea's hand. "What about the job? Did you talk to your parents?" Sara and Sofia had kept the promise they made themselves and took Lea to various cafes to get her a job there. Two potential cafes showed interest, but

wanted Lea to bring her parents so they could sign their agreement.

"I tried. When we drove to West Hollywood, they made it obvious, they don't want me in a scene café. In fact, they don't feel too good with me working in WeHo at all. I don't get it, they have no problems with you - so they say - you have dinner with them, but when it comes to me, they are so... damn old-fashioned stubborn."

"There's a difference between accepting and tolerating something that isn't in your family and something, that includes your family. They have other plans for you, probably want grandchildren."

"It's my life."

"Parents have problems with this argument."

"What are they going to do when I come home with a girlfriend? Shoot us both? Kick me out? Things like this happen all the time, I know."

"Whatever they do or say, you're not alone. Plus, there's no rule you have to tell your parents who you date. Secrets can be exciting."

"Great and when we want to be alone...we drive the car into the national forest and hope, we don't get caught by a ranger?"

"We have a spare room for you."

"Very romantic...sorry."

"No need to apologize." Sara pulled the teenager into her arms.

"Why can't I change parents?"

"Believe me, I asked myself the same question a couple of times. There's a reason for everything. Sooner or later you understand it."

"Later. Much later."

"So, you're stuck in the shop?"

"Yes, a lovely straight shop, with a straight owner and straight customers."

"And after your straight shift you come to your best friend's place and hang there. At a not so straight place."

"If they ever try to take that away from me, I'm leaving. For good."

"Before you end up as a runaway on the streets, come to us. No running away, not further than our house. Promise?"

"Promise."

"Thanks. You are not only Steve's best friend, you are also our daughter. We love you and want you happy and safe."

"Being with you makes me happy."

"Stay with us as long as you want. And as often."

"Thanks. And now I'm going to take the little loser out to the pool."

"It's cold!"

"So? Only wimps complain about cold water. Five minutes, water fight, then back in. Come on, Steo, move your loser ass."

"Bite me."

"No, you'd like that too much!"

"I like Cori, she kicks Lou's ass." Sara leant back on the bed, a book on her lap.

"She does and she keeps him on a very short leash. It might be the best way to keep him with her."

"Yeah, a few more slaps and kicks, maybe a chastity belt."

"You are such a bad ass woman." The blonde lay next to her lover.

"I've got a problem with men, who spray their DNA all over the place and think, they're a king, while a woman, who does the same, is a slut."

"The world is not fair. Most times."

"Unfortunately true."

"But sometimes, the world can be nice." Sofia put the book away, placed her head on Sara's lap. "It will be very nice when we're at Lake Tahoe."

"In a house, which means, because we're talking about Lou, a villa."

"It is. Six bedrooms, four bathrooms, a kitchen, living room, sauna, spa, balcony with a view over the lake."

"How do you know so exactly how his house looks?"

"It was in one magazine. Nice place. We'll like it. You, my dear, will love the time with Jules."

"And the nights with you. Summer time. You'll be very pregnant."

"The cool air up there will be perfect for me."

"The fresh and clean air. Barbecues in the garden?"

"Absolutely."

"Holding hands? Kissing under stars?"

"We're so in for that."

"Sex on the balcony?"

"Now you're talking." Sofia kissed Sara. "I love you."

"Love you too." Sara slipped down and spooned her lover.

"We're not over the critical trimester, we have to be careful."

"I feel good."

"Which doesn't mean you're safe." The brunette stroke softly over the blonde's belly. "I hope you and twins will get through this."

"We'll do our best."

"You do work less, eat more healthy and see the doctor regularly."

"I promised."

"And I'm glad you keep your promise."

"I do what it takes to make you happy. I love you, I want you happy and I want to sit with you and our four kids under the Christmas tree this year. All of us happy and healthy. Whatever it takes to get there, I'll do it." Sofia closed her eyes. She could see them all together under the Christmas tree, could see how their children loved the holiday, the tree, the presents. It was like she watched an old fashioned movie. Well, almost because in her movie there were two happily married women.

## Sunday, February 22nd

Twins. Two babies. Double happiness. Sara still couldn't believe it. Her wife was pregnant with twins, they'd not have three children, they'd have four. Three of them small, three to watch growing up and get them through all joy, happiness and trouble life brought to everybody. Amazed and with eyes full of love she watched her wife sleeping, the sunshine on her face. So peaceful. Beautiful. Her shirt slipped up a little bit, Sara could see Sofia's belly. It looked like the last time the blonde was pregnant, not bigger. In fact, it barely looked different than it did a few weeks ago.

Carefully she kissed the bare skin just below the belly button. It was the closest thing to kissing her babies. A few more months and she could hold them in her arms. Two babies. It was...a miracle.

"You are a beautiful woman and I am very lucky to be married to you." Sara said quietly.

A perfect Sunday, a Sunday morning with her wife, their children. Soon Susan would wake up, they would prepare breakfast for them, see if Steve woke up in time to have breakfast with them. And then? A whole day lay ahead them, a day for them together. A few hours in a park? Strolling around the beach? A mall? So many possibilities.

"Since when are you awake?" Sofia asked, her eyes still closed.

"A few minutes."

"You stared at me the whole time?"

"No, I got lost in my dreams about our babies, about how lucky I am to be with you and how much I love you."

"A nice way to start the day."

"It is." Sara pulled Sofia in her arms and kissed her gently. She was not only blessed with a wonderful wife and children, she was also blessed with another day off. Her boss spoiled her this week.

"How did you sleep?"

"Good. I love Sundays in bed."

"The day barely started."

"I know. Which is great, a whole day with you lays ahead."

"Did you come up with plans?"

"No. Breakfast with you and Susan, Steve if he wants and is awake. After that, I have no idea. There are a few things we should do, like housework, are not exactly fun."

"No, not at all."

"Nevertheless we should do them. Some of them. How about, we do the housework in the morning and have fun the whole afternoon and evening."

"Deal." Sofia smiled. "I volunteer for the bathroom and the laundry and if there's some time left for the living room."

"How about I take you out to Triple Burger when you manage the bathroom, the living room, the laundry and the dishes?"

"What will you do while I work like a dog?"

"Clean the windows, our bedroom, vacuum our level, down the stairs and clean the bathroom downstairs."

"Deal."

"Good."

"Triple Burger means Steve will come with us and that we can spend the afternoon in Malibu."

"How about we have lunch at Triple Burger, let the dogs swim at the dog beach and then take Mulholland Drive back, have a stop somewhere for a walk and come back here."

"I like that."

"Me too. Susan and the babies will too."

"Yes."

"We have to pick godparents." Sara placed her head on Sofia's shoulder. "Four instead of two."

"Any ideas? Any wishes?"

"Tanya was our first choice when we thought it's only one baby, now she can pick. Like the baby, who looks more like Don."

"Okay. I'd like to have Lynn and Kyle as godparents, if that's okay for you."

"Absolutely. Makes one more male we're looking for. How about Lou?"

"Are you seriously suggesting Lou Lee as a godfather of your child?"

"Of our child. Yes. He deserves to be a godfather, he...he is a nice guy."

"I won't ask you to repeat this sentence, don't worry." Sofia laughed. "We have the godparents for our children."

"Yes. We need godparents for Steve too."

"He can pick them himself, he's a big boy."

"True. Shall we get up or stay in bed until Susan calls us?"

"Stay in bed until Susan calls us. It's Sunday and we shouldn't leave our bed too early."

"Right. There are so many nice things to do in bed." The brunette pulled up the shirt of her lover and kissed the belly button before her lips wandered up.

Three hours later they were both busy with housework, eager to get it all behind themselves. Sofia did take some breaks, careful not to overwork herself and endanger their babies.

"Let me get this for you." Steve took the laundry basket away from Sofia. "You are not supposed to carry heavy things.""

"Thanks darling." She kissed his cheek.

"You're welcome. Do you and mom spend the day with cleaning?"

"No, only the morning. If you watch your sister, we take you with us to Triple Burger for lunch."

"Do you go home afterwards right away?"

"No, we go to the beach with the dogs, then drive around Mulholland Drive. How do you feel about a family day?"

"It's a family day with burger, I'm in."

"Great." She looked at him. "We picked godparents for the twins today and wondered, if you want godparents too."

"What for?"

"Some extra presents."

"Oh, good point. No, I think I'm fine without godparents, I've got grandparents. The best in the world. I'm sure they'll look after me if something happens to you and mom."

"They will."

"Then I don't need godparents. Unless Lou Lee becomes my godfather."

"You can ask him. Who do you want as your godmother?"

"The sexiest woman alive."

"Honey, I'm your mother and so is Sara. Or are you talking about a sexy model or actress?"

"I meant Tanya."

"She is history."

"Still sexy."

"You've got that right." Sofia grinned.

"We won't tell mom." Steve blinked. "I get the laundry down in the garden. Don't worry about the second load, I take care of it too. Then I take Susan and the dogs out for a walk, pick up some cheese and berries because somebody ate them all."

"Thanks, you're a great son."

"I know, it's why I picked you and mom. You needed a great man in your life."

"We did."

"And one day Tanya will realize she should have picked me back then - even when I had broken her heart because of Jenny."

"That's the self-esteem I like."

"Reminds you of yourself?"

"Yes. I want you to teach this your little siblings."

"Mom, you know that my self-esteem is just building up?"

"I'm aware of that, even when your mouth was quite big when we met the first time."

His face turned deep red. "Can't we forget that?"

"No, your mother likes to call me Porn Barbie only to tease me."

"Not the best day of my life."

"It was a good day, you decided to trust Sara, it got you back into the forest and later to us. She thought about adopting you for a while, was afraid you'd deny her wish, would feel offended."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because your mother's self-esteem is also not the best. She liked you so much, which added to her fear."

"What did you say when she asked you to adopt me?"

"If I remember correctly I told her just to tell me, she wants to adopt you. I figured it out quite soon, I know my wife."

"And you were fine with it?"

"Yes, I like people, who are smart and have their own mind."

"I'm your man."

"You are my son. The perfect son."

"So why did you need another baby?"

"Arrogance and being egoistic. Maybe an early sign of the midlife crisis. I want my DNA carried on to have a part of me in the future. A young me while I'm turning old."

"When Sara told me the first time the two of you want to have a baby I was very disappointed. I hoped you'd adopt me, when she said you were trying to get pregnant, I thought I'd lost my chance to get cool parents. I hated the baby before you were pregnant for taking something away from me that never was mine."

"Did she?"

"No, I love my little sister. You made it very clear you love us both."

"We do, we don't see a difference between you and Susan."

"I can use the toilette."

"You know what I mean."

"Yes, I do." He hugged her. "I get the laundry down before it's dry."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome, mommy." He smiled.

"Do you have our son do your work?" Sara asked when she saw Steve walk away with the laundry.

"Yes, he said I'm not supposed to carry heavy things."

"We got ourselves a perfect son." The brunette pulled the blonde into her arms. "How about a little break? In our bedroom? Five minutes."

"Make it ten."

"Deal." Sara pulled Sofia closer in her arms and kissed her passionately. Maybe fifteen minutes would be even better. The cleaning could wait, there were more important things to do.